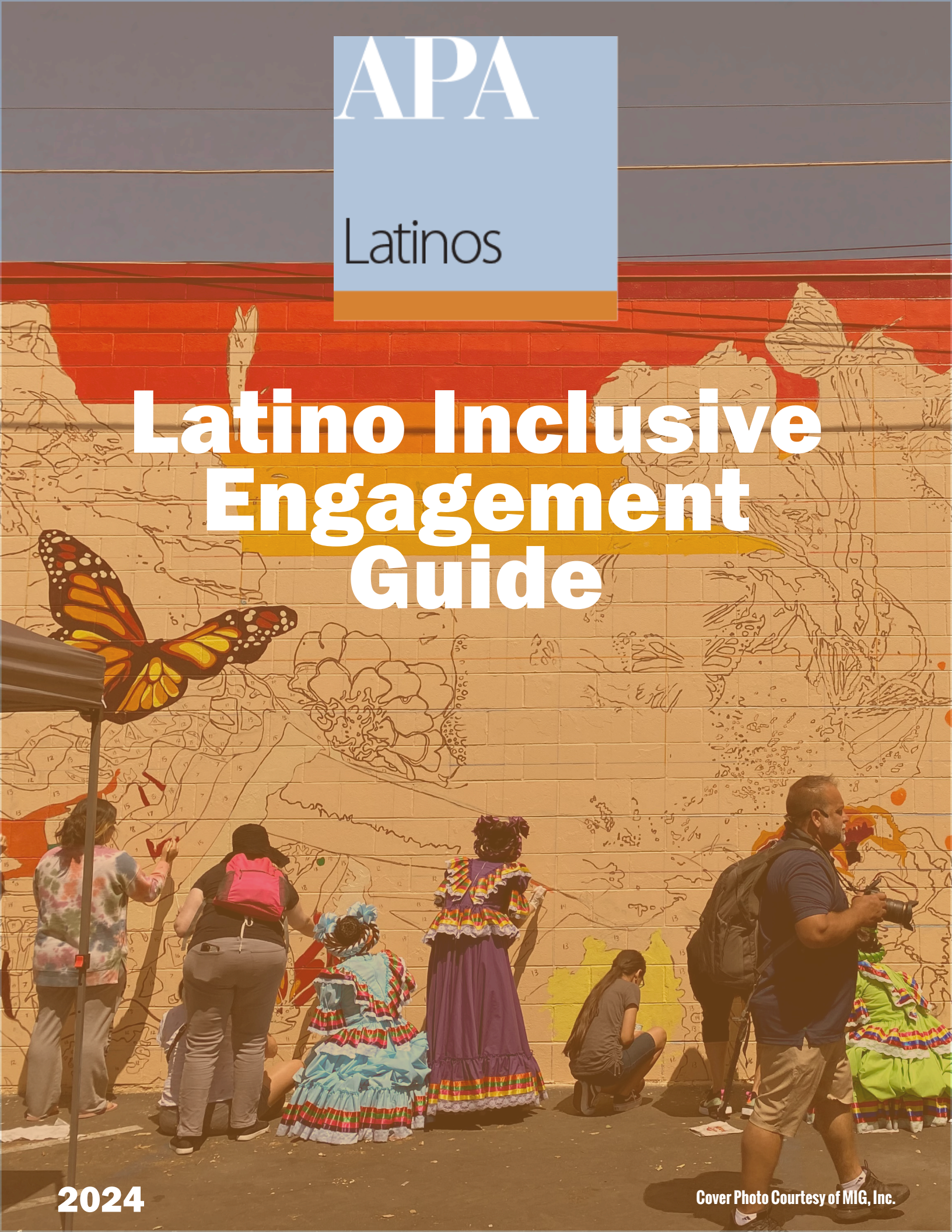
APA

Latinos

Latino Inclusive Engagement Guide



2024

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Message from the Chair

¡Bienvenidos!

Welcome!

The Latinos and Planning Division (LAP) of the American Planning Association is pleased to introduce you to our Latino Inclusive Engagement Guide. Change is inevitable and you have heard it before – that the Hispanic and Latino populations are the fastest growing demographic across the United States. This change, the change that came before it, and the change that will come after it, requires planners to adjust and refocus our efforts to create great communities for all.

As you read through this Guide, please understand that these are generalized samples of a myriad of tailored actions you may take for your respective communities. This is a compilation of over one year of work by the Project Team consisting of LAP executive board, LAP's extraordinary members, and several external contributors. I would like to personally thank each one of them, LAP Immediate Past Chair Vidal Marquez for his guidance and initiative, and the Project Manager for his work and dedication, LAP Vice Chair Marco Hinojosa, AICP.

Daniel C. Besinaiz, Chair of Latinos and Planning Division

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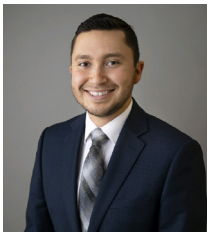

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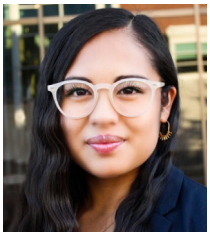

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Photo Courtesy of Bria Woods

1 Introduction

Document Overview

Urban planning is an artful blend of vision, foresight, and the practical application of ideas that shape the landscapes where we live, work, and play. The rapidly evolving demographics of the United States paint a vivid picture of the richness that diversity adds to our urban tapestry, and Latino communities are undeniably integral to this vibrant mosaic. According to the 2020 Census data, there are approximately 62.1 million Hispanic people nationwide, accounting for 18.9% of the total U.S. population. Hispanic people (of any race) are the second largest demographic group in the country, after non-Hispanic whites. Embracing the diversity within Latino communities and involving them in the planning process is essential to creating inclusive, equitable, and prosperous cities.

Engaging with Latino and Spanish-speaking communities is not just about demographics; it's about recognizing the economic, cultural, and social importance of this community in the U.S. This community has for generations made America the land of opportunity by being the backbone of essential industries and creating indelible shifts in our national cultural fabric. This is worth investing in because it is our collective future.

This guide is tailored specifically for urban planners, architects, policymakers, and all those involved in shaping the urban landscape. Its aim is to equip you with the knowledge, tools, and strategies required to facilitate inclusive engagement with Latino communities. We believe that inclusive urban planning is not just a professional imperative but a moral one, rooted in the principles of social justice, empathy, and respect for cultural diversity.

Our approach to inclusive engagement for urban planning in Latino communities hinges on a profound understanding of their unique challenges, needs, and priorities. It is about listening actively, acknowledging historical contexts, and partnering collaboratively with these communities to build communities that reflect their values, preferences, and character.

This guide is structured to provide practical insights, best practices, and case studies. We delve into the importance of linguistic and cultural competence, recognizing that language barriers are often symbolic of broader communication gaps that need to be bridged. We also examine the significance of addressing issues related to accessibility and trust within these communities.

Our main goal for this guide is to make urban planning a unifying and transformative force, one that fosters cooperation, inclusion, and the shared prosperity of Latino communities within our cities. We invite you to embark on this journey of discovery and exploration, and to embrace the complexity and diversity that urban planning in Latino communities represents. As we move forward, let's shape our cities not only as centers of innovation and economic growth but also as havens of cultural richness, where everyone, regardless of their background, can find a sense of belonging and a brighter future.

Photo Courtesy of James Rojas

2 Barriers

A Story

After a long day, the Alvarez family returns home. The parents have several jobs throughout the region, and when one of them leaves to drive across town, the other is battling to get themselves and their children ready for work and school. After breakfast, the mom makes due by dropping the kids off at a neighbor's house a few houses away, who walks them along with their children to the school bus stop. The mom then proceeds to the nearest bus stop and spots a sign announcing a planning process looking at transportation improvements (bus rapid transit, road diet, bike lanes, crosswalks, etc.) and the kick-off community meeting set two weeks away. They ignore it because they are focused on getting to work on time.

They received a postcard regarding the corridor planning process a week later. It was entirely in English. The parents have limited English proficiency and ask their eldest child what it means. They are hesitant to participate, with an overall mistrust of government, but make the effort to see what is going on. The meeting is held in the municipal building which is far from the corridor plan boundaries. It's a weekday, their kids need to be in bed by 8 p.m., and the site is only accessible by car (buses don't run regularly and it's a 15-minute walk from the nearest transit stop).

When they arrive, they choose not to provide their email address or phone number at the sign-in table in order to keep contact information private. Childcare isn't provided so they decide to enter the meeting space with their children. They don't recognize anyone and sit in the far back; the room is set up lecture-style, and the planner speaks only in English. They feel lost with the vocabulary being used and it isn't clear what the process is. Certain community members dominate the Q+A with rhetoric against any changes that promote adding bike lanes and lowering speeds. They become unwilling to engage and unable to understand how to best participate. They decide to leave, it's late and past 8 p.m., gaining nothing from the conversation and missing out on the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback to the planning team.

Barriers of the Traditional Planning Practice

This story isn't unique; it's more common than many planners realize. While these scenarios might seem typical in many communities with traditional outreach, Latino communities often face additional challenges in participating—especially when English is not their primary language. For Latino families, attending public meetings isn't just about staying informed but about actively engaging and being part of the community, even in highly transient neighborhoods. Parents often bring their children, not only to utilize translation services but to teach them about their community and the public process in this country. This engagement reflects a deep desire to make the neighborhood better for their children and future generations. Although the planning profession has made strides in inclusivity and cultural competency, it's essential to acknowledge and address the unique barriers Latino community members encounter as they strive to participate in shaping their neighborhoods.

Intimidating Process

Even for the most seasoned community participant, navigating the community planning process is daunting and fraught with intimidation. Aside from being a highly technical profession involving codes and plans that often aren't always developed in a manner that makes it easier for anyone other than

practitioners to understand, the planning process hasn't always lent itself to be approachable to the masses. Not only are most planning documents written in a technical manner that may be difficult to consume for most, but it doesn't always translate to those with limited English language proficiency or English as a second language.

From its onset, the practice of planning can be viewed as intimidating, but the environment in which the public interacts with planning practitioners adds to that. It involves the community members to come to them in government buildings and facilities that can be sterile and uninviting. Discussing and engaging on planning is formulaic and sometimes requires a person to know who to speak to and what to ask before walking into the building. It often expects one to be highly professional to engage with officials to feel their questions, concerns, or ability to participate in the process is invalidated.

Intimidating Engagement

The most typical opportunity that the community is aware of to participate in the planning process is the public hearing. While a staple of municipal governance to deliberate in a public and transparent forum, it often isn't suited to meaningful dialog with a community. Other opportunities such as town halls or open houses with limited coordination also don't provide an environment for thoughtful interaction with community members. Many of the typical engagement situations are filled with intimidation for many, including those of the Latino communities.

As public hearings are prescribed by a process, it may not be straightforward to understand when one can participate. Meeting agendas that may explain the hearing process may not be offered in Spanish or even in writing using legal and technical terms that aren't straightforward. When one is able to speak, they're limited to a prescribed time to speak and often are not given a response to validate their comment or concern. If translation is necessary for non-English speakers, then it becomes a situation where one has to occasionally pause their comments to allow for translation. It's not difficult to imagine a situation where a Spanish speaker is at the speaker podium staring at a countdown clock trying to get succinct thoughts out not knowing if they actually are taken into consideration. In the end, such situations only foster a non-welcoming intimidating situation.

Complex Regulations

For most communities, intimate knowledge of a community zoning regulation is left to practitioners and not necessarily expected for the general public to fully comprehend. As such, many individuals may not necessarily be aware of the processes or regulations that exist when it comes to their properties. Within Latino communities, situations can exist where families with limited needs often take on home improvement themselves for cost savings or other reasons. In these situations, the availability of resources and readily accessible and understandable processes regarding such activities may be lacking. This can result in potential violations that often also may not be thoroughly explained, and as such provides a barrier for Latino communities to provide for their families and improve their living situation.

Government Mistrust

A general mistrust can be present in Latino communities for a variety of reasons. Whether it's fear of law enforcement, potential immigration status concerns, unawareness of regulatory requirements, negative experience with officials, or not feeling local municipalities have come through on neighborhood improvements, trust in local government officials can be lacking. As such, the desire to participate in

community planning efforts is seen with suspicion and scrutiny, possibly discouraging participation and compromising trust.

Inadequate Language Accommodations

In some communities, offering non-English materials and translation can be seen as an afterthought (if offered at all). Agenda and handouts are at times translated using an online service or automated translation that is not always vetted by a native Spanish speaker which can lack important nuances to the messaging. Public hearings, workshops, and open houses will primarily begin with an English introduction leaving non-English speakers waiting for a translation (if one is offered). Outreach as described in Latino communities can leave individuals who primarily speak or are more comfortable speaking Spanish feeling as a subordinate class and less important community.

Built Environment and Access to Transportation

While best attempts can be made to humanize the planning process and be considerate of Latino community participation, barriers to participation can also be physical or technologically constrained. Access to participation may also be difficult due to timing of events and locations. Planners need to be mindful of the vast diversity of those participating from the Latino communities who may have mobility issues, access to transportation, or don't have the means or access to technology to allow for virtual participation.

Built Environment

Depending on the location or venue for onsite community engagement, equal access to those with disabilities and mobility issues can be limited or in some cases no access. Meeting locations without adequate access such as wheelchair accessibility or accommodations for such create an unequable environment for engagement or violate accessibility laws. Poorly selected venues can also include rooms with acoustical issues (such as too noisy or echoes) and bad sight lines to displays or participants leading to a distracting environment. The built environment should be a significant consideration when evaluating community engagement opportunities to ensure an equitable experience in Latino communities.

Technology

In recent years, planners have embraced technology to open up additional and innovative methods to engage communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technology for community engagement increased dramatically in order to maintain social distancing. However, the use of technology that required access to a computer or internet access created a barrier for those who do not have such. The use of technology, while efficient and allows for new ways to convey complex planning concepts, can limit participation to those who are familiar with the use of technical tools such as a computer or smartphone.

location and Time

Where and when community engagement opportunities occur matter. When a workshop or open house is conducted during inconvenient times such as during the work day or when it is difficult to arrange care for family members, this limits individuals in the Latino community who can participate. The location of an engagement event can also be a barrier when it requires a community member to travel out of their community or rely on vehicular access when they may not have such.

Photo Courtesy of Megan Lopez

3 Engagement Activities

Community Workshops

Community workshops are collaborative and participatory gatherings designed to engage individuals from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. These workshops aim to create a sense of belonging and foster a supportive environment where everyone's voice is valued and heard. The overarching goal is to promote inclusivity by breaking down barriers, embracing diversity, and ensuring that all community members feel welcome and respected. These workshops can cover a wide range of planning topics. They provide a platform for open dialogue, story-sharing, and collaboration that contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

How-to-Do

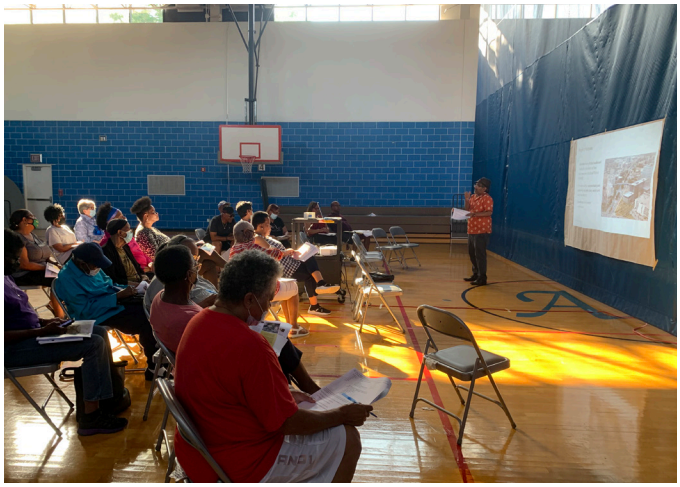
Conducting a community workshop involves careful planning and consideration to ensure that diverse voices are heard, and community members feel empowered to contribute meaningfully. Here are some key steps and strategies to conduct an inclusive community workshop:

1. **Preparation and Outreach**
    - Identify and engage diverse community stakeholders, including residents, local businesses, community organizations, and marginalized groups.
    - Use various communication channels to promote the workshop, ensuring that information is accessible to all residents, including those with different language preferences or accessibility needs.
    - Collaborate with community leaders and organizations to enhance credibility and encourage broader participation.
2. **Accessible Venue and Resources**
    - Choose a venue that is easily accessible, considering factors such as public transportation, parking, and physical accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
    - Provide materials in multiple formats, including printed materials, digital resources, and materials in different languages to accommodate diverse preferences.
3. **Facilitation Techniques**
    - Employ inclusive facilitation techniques that encourage equal participation and prevent dominant voices from overshadowing others.
    - Use visual aids, interactive activities, and small group discussions to cater to different learning and communication styles.
    - Create an atmosphere that fosters respect, where participants feel comfortable sharing their perspectives without fear of judgment.
4. **Translation and Interpretation**
    - Arrange for translation services if the community is linguistically diverse, ensuring that all participants can fully engage in discussions.
    - Provide interpretation services for individuals who may have different language preferences.
5. **Follow-Up and Ongoing Engagement**
    - Share workshop outcomes with the community and express how their input influenced the planning process.
    - Explore ongoing engagement mechanisms, such as online platforms or follow-up workshops, to maintain a continuous dialogue with the community.

What to Avoid

When conducting a community workshop for an urban planning project, it's crucial to be mindful of potential pitfalls that could hinder the inclusivity and effectiveness of the workshop. Here are some things to avoid:

- **Ignoring Accessibility Needs**: Don't overlook accessibility considerations. Ensure that the venue is physically accessible, provide materials in multiple formats, and accommodate individuals with disabilities to create an inclusive environment.
- **Overlooking Language Barriers**: Don't ignore language barriers. Provide translation services and interpretation to ensure that language differences do not hinder participation or understanding.
- **Neglecting Cultural Sensitivity**: Avoid neglecting cultural sensitivity. Be aware of cultural nuances and customs within the community to create an environment that respects and includes diverse cultural perspectives.
- **Using Jargon**: Avoid using technical or jargon-heavy language that may be unfamiliar to community members. Present information in a clear, accessible manner to facilitate understanding for all participants.
- **Rushing the Process**: Don't rush the workshop process. Allow sufficient time for discussions and ensure that participants have the opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and ideas thoroughly.
- **Ignoring Power Dynamics**: Avoid ignoring power dynamics within the community. Be aware of existing hierarchies and ensure that the workshop provides an equal platform for all participants to contribute without fear of reprisal.
- **Failing to Provide Feedback Mechanisms**: Don't neglect feedback mechanisms. Ensure that participants have a clear and accessible way to provide feedback during and after the workshop, and demonstrate how their input will be considered in the planning process.
- **Inadequate Follow-Up**: Don't neglect follow-up activities. After the workshop, communicate outcomes, decisions, and how community input influenced the planning process. Maintain ongoing engagement to sustain a collaborative relationship with the community.



Community Workshop in Dallas, TX

Photo Courtesy of MIG, Inc.

What Could Go Wrong and How to Deal With It

Several challenges can arise during a community workshop for an urban planning project. It's important to be proactive in anticipating potential issues and implementing strategies to address or avoid them. Here are some common challenges and ways to mitigate them:

1. **Limited Attendance:**
    - Issue: Low turnout can limit the diversity of perspectives and compromise the representativeness of the community.
    - Avoidance: Engage in extensive outreach efforts through various channels, collaborate with community leaders and organizations, and offer incentives or promotional activities to encourage participation. Also, consider the broader demographics of the latinx community you are engaging with (ie. Families and small business owners will have much more limited schedules).
2. **Dominant Voices:**
    - Issue: Certain individuals or groups may dominate discussions, silencing others and limiting the diversity of input.
    - Avoidance: Employ facilitation techniques that ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak, encourage quieter voices, and use small group discussions to promote more inclusive participation. Ensuring that people who don't have English as a first language feel empowered to speak up through various types of activities, comment cards, or translation services
3. **Conflict and Tension:**
    - Issue: Strong disagreements among participants can lead to tension and hinder productive discussions.
    - Avoidance: Establish ground rules for respectful dialogue, address conflicts promptly and impartially, and facilitate discussions that focus on common goals and shared values.
4. **Exclusion of Marginalized Groups:**
    - Issue: Certain marginalized groups may be unintentionally excluded from the workshop due to systemic barriers.
    - Avoidance: Actively reach out to diverse community organizations, use inclusive language in promotional materials, and consider targeted outreach efforts to ensure representation from all demographics. Actively ask the question: "Who is still missing from the table?" and reach out to the corresponding groups that are not represented
5. **Resistance to Change:**
    - Issue: Some participants may resist proposed changes, hindering the implementation of the urban planning project.
    - Avoidance: Foster a culture of collaboration and emphasize the benefits of the proposed changes, ensuring that community input is reflected in the final plans. Take the time to build community trust before the meeting. Engage in conversations with small business owners and community leaders in advance of the workshop. Prime them for initial ideas to then bring forward more developed at the workshop.

Photo Courtesy of City of Los Angeles

Hybrid Meetings

A hybrid meeting is a meeting where some people are attending the meeting in person, but some participants might be attending online through a web service/ meeting app. Hybrid meetings have always been used, but after the COVID epidemic these types of meetings became popularized. A hybrid meeting is a combination of in-person and virtual meetings that allow for more inclusivity by having a wider reach and participation overall.

How-to-Do

A hybrid meeting should be dealt with the same respect and seriousness of an in-person meeting. The process should remain ultimately the same and the participants must know what topics are to be discussed and have an understanding of the process and what to expect.

- An agenda should be posted and shared beforehand with the public/ participants. The facilitators should be clearly indicated and contacts for questions and technological help should be indicated. The agenda should also delineate where participation will occur so participants can prepare their questions and comments and understand where they can voice their concerns.
- A pre-meeting/ technology set up and hardcopy document pick up times/ day: To ensure participation in all methods, a preparation meeting needs to be held to coordinate hardcopy document pick up and assist the community with downloading the video conferencing software or meeting app. This meeting needs to happen at a time convenient for participants at a neutral meeting location.
- When it comes to scheduling the hybrid meeting, the people hosting the meeting need to plan it around the time of the participants and in neutral spaces the attendees frequent. The meeting has to be made as convenient as possible for the participants. As learned from speaking with RAYO, an urban planning community-based organization based out of Dallas, TX, they are most successful when they go to the participants. These spaces can include schools, community centers, libraries, etc. It is important to understand that attendees may feel uncomfortable in official government spaces like Council Chambers due to legal status.
- The meeting should also include a mediator. The mediator will play the role of including the online participants so that their comments and questions are addressed by the facilitator during the in-person portion. The mediator will also make sure that participants online are following the proper protocol and are given help with technological issues.
- Language Accommodation:
  - If a meeting is being conducted in English and Spanish or another language, the translation services should be readily available in person and online.

Hybrid meeting at the IAF Re-Facilitation Conference
Photo Courtesy of SessionLab

  - English and Spanish questions should be answered at the same time and responded to at the same time. The questions and responses in the other language need to be translated so that everyone understands what is going on and is actively part of the conversation. The meeting needs to flow like a conversation. All paperwork (maps, plans, and data) that is provided in English needs to be provided in Spanish.
  - Avoid The mediator and facilitator should fully comprehend both languages to prevent miscommunication and misinterpretation.
  - Making sure the software has language accommodations/ can be easily translated. For example, the language can be changed on Zoom and all functions and setup can be done in the language chosen.
- Disability Accommodation:
  - Before the meeting, it should be made public that disability accommodations can be made and to contact the point of contact if it is needed. This should be something that is thought of before the engagement event. The hosts should already be thinking logistically of transcription services and American Sign Language (ASL) services.
  - Meeting software/applications now also include transcription on demand. The only issue with this would be that the transcriptions can be incorrect.
  - ASL services should be provided if needed. ASL services should be available in person and should be seen online.

Rules of Thumb

- Make sure to include all individuals in the discussion whether they are in person or online.
- Make sure there is dedicated tech help before and during the engagement event.
- Make sure the facilitators/ mediators know the languages of the community.
- Make sure to incorporate accessibility features online and in-person.
- Make sure that there are clear expectations for the event and participants have a point of contact for questions before and after the event.
- Be realistic about access to internet and tech literacy. If it is not there, immediately pivot to a different engagement method.
- Do not use Google Translate to translate documents. Work with a group to properly translate documents and pay someone.

Access to Internet

- Access to the internet, and affordable internet is an issue that can arise in various communities. Additionally, various video streaming and online meeting applications require high-speed internet which may be an issue in rural communities or in communities where high-speed internet is expensive.
- Planners must take into account that 42 million Americans do not have access to the internet, with 5% of the Latino population not being on the internet. Additionally, 50% of rural Americans do not have access to the internet and 18% of all Americans simply cannot afford the internet.

In-Person Pop-Up Events

Unlike traditional workshops or public hearings, pop-up events are temporary and mobile, creating an interactive and accessible platform that brings discussions directly to the people. Rooted in the principles of inclusivity, these pop-up events strive to involve a diverse range of community members. These events often take the form of temporary installations, interactive exhibits, or mobile workshops strategically located in public spaces like bus stops, libraries, and farmers markets. The goal is to break down barriers to participation and foster a sense of community ownership in the planning process. Inclusive pop-up events aim to capture the attention of passersby, encouraging spontaneous engagement and welcoming input from individuals who may not typically participate in formal planning discussions.

How-to-Do

Conducting a community workshop involves careful planning and consideration to ensure that diverse voices are heard, and community members feel empowered to contribute meaningfully. Here are some key steps and strategies to conduct an inclusive community workshop:

1. **Accessible Location**
    - Choose a central and easily accessible location that attracts a diverse cross-section of the community, considering factors such as public transportation, parking, and physical accessibility for all individuals. Use various communication channels to promote the workshop, ensuring that information is accessible to all residents, including those with different language preferences or accessibility needs.
    - Collaborate with community leaders and organizations to enhance credibility and encourage broader participation.
2. **Interactive Displays and Activities**
    - Create interactive exhibits and activities that cater to different learning styles and engage participants of all ages.
    - Use visual aids, hands-on models, and interactive maps to convey information in an accessible and engaging manner.
3. **Multilingual Materials**
    - Provide materials in multiple languages to accommodate linguistic diversity within the community.
    - Consider having bilingual staff or volunteers available to assist and engage with participants who may have different language preferences.
4. **Community Partnerships**
    - Collaborate with local community organizations and leaders to co-host the event, ensuring that the planning process benefits from diverse perspectives and input.
5. **Child-Friendly Activities**
    - Provide child-friendly activities or childcare options to encourage the participation of families and caregivers.

What to Avoid

When conducting a pop-up outreach event, it's important to be mindful of potential pitfalls that could hinder the effectiveness and inclusivity of the event. Here are some things to avoid:

- **Inaccessible Location**: Failing to reach a diverse audience may result in a lack of representation and perspectives from different community members.
- **Lack of Cultural Sensitivity**: Ignoring cultural nuances and preferences may make some attendees feel unwelcome or misunderstood.
- **Insufficient Staff Training**: Inadequately trained staff or volunteers may not be equipped to handle diverse perspectives or ensure inclusivity.
- **Demographic Mismatch**: Avoid staffing these events with people who do not represent the community you're trying to reach.

What Could Go Wrong and How to Deal With It

Several challenges can arise during a community workshop for an urban planning project. It's important to be proactive in anticipating potential issues and implementing strategies to address or avoid them. Here are some common challenges and ways to mitigate them:

1. **Inadequate Diversity:**
   - Issue: Limited diversity among attendees may result in a skewed representation of community perspectives.
   - Avoidance: Collaborate with diverse community organizations, tailor outreach strategies to reach different demographic groups, and choose a central location accessible to a broad cross-section of the community.
2. **Unresponsive Engagement:**
   - Issue: Attendees may not actively engage with the event activities, resulting in superficial input.
   - Avoidance: Design interactive and dynamic activities that capture attention, provide clear instructions for participation, and incorporate elements of gamification or rewards to encourage involvement. Consider breaking into smaller groups to break down the intimidation factor of large group settings and public speaking

Pop-up event near a school in Houston
Photo Courtesy of MIG, Inc.

3. **Logistical Challenges:**
    - Issue: Poor event logistics, such as congestion or inadequate space, can impact the overall experience.
    - Avoidance: Plan for sufficient space, clearly mark areas, and consider the flow of participants. Anticipate potential logistical challenges and have contingency plans in place. Coordinate with partners to ensure you are locating in a well trafficked area (ie. If you are having a pop-up event at a city festival, make sure to talk through the location with the city to ensure you are in a good place with people traffic and not in the far back corner with less foot traffic.
4. **Weather-Related Issues:**
    - Issue: Unfavorable weather conditions may discourage attendance and disrupt outdoor events.
    - Avoidance: Check the weather forecast in advance and have contingency plans for adverse conditions. Consider indoor or covered spaces for activities.
5. **Safety Concerns:**
    - Issue: Safety issues, such as overcrowding or inadequate security, can compromise the overall well-being of participants.
    - Avoidance: Plan for appropriate security measures, monitor crowd size, and have staff or volunteers trained to handle emergencies. Communicate safety measures to participants.

Language interpretor at a pop-up event in Houston
Photo Courtesy of MIG, Inc.

Photo Courtesy of Vivienne Gucwa

In-Person and Hybrid Focus Groups

Focus groups are meant to be small groups of people that are selected to provide feedback to a discussion leader. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), focus groups encourage discussion by allowing people to share details in a small setting. This format would allow for a more comfortable setting that encourages collaboration and engagement.

Conducting focus groups in person, if possible, is preferred. This tends to be the most effective way to engage with Hispanic and Latino communities, often considered hard-to reach groups because of the realities of the day-to-day responsibilities, including but not limited to work schedules, language barriers, and comfort level. Seeking open and honest feedback at formal and informal opportunities should be the goal.

HUD's best practices for contacting hard-to-reach groups include:

- **Translate materials into all applicable languages**. Utilize community partners that fluently speak the language of the audience you are trying to engage and prep them on the discussion to ensure that higher-level ideas and concepts can be accurately translated.
- **Send outreach materials based on contact lists for existing programs** that benefit target groups, for example, neighborhood associations.
- It is uniquely important when dealing with non-English speaking populations to **routinize outreach**, which helps overcome structural barriers to engagement.
- **Delegate outreach responsibilities to local community leaders** who can take the lead in coordinating engagement within their own spaces. For instance, some program participants pay local leaders for conducting outreach. Others have relied on non-governmental partners to coordinate with particular communities that may not trust local government, for instance, undocumented immigrants.
- **Smaller focus groups,** such as those with formerly incarcerated residents, can also be useful in reaching marginalized communities.

Be aware that rural communities face a unique set of challenges in engaging with the Hispanic and Latino community. Conducting community participation activities to engage them could be difficult, both practical and ideological. Can vary the times and format of engagement meetings (during and after the workday, hybrid options) to encourage engagement. Have local trusted local representatives that Hispanic and Latino constituents are familiar with, can relate to and are comfortable speaking to them. It is advisable to consider minimizing the role of government entities in leading discussions.

Disability Accommodations

Gathering input from people with disabilities is crucial and should be included in any effort for public engagement. The American Disabilities Act (ADA) provides guidance and resource materials – information for people with disabilities, state and local governments, and businesses. According to the ADA:

- Customers with disabilities are part of a large and growing market segment whose customer requirements are often overlooked. Businesses cannot afford to ignore more than 50 million consumers with billions of dollars to spend.
- Business environments and product characteristics that serve people with

disabilities also benefit other markets. People with disabilities, who frequently need to find creative ways to work around physical barriers and product inaccessibility, can offer ideas and innovative solutions to attract and keep new customers, especially those in the burgeoning older adult market.

- People with disabilities can assist businesses in finding cost-effective, usable solutions that bring facilities and customer service policies and practices into compliance with the ADA.

Accessible Means for Gathering Feedback

Some examples of accessibility considerations for gathering feedback from customers with disabilities:

- Customer surveys must be accessible to people who are blind or who have low vision. This may be accomplished by producing the survey in alternate formats (e.g., Braille, large print, or an electronic format) for independent use by customers or by providing an assistant who can read the survey to a participant and record his or her responses.
- Product usability interviews with customers who are hard of hearing or deaf may require the use of an assistive listening system or the services of sign language or oral interpreters.
- If businesses require complaints to be filed at customer service desks, the desks must be accessible to people who use mobility devices (e.g., the desk must be on an accessible route and have a writing surface at the required height or a clipboard available for people who use wheelchairs).
- Training provided for mystery shoppers with disabilities has to be provided in an accessible location and communicated in an accessible manner for all participants.
- Focus groups that include people who are hard of hearing or deaf may need to enlist the services of a realtime captioner to ensure that there is effective communication among all parties. As a secondary benefit, this service can provide a verbatim transcript of the session's discussion for follow-up research purposes.

Customers with disabilities can be assets to a business if it is willing to make the necessary investment to listen. Input from these customers not only can help businesses comply with the ADA but also develop creative, innovative customer service policies and practices as well as product and facility designs.

What to Avoid

- Avoid personal bias and focus more on the what and why. Most importantly listen to what has to be said. This is crucial to obtain meaningful feedback.
- Hosting focus groups without a well-defined purpose or clear objectives can lead to unfocused discussions.
- Having a facilitator who dominates the conversation, lacks neutrality, or fails to keep the group on track.
- Neglecting to create an inclusive atmosphere where all participants, especially marginalized voices, feel comfortable contributing.
- Inadequate technology that causes delays or communication barriers for virtual participants.
- Prioritizing in-person participants' contributions over virtual attendees.

Door-to-Door Canvassing

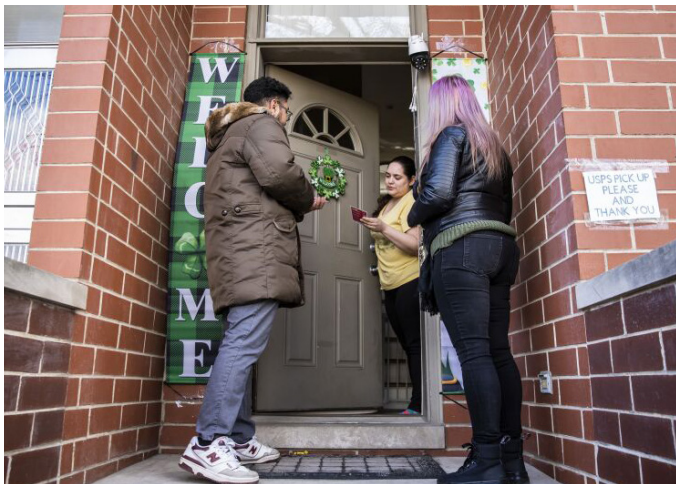
Door-to-door canvassing is an outreach technique that provides an opportunity to meet people where they are. If consistently used, planners can work to establish and foster a consistent connection and communication with community members. Canvassing also allows planners to submerge themselves in communities and become more intimately familiar with an area. The approach can be used to engage residents, businesses, churches and other stakeholders from the community. For more information on best practices for canvassing, please read the guide from Somos Tejas, an organization that works to cultivate a vibrant culture of civic participation in the Latino community in Texas, located in the Appendix.

Overview

First, identify the target population and geographic areas. Second, collect public data available of the target population i.e., addresses. Once preliminary data is collected, focus on establishing a system to collect and track new data. Lastly, there should be procedures in place for canvassing.

Target Population/Areas

The canvassing's goals will influence the target population and geographic areas of interest. Once identified, display the geographic areas on a map. Then divide the area into sections in order to assign canvassers to certain areas. Prior to canvassing, it is helpful to connect with several stakeholders in the area to inform them and to ask for any general advice. For example, if there is a problem of stray dogs in the neighborhood, that is helpful information to be aware of in order to implement additional safety precautions. In some cases, stakeholders might offer to volunteer or recruit others to assist with the canvassing efforts.



Hispanic targeted voting campaign in Chicago
Photo Courtesy of Ashlee Rezin

Data Collection

County or municipal level databases should have data available containing addresses. The system to collect and update data will be a reflection of available resources and based on the team's preferences. However, there are some tips to keep in mind. First, ensure to select one hub to store all data i.e., Google sheet. Second, select the preferred method for canvassers to store information during canvassing. One option can be for canvassers to use a Google form to funnel data into a spreadsheet. A second option could be using a software company such as EveryAaction, which has a mobile application that canvassers can use. The application assigns canvassers to areas, notes pertinent to an address can be uploaded, and if provided, canvassers can also access their script. Another option is to provide a clipboard, paper and pen for canvassers. However, this option poses the risk of information to be lost, handwriting that is not legible and will add staff time to type up or scan notes.

To-Do list Prior to Canvassing

- Understand the uniqueness of a community. For example, be aware of the predominant languages spoken in an area and ensure that one of the paired canvassers is fluent. This also includes non-verbal communication such as sign language.
- Attempt to engage with stakeholders in the area to inform them about the canvassing efforts i.e., neighborhood association. If canvassing inside an apartment complex, especially a gated one, contacting property management for permission might be the preferred approach.
- Recruit support to help with canvassing efforts such as colleagues or community stakeholders. Canvassing should preferably be done in pairs.
- A training or orientation should be provided to explain how information should be collected, general canvassing protocols and to answer any questions from canvassers.
- Gather canvassing supplies – see cost estimates for potential expenditures.
- Assign roles – pair up canvassers, assign teams to an area, select a captain who will collect canvasser's supplies and be available to answer any questions during the canvassing outing.
- Determine the flow such as the day, time and place for canvassers to convene.

What to Avoid

For a full list, see Somos Tejas' "Block walking Do's and Don'ts" handout available in the appendix.

- Do not leave material inside people's mailboxes.
- If using tape to drop off literature, painter's tape is preferred. Also, it is best to use the tape on glass to avoid property damage.
- Do not be distracted. Pay attention to relevant signage and any other dangerous activity in the area i.e., loose dogs.
- Engage with community members outside, do not go inside someone's home.
- Safety first, if you feel unsafe approaching a certain place, skip it.

What Could Go Wrong and How to Deal With It

- If a canvasser is unable to connect with a community member due to a lack of disability accommodation, this information should be shared to the team. For example, if sign language is needed, then a canvasser who is fluent in sign language should visit the home again.
- If the goal is to distribute literature to as many addresses as possible, knocking on doors to interact with people will likely delay the speed. However, if the purpose is to collect community feedback, then door knocking is essential to increase participation.
- A frequent challenge when door knocking is that not everyone is willing to answer their door. During some instances, systemic reasons might discourage someone from opening their door.
- Sometimes canvassers are met with rudeness and disrespect. However, it is important not to allow a negative experience at one stop to carry over to the next home.

Place It Workshops

The Place It approach was developed by James Rojas, a Latino urban planner and artist, who saw that many Latinos attending traditional community meetings would not participate in the discussions. He saw a need for a culturally, socially, and emotionally appropriate community engagement tool for Latinos that did not center on language, maps, data or highest and best use but rather relationships to places and people. From working with artists and educators he created a method that uses art-making with objects, storytelling, and play to help create a safe space for Latinos to articulate their memories, needs, aspirations. Rather than simply asking Latinos what they want or need in their community, Place It takes them on a journey of self discovery that is grounded and literally built on their personal spatial histories. Latinos build solutions with objects, based on their own on-the-ground knowledge and imagination. Through material expressions of ideas and imagination joyfully made by Latinos, this method improves communication, inquiry, reflection, collaboration, ownership of the process, and idea generation in an efficient, and playful manner. The outcomes establish collective values as a metric to measure development of urban plans or policies and promote further discussion.

By bringing Latino together to share their personal histories, creative talents, places, and aspirations, they leave the meeting feeling connected, energized and as being part of a team. They bond, and develop a common purpose and collective values to motivate them to find ways to work to improve their communities. To learn more about the Place It approach, check out James Rojas' book "Dream Play Build".

How-to-Do

1. **Identify Roles**: The facilitator explains the process, outlines the objectives, guides the group through the activities, and helps synthesize their findings. He or she encourages participants to talk, smile, laugh, move, nod, make eye contact and communicate through body language. The recorder documents the activities and findings, and set down this information for everyone to see. The number of participants can range from five to thirty. More time is needed for each activity for larger groups.
2. **Set-Up**: Choose a time, and venue for optimal attendances and create a safe space for people to listen to themselves and each other. The activity can be preformed outdoors or indoors, in a classroom or a park. The materials should consist of everyday, non-representational, vibrant, and interesting objects such as colorful beads, painted blocks, hair rollers, pipe cleaners, buttons, plastic flowers, and other non-architectural objects.
3. **Introduce**: The facilitator introduces the workshop goals and objectives, the reason for the activities, and why urban planning matters. The first activity, Childhood Memory, helps participants reflect on place and how it impacts our lives. The second activity, Collaboration, teaches participants that city planning is not a competition but a collaboration where ideas are generated, vetted, and shared to achieve consensus and values. (5 minutes)
4. **Reflect**: The facilitator asks participants to build their favorite childhood memory in 10 to 15 minutes, choosing from objects provided and building it on a sheet of construction paper. Once the time is up, the facilitator asks each participant to give their name and explain their memory to the group (1 minute each). The recorder should write it down for everyone to see, and also photograph the model. After each participant presented, the facilitator should summarize it to the larger audience, and acknowledge the accomplishment with applause (10-15 minutes). At the end of this activity, the facilitator asks participants to

identify three words or themes, settings, places, relationships, and details that were consistent throughout, and shared to achieve consensus (5-8 minutes).

5. **Collaborate**: Now that the participants have bonded and have a sense of shared values, they can now collaborate. The facilitator places the participants in teams, and ensures that each team is diverse based on age, gender, profession, nationality, race, and interests (3-5 minutes). The facilitator then asks each team to solve a community problem by building the solution together. The team members work by choosing from the same and more objects they used in creating their individual childhood memory. They can start building from scratch or incorporate previous model sections. Through visual, verbal, and spatial negotiations, new ideas emerge from existing ones with the help of others, and solutions can begin to take shape through the models within minutes (15 Minutes). Once the time is up, the facilitator asks each team to introduce the team members and present their solutions using the model. After each team has presented, the facilitator quickly synthesizes the information to the larger audience, and acknowledges the team with applause (10-15 minutes). At the end of this activity, the facilitator asks participants to identify three words or themes, ideas, and solutions that were consistent throughout similar to the last step. Once it is over the facilitator asks the participants if they enjoyed working together and what they learned form each other (5 minutes).
6. **Synthesize**: To wrap up, the facilitator leads a discussion on what the groups learn about themselves, others, and the goals and objectives of the workshop. The facilitator can use the notes as a comparison between the two activities. This synthesis allows people to reflect on the process and consider what impacts the workshop may have on their lives, place, and the broader urban planning process. The facilitator and recorder write down the findings and share them co-sponsors and participants. (5-8 minutes)
7. **Next Steps**: Depending on the objectives and goals of the workshop the next steps will vary. The workshop can be used as a one-time learning experience, or to engage a community, help collect data, or kick off a long-term plan, policy or development. (5-8 minutes).

Place It Workshop at the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum

Photo Courtesy of James Rojas

4 Building Trust

Over recent years, changes to demographics in the US have prompted an increase for bilingual and bi-cultural engagement processes, specifically Spanish-English engagement. Building trust with the community is crucial for a number of reasons, including engagement and obtaining buy-in for a project. This is critical for achieving the desired outcome of any project. In no particular order, below are things to build trust with the community:

- **Connect**: Reach out and make an introduction. Your name, role, contact information and most importantly what you do and how you could be of assistance.
- **Communicate**: Explain clearly why you are asking for information and what you intend to do with it. Provide information in Spanish, as much as possible.
- **Go to Where the People Are**: Attend community events. Visit third places, commonly known as alternative spaces to the workplace "first place" and the home "second place".
- **In-Person**: Meet in-person to connect, if possible. This is preferred over phone calls or emails, which can be impersonal. Face-to-face interactions are best whenever and wherever possible.
- **Identify**: Put a face to a name. Incorporate a picture next to your name/bio in printed material.
- **Translate**: Provide materials and have them readily available in hard copies. Not everyone has access to a computer and printer.

Do

- Take the time…it is worth it!
- Consider unconventional ways to build trust.
- Communicate clearly and transparently
- Foster trust and build strong relationships
- Learn/be familiar w/ the local language
- Go to public community events
- "Show up" on weekends and after hours
- Hear them out - listen more, talk less
- Ask questions
- Respect
- Be genuinely curious
- Be intentional when seeking and gathering feedback
- Be humble and vulnerable – learn other perspectives
- Provide the what and why
- Provide access to information and follow up with results
- Partner with local community stakeholders

Don't

- Hold meetings during the normal business hours M-F
- Provide material in just the English language
- Strictly rely on the website and social media to get the word out

> **"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."**
>
> **Cesar Chavez**

> **"Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a change to change the world."**
>
> **Dolores Huerta**

> **"Educate a woman and you educate a family."**
>
> **Jovita Idár**

> **"Do work that matters. Vale la pena."**
>
> **Gloria E. Anzaldua**

> **"It is important for all of us to appreciate where we come from and how that history has really shaped us in ways that we might not understand."**
>
> **Sonia Sotomayor**

> **"If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him...The people who give you their food five you their heart."**
>
> **Cesar Chavez**

Case Study – West Chicago Forward/Adelante

MUSE led West Chicago, IL through a collective visioning process to define the future of the city, where more than half of the population identifies as Latino and primarily speaks Spanish at home. Bilingual and multicultural engagement was a cornerstone of this project.

MUSE met West Chicagoans where they already were – Sunday church service, volunteering in a school, the food pantry, a youth summer arts camp, and popular local businesses.

This award-winning comprehensive plan is designed to be accessible and approachable for all West Chicagoans, not just City officials. Through the use of graphics, putting the plans biggest ideas at the front of the plan, and including "spotlights" that celebrate community efforts and inspire ideas for implementation, this plan is for everyone.

The West Chicago Comprehensive Plan is available in English and in Spanish.

Gamified engagement activities

Photo Courtesy of MUSE

5 Community and Organizational Partners

Planning is a multidimensional and multi-faceted field that dips into other professions. Do not expect one planner to do it all. Be realistic when it comes to the expertise that your group has. Collaboration is necessary for working with diverse groups as it will require more services like translations, cultural specialists, and group specific engagement specialists.

- Planners must acknowledge before working with partners if there is a history of tension with the community and Planning and make it clear to the partners. Working with partners should be seen as growing a relationship instead of a business transaction.
- From the focus groups, it was clear that collaboration with other groups is crucial in the field. For example, some groups partnered with church groups and their local YMCA.

To find the right partners, it is going to take going through different avenues. Find groups on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Activists groups, clubs that meet at libraries, cultural groups and cultural centers, and even through plans. There are other large national organizations that have local partners or affiliates that can be of great assets to planning (ie. UnidosUS, Chicanos Por La Causa, Main Street America etc.). Look for completed plans and other engagement programs that are similar to what is envisioned and find the people that were responsible for that. Ask local universities if they have programming where they work with communities directly. If the partners are not able to meet your needs, they may know someone that can.

When working with potential community and organizational partners, make sure to make the expectations clear and their scope of work. Make it clear to the partners if there is a history of tension or mistrust with the planning department and the public. Make it clear what you want the result to look like and how you want it delivered.

Community partners can take part in the process at any time, but it needs to be communicated at what point they are coming in and their scope of work. Community Partners can be co-creators and help craft documents. If they are co-creators, there needs to be a point of contact with Planning and make sure there is a safe space for open communication.

Community Partners can also be subcontracted for the engagement event and they can take charge of creating a cultural event that collects data for the project that is needed.

Bike community partners part of the Caltrans District 4 Bicycle Plan

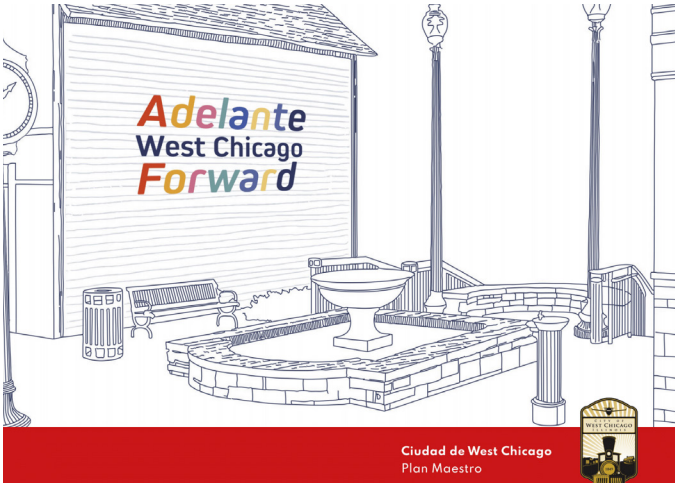
Photo Courtesy of MIG, Inc.

Potential Partners

Get familiar with the local groups in a community. Find out who the key stakeholders are and be proactive in getting to know them. Examples of groups listed below:

- UnidoUS
- Chicanos Por La Causa
- RAYO Planning
- Latinos in Heritage Conservation
- Borderlandia
- Businesses, especially family owned businesses
- Developers/Construction
- Restaurants
- Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
- Community, Youth, and Senior Centers
- Government Entities
- Historical Society's
- Churches, Religious Institutions, and Places of Workshop
- Special Recreation Associations
- Special Interest Groups, such as
  - > American Legions
  - > Athletic Associations
  - > Gardening groups
  - > Recreational Associations
  - > Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
  - > Youth and Family Services
- Main Street Organizations
- Neighborhood Associations/Organizations
- Libraries
- School Districts

Developing intergovernmental partnerships is encouraged to engage the Hispanic or Latino local community. Adopting clear ways to do this in communities with a large Hispanic or Latino community. One example of this is the City of West Chicago when their adopted part of their Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Plan, which was recently recognized by the American Planning Association – Illinois Chapter as the winner of the 2022 "Daniel Burnham Award". The Plan was created in both English and Spanish after an extensive public engagement process with the City's Spanish-speaking residents. The City of West Chicago's Community Development Department with assistance from the City's consultant, Muse Community + Design and the Antero Group were responsible for the plan.



Spanish Cover of Adelante West Chicago
Photo Courtesy of City of West Chicago

6 Inclusive Processes

This Chapter refers to access to public participation at boards, commissions, and city council sessions As mentioned in Chapter 1, according to the 2020 Census data, there are approximately 62.1 million Hispanic people nationwide, accounting for 18.9% of the total U.S. population. Hispanic people (of any race) are the second largest demographic group in the country, after non-Hispanic whites. More specifically, in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex region, according to the 2020 census data , this number is even higher, at 29%. More importantly, it is also the demographic group that grew at a faster pace, between 2010 and 2017, an estimated 38.9%, second to African American population.

While serving as the Assistant Director of Zoning and Design Review for the City of Fort Worth, TX, Daniel Leal was astounded to find that although the Hispanic population in Fort Worth alone was even higher than the average in D-FW Metroplex (34.3%) active participation at the planning and zoning commissions, and at city council was less than 5%. Daniel consistently found that many Latino applicants in Fort Worth either did not attend Board/Commission meetings altogether, or if they did, they rarely spoke, or were not prepared to defend their own cases. In the cases where they did speak, they often had a family member translate for them at the Board/ Commission meeting. With the best of intentions, this family member – typically a younger, second-generation member who was native to the English language - did their best to accurately translate word for word.

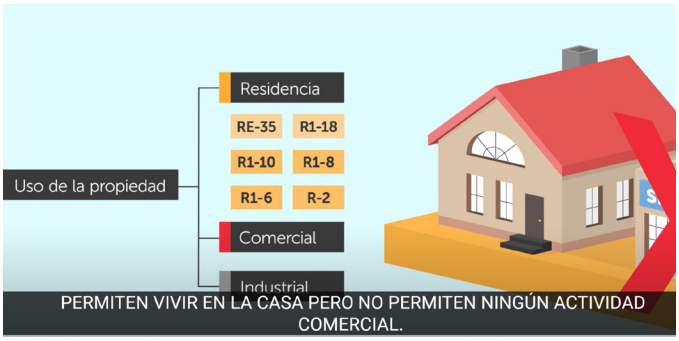
As Planning professionals, we know that technical jargon and complex concepts are rarely translated accurately. Planning in general, and zoning in particular, is filled with obscure language that more closely resembles legalese. Oftentimes false cognates, or "false friends" (words that are spelled very similarly in English and Spanish but have very different meanings) led to clear misrepresentation of the objectives sought by applicants in Fort Worth through the statutory public process. While translation services are available in Fort Worth for applicants at final decision-making bodies from court-certified professionals, they were either rarely utilized by applicants - probably due to the lack of awareness of this free, available resource -; or the translators themselves lacked proper understanding of specific technical terms and the economic consequences for the applicants. To address this barrier and create inclusive processes, the City of Fort Worth implemented the following:

- Reviewed and rewrote all application forms, simplifying language and minimizing jargon
- Translated the revised application forms accurately into Spanish. LA County Planning has a Spanish Planning Glossary with common planning terms translated to Spanish.
- Revised translation services policies to ensure the spirit of the purpose and intent of public hearings as established in State Law, in coordination with the Legal Services Department.
- Built internal capacity, which included adding bilingual skills (Spanish and/or else) in the "preferred qualification" section for all new hires. (For more details regarding hiring Latino professionals, go to Chapter 7).
- Updated neighborhood group notices and legal notices, following the same formula as the application changes.

- Allowed and encouraged bilingual staff members to supplement official translation services at boards and commissions by providing clarification to applicants of planning and zoning terms/concepts that were technical in nature.
- Created short length videos in YouTube on "how to apply" in the City's system, both in English and Spanish.
- Ensured proper assistance of customers who prefer to apply in Spanish by a bilingual staff member who took care of the case all throughout the process, up to and including city council sessions.

With all these changes to enhance access to participation at boards, commissions, and city council hearings, the number of Spanish-speaking residents who actively participated in planning processes significantly grew in Fort Worth.

Zoning 101 workshop hosted by RAYO Planning in Dallas
Photo Courtesy of RAYO Planning



Video explaining zoning in Spanish
Photo Courtesy of City of Phoenix

7 Hiring and Retaining Latino Professionals

According to the 2020 Census data, there are approximately 62.1 million Hispanics living in the United States, accounting for 18.9% of the total U.S. population. This makes Hispanics the second largest racial or ethnic group in the country, after non-Hispanic whites. However, the number of Professional Planners that self-identify as Spanish/Hispanic/Latin is about 8%. Even if this number is approximate and based on voluntary self-identification before APA, the gap is more than double the average national population.

In this section we will evaluate whether there are barriers for Latino individuals to accessing jobs in Planning; and what can organizations do about it if they really want to attract and retain a diverse workforce within their ranks.

Given that hiring is typically a very structured process, the structure of this chapter is slightly different from that of the rest of the Guide. We will present the perspective of a potential Latino candidate for hire on one hand, and the perspective of the hiring employer on the other.

For the Candidate

- **Make connections.** Professional networking is always good; when you are at the beginning of your career, for obvious reasons; but also when your are in the mid and late stages of your career, while assuming mentor/coaching roles that would enable you to give back and pass on the skills and competencies you were granted some day by someone else. As it pertains to Latino professionals, you may want to join the APA Latinos in Planning division and the many activities and resources we offer to our fellow planners, as well as local non-profit organizations working with/for the Hispanic community.
- **Identify career goals you are trying to achieve.** Whether related to the Hispanic community or not, make a list of what would you like to see in your next job. Not just the title and desired salary range, but break down specific aspects you would like to grow into in the near future; this could include equity considerations, geographic area, level of responsibility, technical vs. managerial type of role, skills you would like to acquire, etc. And do this in a balanced way, starting from acknowledging some strengths and weaknesses you already have, and then being realistic on the new boundaries of specialization you are willing to expand into.
- **Search for job postings that match those goals as much as possible.**
- **Assess the job posting in detail.** Before applying to a specific position, analyze what is what the posting agency is trying to get with this posting. Forget about yourself (for a moment, please), this point is about them, about screening and understanding what explicit and implicit needs they have, in the most objective possible way. Some of the needs are obvious, for example, "at least three years of experience with zoning change cases". But some others may not be that apparent, for example, the sentence "consistently and proactively communicate and support a team with very diverse backgrounds…" may well mean that either the previous person, or that particular work place, may have some improvements to make in the areas of cross-collaboration, communication, and/or truly embracing diversity. It may well not be the case, as many of those sentences are copy-pasted from one posting to another, but, overtime, you will hopefully develop an instinct for detecting things that just feel out of place, or are written in a way that suggest that these organizations had a problem in those areas in the past, and thus, the new person is expected to play a constructive role on those very matters, rather than exacerbating it.

- **Before the interview, research.** If you get an interview invite, do some research on who will be on your panel. It is a sign of interest and respect if you conduct some research on the individuals that will be in the interview. It is also a good source of clues that will help you see if your own background, or expected future, could relate to theirs in some way.
- **After the interview, evaluate.** Again, in the most objective and unbiased possible way, check how you did. But also, relating to Latino professionals, you should also identify and reflect on the new pieces of information you may have gotten thanks to your interactions during the interview. What does the interview tell you about the interviewers, their organization, and the environment you noticed? All of which leads us to the main question you have to ask yourself: Do you see yourself working in that team in the long run? This includes what level of diversity you have observed, and you may or may not be comfortable with. Do you think that environment would actually embrace you, and be generally supportive of the goals you outlined in point #2?
- **Background checks and selection panel deliberations.** This is probably one of the clearest points in which a Latino professionals may be discriminated against, or at least not properly valued. For professionals who obtained their credentials outside the US, the first thing you need to do is spend some money in getting your degrees revised by a US-based credential evaluation agency. As opposed to other countries, this is not conducted by a federal or nation-wide, official evaluation agency, but rather by private companies. Reach out to some few in you State or nearby. Then, you will be able to provide credential check documentation to your prospective employer upon request. However, there are also other forms of subtle or inadvertent discrimination you may still face compared to other candidates, such as discounting professional experience you may have accrued in other countries; your accent, assumed grammar, or manners being perceived as a potential problem ("not making them look good" or not meeting the so-called "excellent verbal and written skills" requirement); or an assumed inability from you to understand local issues and politics (many times covered as "not culturally fit").
- **Potential outcomes.** The hiring process is a binary one; you either are successful, or you are not. If you are, congratulations! If you are not, it may be for a number of reasons, but the problem is that it is almost impossible to know why. The general lack of feedback to candidates is one of the most frustrating parts for the candidate. I do believe that providing professional, objective, and constructive feedback from hiring managers to candidates who request it in good faith is indeed an act of commitment to the advancement of the planning profession – as stated in our Code of Conduct (section A.5.e) – and should be offered upon request.
- **Overcoming prejudice and discrimination.** In my own experience, I have personally faced many of the situations described in this chapter or have reasonable doubts that they may have played a role. But, as part of my commitment to AICP's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, I hope I could turn those bad experiences into useful advice to other Latino/ underrepresented Planners, in order to increase the opportunities for those members to enter and succeed in the profession. Sadly, that includes overcoming prejudice and discrimination. My only additional two pieces of advice would be a) if you think your ethnicity played a detrimental role in your hiring process, at least be thankful that you found out. You wouldn't be happy and able to perform your best in such that place anyways, right? And b) to never give up, like the song from Shakira, "try everything". This profession is as beautiful as it is vast, so you will eventually find a place in which you will be valued for who you are as a whole.

For the Employer

- **Be open to new avenues for candidate attraction.** Similarly to public engagement, prospective candidate attraction is an area that requires new means and methods to explore. When attracting Latino candidates, you can adventure yourself in the many new forms of professional interactions, such as Social Media interest groups, themed events, chapter networking, etc. and of course, APA's LAP Division resources.
- **Identify the goal or gap you are trying to achieve with this position.** Beyond the basics and technical skills required for the position, the question becomes what else do you want to accomplish with the new hire? Is it improving communications with a growing Hispanic population in your area? Is it bringing in additional creativity and different ways to approach issues? Or is it to simply be more reflective -as an organization- of the population you serve? Identify the "add-ons" that a Latino Professional could bring to your organization.
- **Be honest with yourself.** In your role as hiring manager, you should assess to what extent you and your organization are willing to update your hiring practices in order to truly embrace diversity. Why does your organization have a diversity gap, in the first place? Please be honest with yourself and identify potential unconscious biases either you and/or your organization may have had in the past.
- **Craft a revised version of the job description/ job posting.** One that, implicitly, addresses each of the errors, biases, or gaps identified before. These remedies are generally better included in the "preferred qualifications" section, rather than in the "minimum qualifications" section, in order to not be too prescriptive. As the hiring manager, you can also assign points to each of those preferred qualifications to see how they weigh in the overall assessment, so they don't get "lost in translation", nor do they outweigh other important factors. Testing it up against point #2 would be helpful for that. Are you staying true to the vision you first established for the position?
- **Gather a selection panel that is diverse in and on itself.** Invite to be panelists other peers and professionals that can understand the role, but also that display diversity among themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, levels of responsibility, etc. A diverse selection panel not only will be better suited to capture added value that Latino candidates might bring, but it is also the face of your organization before the candidates, which is most of what they are ever going to know of your organization.
- **Share your vision.** Before the interviews, explain your vision for the role to the selection panel. What else do you want to accomplish with the new hire.
- **Stay away from any assumptions.** As a member of the selection panel, do not make any assumptions about the candidate either. Just because someone looks like a member of the Latino community, for example, doesn't necessarily mean that they would self-identify as such, and/or that they would really be proactive on advancing inclusion on their day-to-day work. Same for non-Latinos, it doesn't mean they may not have a genuine interest in DEI, and demonstrable skills that would make them instrumental in the type of gap you are trying to fulfill. Try to filter out what are "politically correct" statements from what is genuine passion that is transferable from other forms of experience.
- **Keep your mind open all throughout.** Despite all the planning done so far, be prepared for the unexpected. Just because you think you have a great vision for the position (point #2), don't let that fact eclipse some other things the actual candidates may be bringing to the table. You may have missed some corners in

your initial assessment. And more importantly, there is a real person with real-life experiences right in front of you, and you should be attentive and appreciative of other skills you simply did not plan for. In a nutshell, what "else" is this candidate adding to your "elses" established in point #2?

- **After the interview.** Reconvene with the rest of the panel, share perspectives, ensure mind-openness in other members, too. Prioritize candidates based in the initial vision, but with the nuances and additions the panel discovered in the process. In my personal experience (and this is just a personal opinion) the selected candidate should not necessarily be the "flashiest" one, but rather the one that could actually hold on and deliver on the (updated) vision for the role in the long term and with minimal supervision. Most Latino professionals are not naturally prone to bragging or exaggerating professional accomplishments (due to cultural mindsets too long to explain here) and are not comfortable in highly competitive environments; so, the mainstream "flashy/braggy" approach could make you lose great, true deliverers. I recommend seeking authenticity instead.
- **When conducting background and qualification checks.** This part is typically done by Human Resources teams/ recruiters, but your role should include making sure that good candidates are not rejected for veiled forms of discrimination. That includes a misunderstanding of foreign degrees and accreditations, underlining perceived language barriers, or discounting foreign or more informal forms of experience, such as internships or volunteering with community organizations. The value of the latter should rather be weighed positively as a test of authenticity in the matters discussed in the previous points.
- **When bringing the successful candidate into the organization.** Be sensitive to personal circumstances that may alter your expected times for incorporation, stay open to possible requests for accommodation, etc. Keep an open dialogue with the candidate and their circumstances. Many Latino professionals assume care-taking roles in their families.
- **Once in the job, supervisors of Latino professionals should be aware of the different working styles among their workforce.** Most Latino professionals greatly appreciate collaborative and supportive work environments and, on the contrary, may perceive calls for individual responsibility in tasks as a useless search for individual blame from their supervisors, and proof of failure from their supervisors on creating a real teamwork environment. If so, they will likely unplug themselves and eventually leave. One of the main retention approaches for Latino professionals, though, in my experience, is openly and genuinely promote teamwork and collaboration; alongside with appreciation for the commonly-accomplished achievements. And please do not make an over-the-top, unnecessarily public appreciation speech; they would probably prefer a more spontaneous "thank you" in a more private setting that shows genuine appreciation.

8 Steps to Building Accountability

Accountability in engagement means that there are measurable steps towards a collaborative goal. It means fulfilling commitments at the pace of community trust and culturally-responsive follow up in your engagement. This is in both process and progress.

The specific measures are crafted both by the organization and the community members that are meant to be served. Consider the following reflective exercise from the City of Philadelphia's Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit to establish accountability measures that effectively engage Latino and Spanish-speaking communities:

- **Step 1: What** - Identify what your commitments are throughout your engagement.
  - > What promises are you making to the community before, during, and after your engagement?
  - > What is the community requesting of you before, during, and after your engagement?
  - > What needs to happen after your engagement?
- **Step 2: Who** - Identify who's involved in the commitment. Those people are your accountability partners.
  - > Who's responsible for fulfilling the commitment? In other words, who's doing the work?
  - > Who's responsible for holding that person/body accountable? In other words, who's making sure the work gets done?
- **Step 3: How** - Identify how accountability partners will collaborate. Accountability looks different for each partnership. Consider periodic check-ins, progress trackers,
  - > What do accountability partners need from one another to fulfill the commitment?
  - > What is the best platform for regular communication?
- **Step 4: Where** - Identify where challenges may occur in fulfilling the commitment.
  - > Reverse brainstorm. What needs to go wrong in order for the commitment to not be fulfilled? Try to do the opposite.
  - > What questions need to be answered before fulfilling the commitment?

> Community engagement is a two way street, and in order for a challenge to be accepted it must trust in the good faith efforts of the other party.

Graphic Courtesy of Verdunity

Photo Courtesy of Hunter McRae

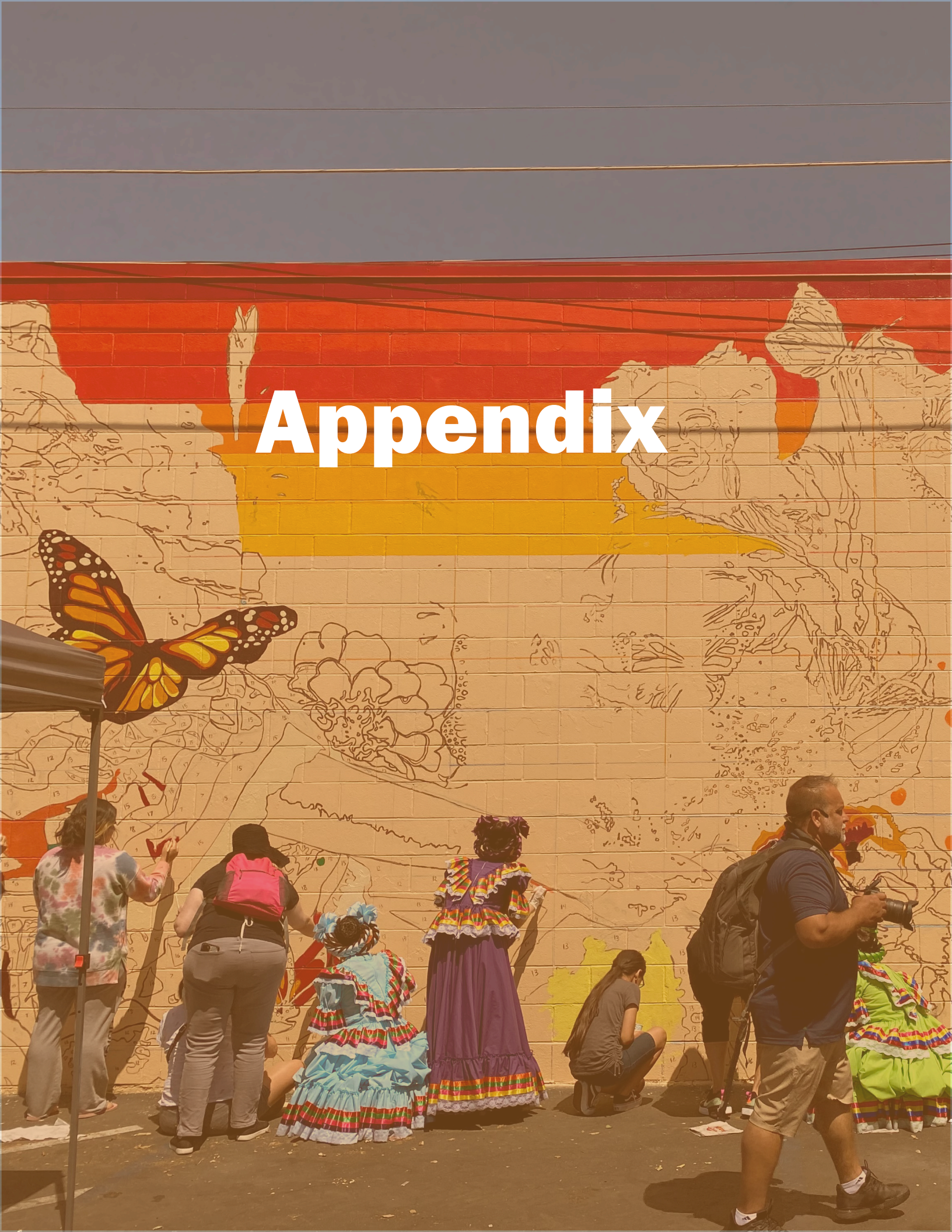
9 Conclusion

Fostering inclusive engagement with Latino communities is not just a check box; it is an essential commitment to building stronger, more vibrant communities. This guide seeks to empower planners, organizers, and community leaders with the knowledge and tools needed to bridge cultural gaps, celebrate diversity, and create spaces where every voice is not only heard but valued.

By recognizing the rich tapestry of Latino cultures, languages, and experiences, we open doors to collaboration and innovation. Inclusive engagement is not a one-size-fits-all approach but rather a dynamic and adaptive process that requires ongoing commitment. As we conclude this guide, let us carry forward the principles of cultural sensitivity, linguistic accessibility, and community partnership, weaving them into the fabric of our professional and personal endeavors.

May this guide serve as a catalyst for building bridges, breaking down barriers, and cultivating environments where Latino communities can actively participate in shaping their surroundings. In doing so, we not only enrich the urban landscape but also contribute to a more equitable, interconnected, and harmonious future for all. Together, let us create cities and communities that celebrate diversity, promote understanding, and amplify the voices of Latino residents in the tapestry of our shared urban narrative.

Photo Courtesy of Chicago Sun-Times



Appendix

CANVASSING & BLOCK WALKING TOOLKIT

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FOLLOW US

WHAT IS CANVASSING?

Canvassing is when you talk to people to get their support, share a message, or gather information.

It includes talking to people in person, making phone calls, sending mail, or using digital methods.

It helps identify supporters, persuade undecided folks, and encourage action (like voting).

Canvassing can be done by volunteers or paid staff.

WHAT IS DOOR KNOCKING?

Door knocking is a type of canvassing where you visit people at their homes.

Steps: Find areas with potential supporters, talk to people at their doors, introduce your cause, discuss issues, encourage support, and gather data.
It's a personal way to connect with the community and answer their questions.

Both canvassing and door knocking are important for organizations or campaigns to connect with people and get them involved.

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CANVASSING & KNOCKING 101

Always practice good citizenship and knock with integrity. Follow local laws and regulations.

Always be courteous and never argue with people. Do not enter homes.

Wear comfortable clothing that represents your organization or cause.

Be enthusiastic! People will respond well to a go-getter & positive attitude.

Somos Tejas

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The First Amendment protects political speech, so we do not need permits or permission to canvass neighborhoods for political causes, even when there is signage that claims to prohibit such activity.

NO TRESPASSING

When an individual house has a No Trespassing sign posted, you may record as "Inaccessible", but when an entire community has a No Trespassing sign, you should proceed with canvassing.

NO SOLICITING

No Soliciting signs do not apply to political canvassers, so you should continue with your canvassing even if there is No Soliciting signage. Remember to be courteous and never argumentative with the voters and the individuals you encounter while canvassing.

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DOS & DON'TS

DOs

Remember: SAFETY FIRST

Example: At a closed gate, shake it and wait a few seconds for the dog on the other side.
Example: don't go into locked apartment buildings if not invited inside.

- **Knock on all the doors on your list and only the doors on your list; finish your packet.**
- **Block walk with a partner who will split your walk packet with you.**
- **Stay near your partner.**
- **Exchange cell phone numbers with your partner and the block walk captain.**
- **Use the script as a guide and ask all the questions on it.**
- **If you are a VDR, register voters enroute.**
- **Be Courteous, Friendly and Respectful. Thank everyone for their time.**
- **Return all materials and walk packets to the staging location.**
- **If you are running later than the end of your shift, call to let your block walk captain know.**
- **Count your doors and complete the tally sheet when you return.**
- **Have fun and look like you are having fun!**

DON'Ts

- **Don't stay at one door too long (5 min max).**
- **Don't go to the door with your partner (people are much less likely to answer).**
- **Don't read the script mechanically to the voter (be conversational).**
- **Don't enter the house (have your conversation at the door).**
- **Don't leave literature in mail or paper boxes (it is illegal).**
- **Don't knock on doors that make you feel uneasy or fearful.**
- **Don't argue with voters; your goal is to inform them about the candidate.**
- **Don't start without your partner and the contact information for the block walk captain.**

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