

City of Bridgeport

Plan of Conservation and Development

Public Outreach Committee

Meeting No. 1 Summary

May 11, 2018

On May 11, 2018, the City of Bridgeport Plan of Conservation and Development project team held their first meeting with the Public Outreach Committee. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Committee to the Plan, present potential outreach methods, and strategize on how best to increase the reach of the Plan. Specifically, the project team was looking for input on potential events that could be leveraged for outreach, community groups that could be partnered with, and strategies for reaching constituencies that are traditionally disadvantaged.

Presentation

Following a round of introductions, the project team delivered a short presentation to introduce the Committee to the Plan and its themes as well as the proposed outreach strategy.

The project team presented a review of Plans of Conservation and Development and discussed impacts from the 2008 Plan. Dean Mack (City of Bridgeport) explained that the 2018 Plan of Conservation and Development will expand on the 2008 Plan but will comprehensively go further to incorporate health and community resiliency. He noted that the last Plan was heavily focused on redeveloping downtown Bridgeport and the new Plan will derive from priorities decided on as a community.

The project team emphasized the importance of community outreach throughout the process of developing the Plan of Conservation and Development as the decisions and policies derived from the Plan are directly dependent on input heard throughout the engagement process. The message “planning with the community, not for the community” will be forefront throughout development. The project team introduced and defined pop-up events, community meetings, school events, thematic meetings, interviews, and virtual public meetings as venues for fostering impactful dialogue surrounding the Plan. The team reviewed various outreach tools that would encourage thoughtful feedback. Social media, virtual tools and a website will be used in conjunction to the outreach strategies to develop an online presence for the Plan. Committee members discussed branding options and were also given a handout asking them to match outreach methods to various constituencies.

Discussion

An interactive discussion supplemented the presentation. Committee members were encouraged to share their thoughts on the Plan’s approach and provide input on effective outreach strategies customized for Bridgeport. A summary of the discussion follows:

History and Character of Bridgeport

- Bridgeport underwent a tumultuous time in the 1980s and seems to be reeling from that to this day. This history perpetuates the “every neighborhood for itself” mentality.
- There is a systematic lack of communication and understanding between the neighborhoods. Neighborhood silos create distinct regions in Bridgeport that residents seldom venture from

except for going to parks. Inter-neighborhood politics is also widely divisive and prevents cohesive collaboration.

- There is a lack of awareness that the NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone) Plans have been incorporated.
- The Connecticut-wide external perception is damaging to the confidence of Bridgeport and its residents. The Plan should be orbited by positive messaging.
- Residents don't feel that Bridgeport is a healthy city. People from surrounding towns will often dump their waste across Bridgeport.
- The Bridgeport Innovative Places Team can provide analysis on existing market conditions.
- The community has been reactive to concentrated investments in downtown Bridgeport over the last ten years and there is a lack of understanding as to how investments are prioritized.
- School construction at Bassick High School will soon force those students to attend the old Harding High School building. This is a potentially toxic situation because the two rival schools will be one block apart for at least one full school year.
- Young mothers between the ages of 16 to 23 have limited social and wellness programs available to them. They need a place to socialize where they can bring their children.

Outreach Goals

- Priorities derived from the Plan of Conservation and Development should account for unique neighborhood-level issues.
- Communicating the impact of the last Plan will be integral to incentivizing residents to participate. The overall message should be: "if you want Bridgeport to change, you need to participate."
- The Outreach Committee and project team should establish specific targets for measuring the success of reaching various constituencies.
- Outreach should be demographic focused as well as neighborhood focused. Each neighborhood has its own personality and should be respected.
- The term "stakeholder" does not have the best perception in Bridgeport and creates a divide between residents. A new term should be explored.
- Trumbull Gardens and Green Houses are low income housing communities that would not be receptive to participating in the Plan as they do not consider themselves "stakeholders." There needs to be a way to demonstrate that their voices will be heard and considered.
- An education process should follow after the Plan is complete to explain how priorities were derived and how they will be implemented.

Outreach Strategies

- A lot of Bridgeport residents, especially disadvantaged communities, rely on cell phones for a majority of their communication. Text announcements and programs such as Textizen could be beneficial to reaching these populations. Phone chains should also be explored.
- Leverage neighborhood association meetings to interact with engaged citizens across the neighborhoods.
- Online and paper surveys can be used to gain feedback from events or meetings that the project team is not able to attend.
- QR codes linking to online surveys can be used on outreach materials.
- The Facebook pages of the City, the Fire Department and the Police Department should be used to promote meetings and events. Each page has about 11,000 unique followers.

- All meetings should be livestreamed on the Plan’s Facebook page with links directing users there from the City’s page.
- Thematic meetings and focus group interviews should be especially transparent to diminish any lack of trust in the development of the Plan.
- Focus groups for some efforts usually meet after Church services. The project team can send a representative or some materials to spark conversation.

Community Groups and Potential Events Identified

- Community Emergency Response Team
- Youth Conservation Corps
- Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders
- Bridgeport Generation Now
- Bridgeport Latino Old-timers
- Bridgeport Youth Studio – video capabilities
- Bridgeport Innovative Places
- Health Department Saturday Health Walks – approximately 75 people in attendance

Branding

- Option 3 closely mirrors the rebranded design for the City. The Committee expressed a preference for a solid fill on the lettering of “PLAN.”
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Attendees

Public Outreach Committee

- Carolyn Gonzalez – Capital for Change
- Allison Logan – Bridgeport Prospers & United Way
- Alma Maya – City of Bridgeport
- Rowena White – City of Bridgeport Mayor’s Office

Project Team

- Lynn Haig – City of Bridgeport
- Dean Mack – City of Bridgeport
- Ken Livingston – FHI
- Zainab Kazmi – FHI