

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Street-focused initiatives require leadership and action at all levels to succeed. However, no single leader needs to have all the answers, and all of us come to a project with our own biases of discipline and personal experience. By acknowledging these facts and providing space for relationship building and collaboration, you can create a more humble, responsive, and attentive process to unfold than a process led by one discipline or interest alone.

Doing a little homework about one another can go a long way. Before meetings with various stakeholders, take the time to fully understand and empathize with each other's

roles, key concerns, and limitations. Knowing these aspects about the stakeholders different from yourself can inform how you communicate, collaborate, and build mutually supportive partnerships with them.

The following pages provide two-page profiles for certain segments of stakeholders that can be important for street-focused projects: Main Street leaders; transportation professionals and civil servants; and community advocates. These profiles can help you consider the unique attributes of different types of stakeholders, the value they add, and the ways in which co-creating streets with them can support your implementation plans.

PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

Knowing your stakeholders brings forth the opportunity to then collaborate and build trusting partnerships with them. The following profiles outline some ways to prepare for conversations and engagements with stakeholders. But regardless of who initiates a conversation with whom, the “rules of engagement” are the same. These five principles can help to hold everyone accountable throughout collaborative processes:

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO PARTICIPATE. Make the process fun, engaging, and rewarding for everyone by sharing an open mindset, thinking creatively, and celebrating participation within activities.

RESPECT AND APPRECIATE ONE ANOTHER'S EXPERTISE. Everyone is an expert in some element of the life and function of a public space, whether through occupational, educational, or personal experience. All forms of expertise should be validated in engagement settings. Participation and community engagement should feel like an open, two-way conversation so that all participants can freely share input, raise questions, and make recommendations. Additionally, accommodations should be made in meetings to encourage participation from those members of the community who might not be comfortable speaking up in a public setting (e.g. an anonymous survey).

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP. Because no single person should be expected to know everything, don't be afraid to ask for the assistance you might need in order to fully participate. Likewise, be prepared to support others with your own skills or expertise when you come to public meetings. Helping each other by answering questions and providing assistance will build the trusting, supportive relationships that allow projects and collaborations to succeed.

HONOR DISAGREEMENT. There are pros and cons for nearly every idea, so prepare yourself, your teams, and your community for this inevitability. To honor the value of all community members, it is important that both sides of an argument are given equal opportunity to be shared. Ultimately, this respectful approach could allow for a consensual or middle-ground plan to be developed.

DON'T JUMP TO SOLUTIONS FIRST. Focus your thinking on your perception of the problems, and not your interpretation of the solution. Define the issues of the street first and then work towards building a solid case for why those issues should be solved.