

Community Engagement Guidebook

2023 Peer Cities Network
Learning Module



Housing Solutions Lab
Building and sharing knowledge to
advance equitable local housing policy.

HESTER ST

Contents

5 Executive Summary

Hester Street: Who We Are
What We Did
Summary of Recommendations

9 Introduction to Community Engagement

Peer Cities: What We Heard
Guiding Principles

13 Community Engagement Strategies

Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership
Building an Engagement Strategy
Phases of Engagement
Consult
Involve
Collaborate
Other Levels of Engagement

27 Recommendations

Think Big and Start Small
Create Brave Spaces
Communicate Clearly and Effectively
Compensate Communities for their Time and Expertise
Engagement as Community-Building
Cultivate your Capacity to Engage Communities
Evaluate your Engagement to Foster Incremental Change
Applying these Recommendations

35 Appendices

Appendix A: Community Engagement Activities
Appendix B: Backcasting
Appendix C: Stakeholder Power Mapping
Appendix D: Stakeholder List

Left: A community member chooses what neighborhood amenities are most important to them.

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Executive Summary

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Housing Solutions Lab at the NYU Furman Center brings together housing leaders from five small to midsize cities for peer learning, networking, and planning activities to develop innovative, equitable local housing solutions. Network participants focus on advancing specific projects or initiatives intended to address longstanding housing challenges and disparities in their communities relating to local land use and zoning reform; eviction prevention; rental and security deposit assistance; increasing access to homeownership; efforts to increase access to low-poverty, opportunity-rich neighborhoods; or efforts to address vacant, abandoned and deteriorated housing.

Through the cohort-based program, the Lab supports city leaders in building essential knowledge, skills, and capacity to advance their project while working collaboratively with other small and midsize cities throughout the country. Participants have access to timely and practical data and policy resources, technical assistance, and information from housing experts to help them pursue equitable, evidence-based housing policies. They also have access to an ongoing national community of support to share ideas and receive feedback from other practitioners.

During the eight-month program, city teams attend regular sessions providing guidance on creating effective community engagement and communication strategies, designing interventions that draw lessons from past policies, using data to target populations most in need, and measuring progress towards goals, among other topics. Participants leverage Lab data and policy resources and opportunities to work with technical assistance providers that will help with project development and implementation.



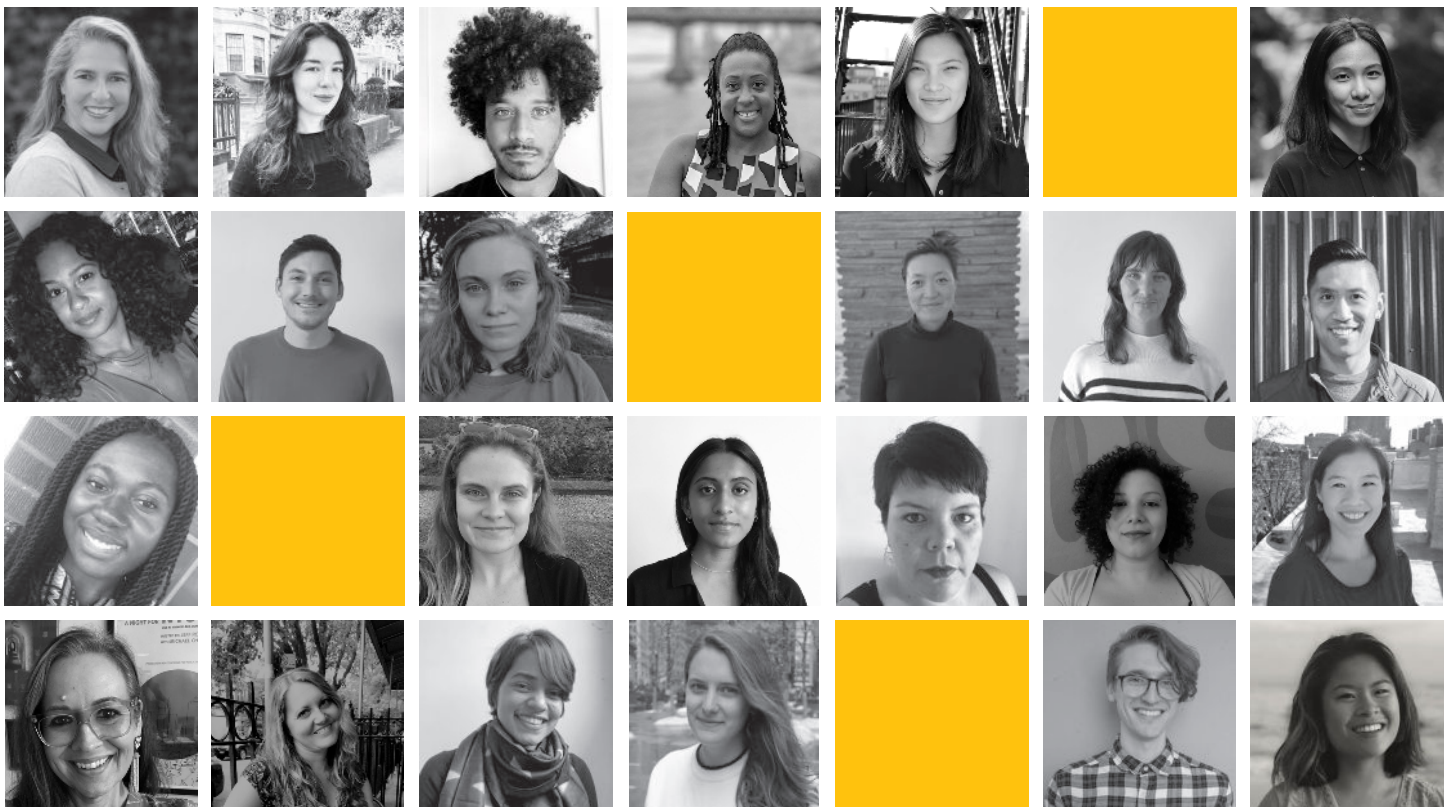
Hester Street: Who We Are

HESTER STREET (HST) is a New York City-based nonprofit with national reach that devotes urban planning, design, and development expertise to support community-led change throughout the five boroughs and beyond. We provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to community-based organizations (CBOs) and government agencies to advance participatory planning, transformative policy, and equitable community development.

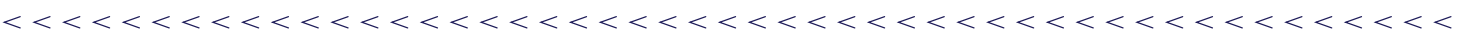
HST works closely with people of color (POC)-led and -serving CBOs to provide technical capacity to advance their goals and project work. We also work with government executives, legislators, and agencies to develop and deploy the skills and tools necessary to ensure transparency, accessibility, equity, and accountability to communities of color.

We envision neighborhoods, cities, towns, and regions where resident concerns and priorities are centered in the planning and policy decisions that most directly impact them; and where the health, well-being, and resilience of all community members are valued above profitability and expediency. HST believes in a thriving democracy built on the active participation of everyone, specifically people and communities that have been persistently excluded from decision-making. Designing avenues for inclusive civic engagement is central to our work. We collaborate with neighborhood leaders to foster vibrant civic life that builds community power, cohesion, self-determination, and government accountability.

HST is made up of designers, architects, planners, community developers, and organizers who pair technical expertise with a deep understanding that the most successful projects and plans are grounded in local needs and informed by community priorities. Our staff of 26 is woman-led, majority women (77%) and majority POC (62%).



Hester Street staff.





Community members identify their needs and priorities.

What We Did

Supporting the Housing Solution Lab (Lab), HST developed responsive technical assistance (TA) for three cities within the 2023 Peer Cities Network (Network). Working directly with Skokie, IL; Jackson, TN; and Cheyenne, WY; HST hosted research and discovery sessions with these cities to understand their community engagement needs and the conditions facing working residents, community organizations, and other government entities. Technical assistance and discussion addressed the intersection of community engagement and topics including, but not limited to, zoning and land use, multifamily housing development, green retrofits, naturally occurring affordable housing, comprehensive housing plans, and housing trust funds.

HST synthesized the findings from these discovery sessions and developed individualized community engagement TA plans for each city we worked directly with. Monthly workshops and follow-up activities covered topics such as community engagement planning and strategy development, a spectrum of community engagement stakeholder power mapping, a backcasting exercise, and tools and case studies for engagements.

TA designed for the individual needs of these three cities was complemented by programming provided to the full Network. HST delivered a community engagement training and facilitated discussion amongst the cohort at large as a module within the Lab’s curriculum.

Summary of Recommendations

In order to overcome the affordable housing challenges facing their residents, we recommend that cities:

- I. Think big and start small:** Scale engagement plans to be realistic, with a focus on building relationships with one or two stakeholder groups.
- II. Create brave spaces:** Experiment with multiple new strategies to allow for all stakeholders to share their lived experiences freely and with confidence.
- III. Communicate clearly and effectively:** Create and maintain new communication pathways by using plain language and drawing connections between housing concepts and stakeholders’ everyday experiences.
- IV. Compensate communities for their time and expertise:** When stakeholders engage with cities, they are giving their time and expertise. This should be considered a form of labor and compensated as such.
- V. Utilize engagement as community-building:** Community engagement empowers communities by building their capacity to support future work and counterbalance regressive or exclusionary voices.
- VI. Evaluate engagements to foster incremental change:** Tracking and documenting quantitative and qualitative data can build support for further action.



Introduction to Community Engagement

Thoughtful, inclusive outreach, and engagement should lead to outcomes more in line with community aspirations and values. But it's complicated; frequently, priorities and goals are at odds with one another, and community planners must navigate and balance these disparate goals.

Deep, authentic engagement can take months or years and can be blamed for slowing development. In some areas, market-rate development must account for required engagement processes set in place by local governments, and market-rate housing subject to inclusionary requirements can take even longer. This sometimes leads to efforts to shorten the development timeline by removing engagement processes from it. For example, in New York City some policymakers are pushing to "streamline" development approval by eliminating engagements and environmental review because they blame these processes for slowing down the building process and exacerbating the housing crisis.

In the case of housing, many municipalities grapple with constant pushback from communities to prevent new development and experience ongoing crises related to housing scarcity. Engagement is therefore an opportunity to deliver development by educating, building trust, demonstrating respect, and organizing and mobilizing support.



Community members review posters with maps and other contextual information about their neighborhood.

The quality of development and programs can also improve when engagement is more comprehensive and robust because decision-makers learn the intricacies of their community's goals and priorities. Community engagement can also help set expectations and create a baseline while providing insight into how people perceive change, while shared sets of values and principles developed through engagement can better guide change. Finally, new and unexpected ideas can enrich designs, plans, and policy.

Working with the Network, HST heard many perspectives on how localities used engagement and discussed different perspectives on how to better develop and implement engagement strategies.

Left: Community members engage with an activity wall on the sidewalk in their neighborhood.

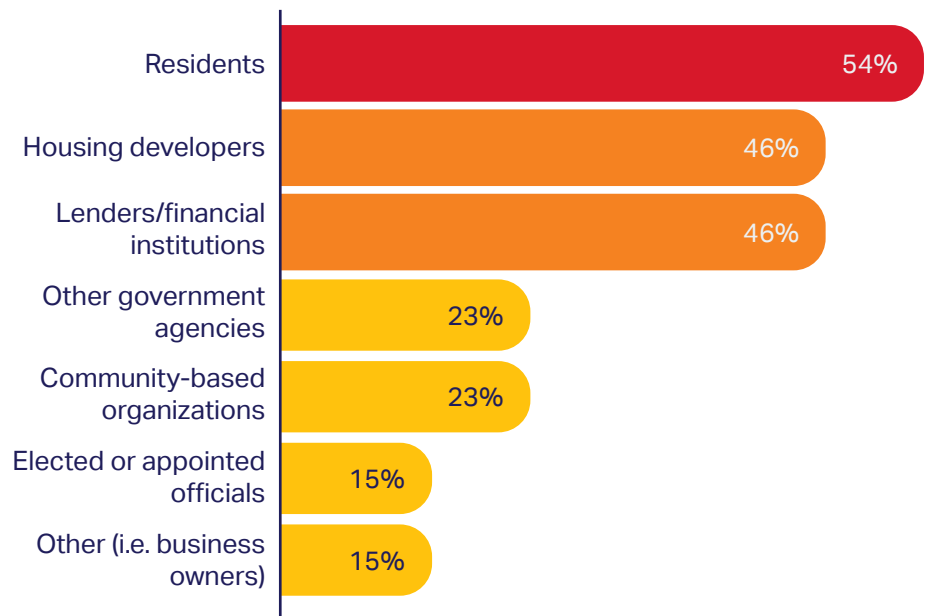


Peer Cities: What We Heard

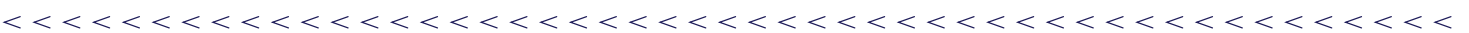
When we asked the Network cities about their existing engagement practices — in addition to seeking feedback and gathering input to inform plans, programs, or policies — trust-building emerged as a leading goal for engaging with communities. Interviews and site visits were the most common methods of engagement deployed by cities in the Network, followed by surveys and focus groups, workshops, task force or advisory committee meetings, summits, and information sessions. Overall, Peer Cities were interested in developing strategies to deepen and strengthen their engagement with residents, developers, and lenders. At the same time, many felt that their engagement with other government agencies, elected officials, and community-based organizations was already strong.



The greatest barriers cities in the Peer Cities Network face in engaging with stakeholders.



Percentages of Peer Cities respondents who, when surveyed, identified various stakeholder groups as key engagement targets.



Guiding Principles

HST develops engagement strategies to embed community ideas, needs, and priorities into urban planning work. To ensure robust and authentic engagement, we use guiding principles to build quality outreach and participation strategies.

Inclusive

Elevate the voices of communities that have been systematically excluded from power and possibility.

Respectful

Don't give without taking. Honor the time, wisdom, and energy of community members.



Innovative

Use engagement as an opportunity to think outside the box and discover new ways to communicate with communities.

Contextual

Familiarize yourself with community contexts and build on them. Be aware of and build on past initiatives and engagements.



Grounded

Understand how communities have been impacted by past policies and practices that have caused harm and trauma.

Accountable

Follow through with any commitments you make.



Transparent

Clearly communicate what is being decided, how those decisions will be made and who is making them to foster trust.



Generative

Engagement must be generative, not extractive. Don't take without giving; create clear feedback loops.



Our Lincoln Center
Add on to the community portrait
Nuestro Lincoln Center - añadir al retrato de la comunidad

Bobory Carter
jazz saxophonist, clarinetist, trumpet player, and composer

Elijah Carter
one of the first African American figures to provide primary treatment and infant care in NYC

Elizabeth Tyler
Vivian Nixon
She, Jane Fonda, and others social services

Johna P. Johnson
pianist, composer, and pioneer in the musical style of stride piano

Mable Nichols
JAZZ ENTHUSIAST AND COLLECTOR

Thelonious Monk
jazz pianist and composer

KYAN

The banner features a grid of 48 colorful face cutouts in various colors (green, pink, brown, tan, blue, purple, yellow, orange, red, black). Some cutouts have been replaced with hand-drawn portraits of jazz musicians and community figures. The portraits include names like Bobory Carter, Elizabeth Tyler, Vivian Nixon, Johna P. Johnson, Mable Nichols, Thelonious Monk, and KYAN. The banner is supported by wooden easels and is set against a background of trees and a building.

HELP
TAKE
OUR CAMP
MORE
WELCOMIN

participate
get a
FREE
MARK



Community members attend a community fair to learn about changes happening in their neighborhood.
Photo credit: David A. Quiroga of SocialJack Media.

Community Engagement Strategies

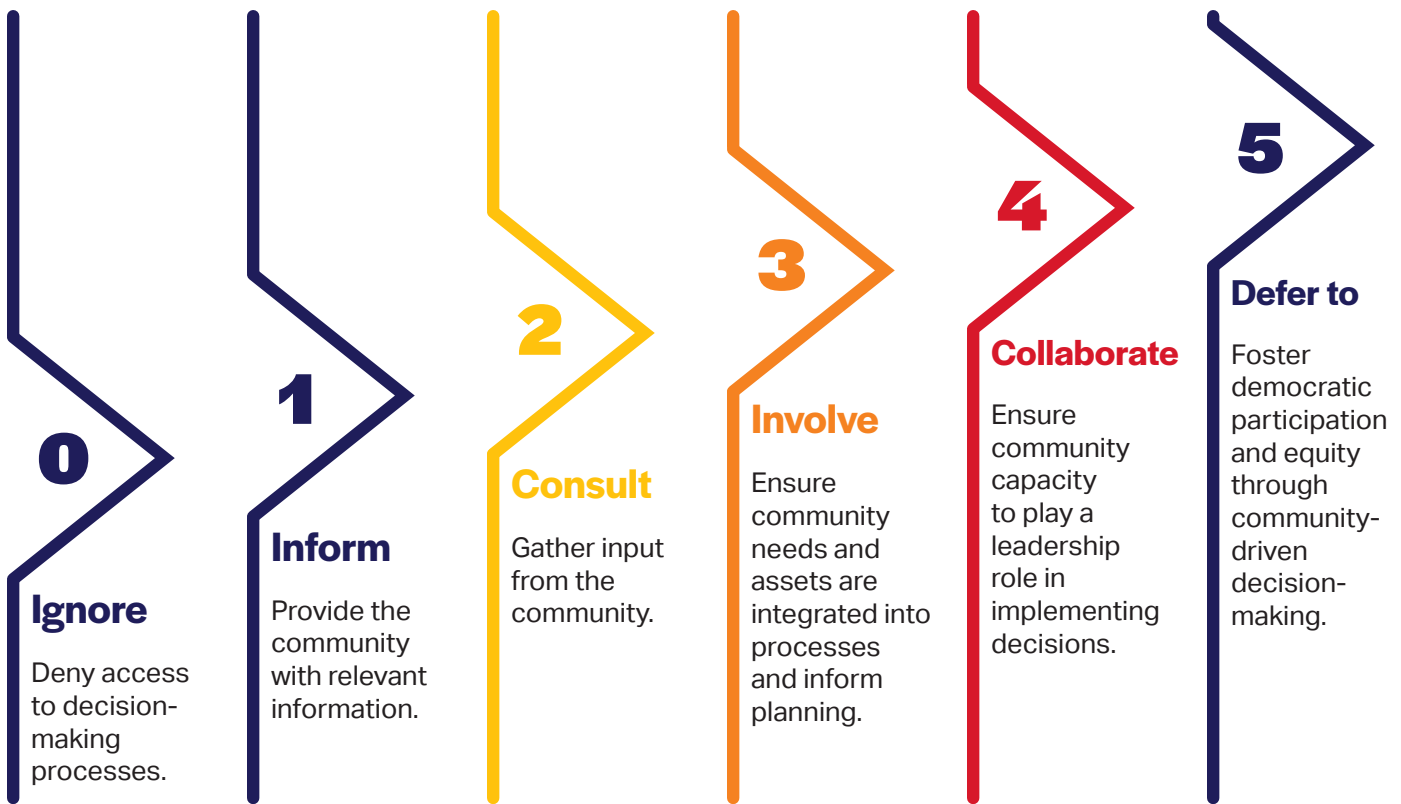
Community engagement can mean a lot of different things to different people. In addition, the goals, methods, and stakeholders that municipalities seek to engage can vary greatly.

Standard forms of engagement, like town halls, presentations, and community meetings, often see participation from an active and vocal subset of residents. Those with a surplus of time and resources are privileged by these engagement methods, resulting in an over-representation of stakeholders that skew older, wealthier, and whiter. Therefore, developing and implementing new engagement strategies is critical to reach communities that have traditionally been excluded from engagement and planning processes.

Conducting community engagement can be challenging, especially considering the barriers stakeholders and municipalities face. At the city level, a lack of resources and capacity can make it difficult to communicate complex topics clearly and meaningfully engage with stakeholders. Even when cities engage with stakeholders, rigid processes can make it difficult to implement what communities want. For stakeholders, there is often very little time and willingness to participate in engagement processes, and previous attempts to participate may have left communities feeling fatigued and distrustful. In this report, we review key strategies that can begin to overcome these barriers and create generative, meaningful engagement opportunities.

Left: Neighborhood residents contribute to a community mural activity.





Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. Developed by Rosa Gonzalez and Facilitating Power.

Spectrum of Community Engagement

Throughout this work, HST and participating cities referenced and discussed the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, a tool developed by Rosa Gonzalez of Facilitating Power.¹ The Spectrum charts a pathway to strengthen and transform our local democracies. Thriving, diverse, equitable communities are possible through deep participation, particularly by communities commonly excluded from democratic voice and power. The stronger local democracies are, the more capacity they can unleash to address the toughest challenges and the more capable they are of surviving and thriving through economic, ecological, and social crises.

The Spectrum was particularly useful for assessing current community engagement efforts across stakeholder groups and setting goals for how they can advance along the spectrum toward greater and more authentic community engagement, particularly as a means to build support for and make decisions about affordable housing. HST facilitated discussions and workshops leveraging the Spectrum to discuss the types of engagement teams have had experience with, what tactics could be more effective with various partners, and how we might develop an engagement strategy that weaves several touchpoints into a larger campaign.

In working with the Peer Cities Network, we focused on the Consult, Involve, and Collaborate levels of engagement. Many municipalities identified that they often Ignored or, at best, Informed communities of their work, so striving to achieve engagement at these three levels would represent a shift away from "business as usual" and towards modes of working that would bring in community voice, build relationships, shift power, and create processes that would allow for more collaborative decision-making.'

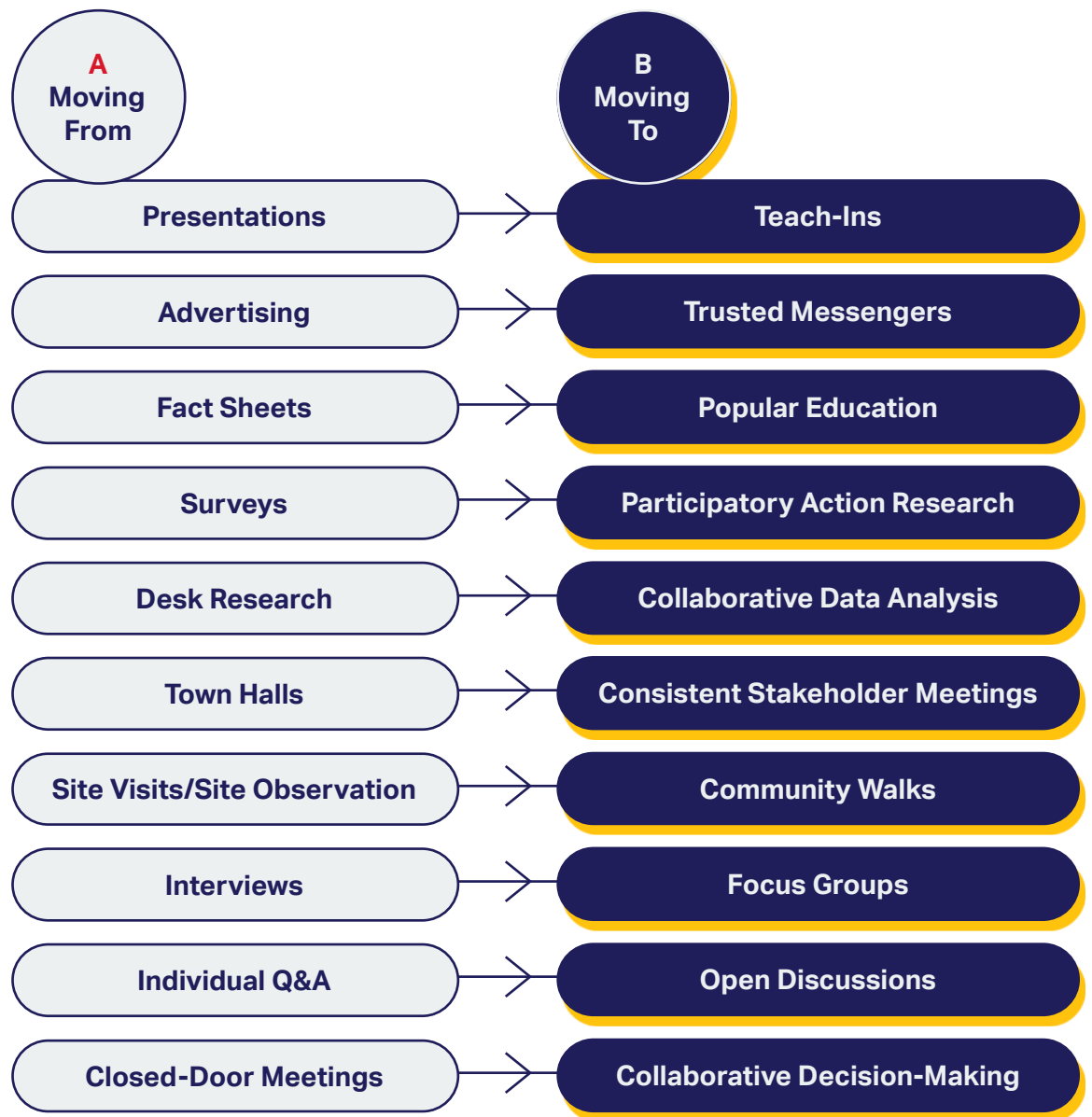
¹ <https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>

Building an Engagement Process

Community engagement is often talked about as discrete moments whereby city officials engage with stakeholders. However, these events unfold over time, and an effective process requires weaving multiple engagement methods with various stakeholder groups into a cohesive strategy. In this section, we'll provide an overview of what engagement strategies might look like at the Consult, Involve, and Collaborate levels of engagement.

Successfully implementing community engagement processes will push cities to shift towards implementing new tactics and strategies. As cities build their capacity and deepen their relationships with communities, they will begin to move away from traditional practices, which often privilege one-way flows of information and hierarchy, and towards more collaborative, generative, and accessible modes of engagement, which foster discussion and shared decision-making and flatten hierarchies.

See Appendix A for more information about the engagements listed under Column B.



Phases of Engagement

Community engagement processes must be responsive to several factors. Community needs and barriers to engagement, project conditions, legislative requirements, external timelines, and the availability of resources, expertise, and capacity to engage communities will all play an important role in shaping the engagement process. As such, no two processes will look the same.

To structure this discussion of engagement strategies, we'll talk of various phases of engagement that every process will likely go through.

Though these phases are presented linearly, in practice, engagement processes are non-linear and iterative. They require the project team to take feedback, reflect, revise its strategy, and backtrack.

Plan

Define project goals, opportunities, and parameters, identify stakeholders, and prepare to engage with communities.

Outreach

Establish communication channels between the project team and relevant stakeholder groups.

Engage

Collect quantitative and qualitative feedback from various stakeholders during the Engagement Phase through various methods.

Synthesize

Review, synthesize, and summarize data into key findings, themes, and action items.

Implement

Incorporate findings into the project, plan, or process. This might include developing pilots, which can be evaluated through further engagement processes.





Residents of a Council District in Brooklyn engaged in conversation about what they'd like to see in their community.

Consult

Consult is a level of engagement where decision-makers, typically public or private institutions, gather input from the community. This may be accomplished through activities such as focus groups, public comment sessions, forums, surveys, and other data collection methods. Insight and data gathered are then used to inform an approach that considers community input.

Consultative processes allow for the two-way exchange of information. Well-designed processes and touchpoints can inform community members and give decision-makers a platform to learn about community priorities and challenges. They also provide community members a chance to influence decisions, which can help generate trust in public processes and build support for projects and programs. While this level of engagement may not provide deep insights, it can be conducted relatively quickly and requires fewer resources in terms of staff, time, and funding.

While engaging a community through a consultative process may strengthen outcomes and build support for projects such as housing developments, it also presents limits and challenges. Often, many decisions driving projects are made before engagement processes even begin, and they appear perfunctory. In these instances, community members or stakeholders can feel they are being engaged to “check a box.” In fact, there is very little opportunity for building consensus or community organizing, which are hallmarks of deeper forms of engagement. If there are already low levels of trust between parties, a consultative process is generally not a productive approach.

Consultative processes tend to be simpler, produce quicker results, and consume fewer resources — especially time, cost, and staff capacity — and are thus more easily replicable. Because community stakeholders are typically not involved in the engagement design process, an engagement activity can be designed once and then undertaken with multiple stakeholders or groups. These consultative strategies and tactics may be implemented when design, resource, legal, or other constraints limit the depth or level of engagement. In cases where these restrictions exist, deeper levels of engagement may not be possible and would not necessarily produce different outcomes or influence decision-making, which could lead to fatigue or disillusionment with the process.



Residents of Pomonok Houses vote on what capital improvements they'd like to see in their community.



3

Community Walks

6

Key Interviews

40

Surveys

4

Resident Workshops

2

Tabling Events

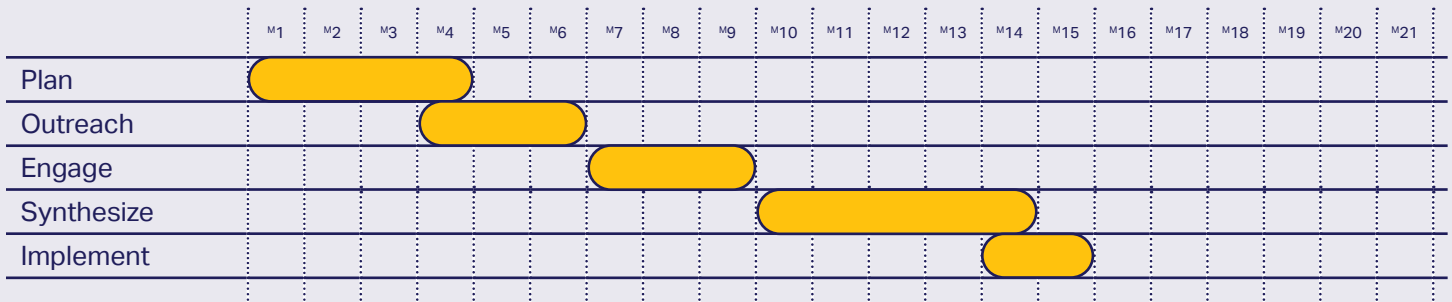
Case Study: Pomonok Houses

Pomonok Houses was chosen as a pilot project for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Connected Communities Initiative. The overall project seeks to address issues of isolation by working with public housing residents to consider how outdoor spaces in their developments should be enhanced, improved, and designed. The goal is to create more spaces for positive interaction and collaboration and improve residents' overall quality of life.

The engagement process resulted in a selection of resident-identified projects that could be implemented in the Pomonok Houses development to address community needs. A participatory process guided the development and implementation of new basketball courts, a splash pad, and a barbecue area were chosen for implementation. Other capital improvements are part of an action plan for the future.



Residents of Pomonok Houses engaged in conversation while painting a bench.



4

Partner Trainings

50

Focus Groups

1

Downloadable Toolkit

2

Debrief Workshops

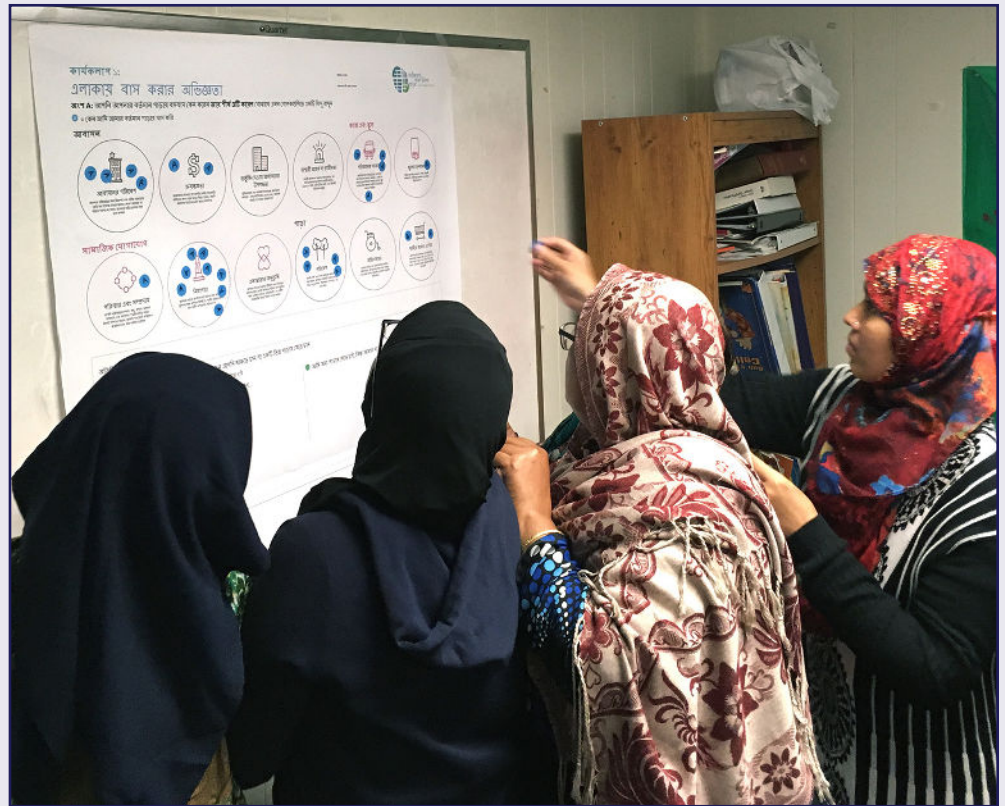
6

Expert Roundtables

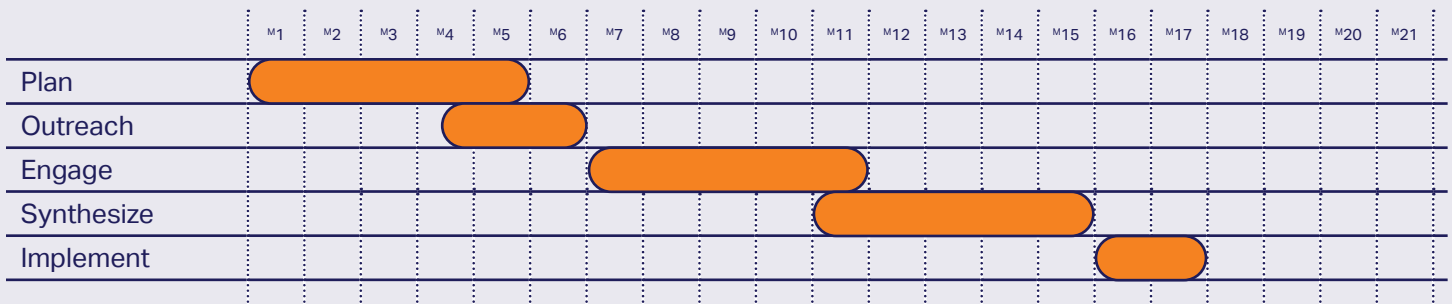
Case Study: Where We Live

Where We Live NYC is an inclusive, comprehensive, and collaborative process for planning how to fight discrimination, confront segregation, and advance fair housing for all. Where We Live seeks to accomplish this by enabling people to move to their neighborhood of choice or stay in their current neighborhood, even as it changes. The program also seeks equitable investing in neighborhoods to ensure that all communities have the resources they need to thrive.

The Where We Live NYC Plan identified six goals, 19 strategies, and 81 concrete actions to be taken by NYC agencies to advance fair housing. Two years after the conclusion of the process, NYC released a report sharing key updates and progress on the 81 actions identified in the Where We Live NYC Plan. Of the 81 actions, 17 (20%) have been completed and 56 (69%) are in progress.



Community members identify their housing priorities in a workshop facilitated by a local CBO.



29

Working Meetings

1

Mayoral Town Hall

2

Public Workshops

5

Shareback Sessions

5

Subcommittee Meetings

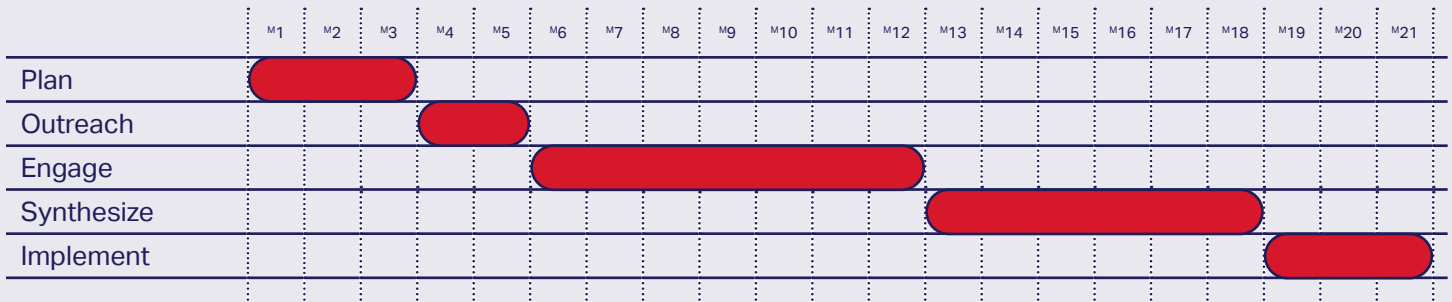
Case Study: NYCHA Working Group

Following community objection to a draft proposal from NYCHA that considered partial demolition to repair and renovate the Chelsea NYCHA developments, local officials, NYCHA residents of the Chelsea neighborhood in Manhattan, and members of the wider Chelsea community called for additional, and more transparent, community input on any plan to address much-needed capital repairs. Engagement had to reconcile significant deep-seated distrust NYCHA faces from residents. In addition, NYCHA had to confront pushback, concern, misinformation, and conflict over a program to fund repairs by converting Chelsea Houses to Section 8 housing in order to access additional funding.

The Chelsea Working Group developed and approved 62 recommendations related to capital finance strategies, resident rights and protections, and resident engagement. These recommendations provide guidance and accountability as NYCHA and resident associations work collaboratively to address resident needs.



A focus group facilitated with residents of Chelsea Houses.

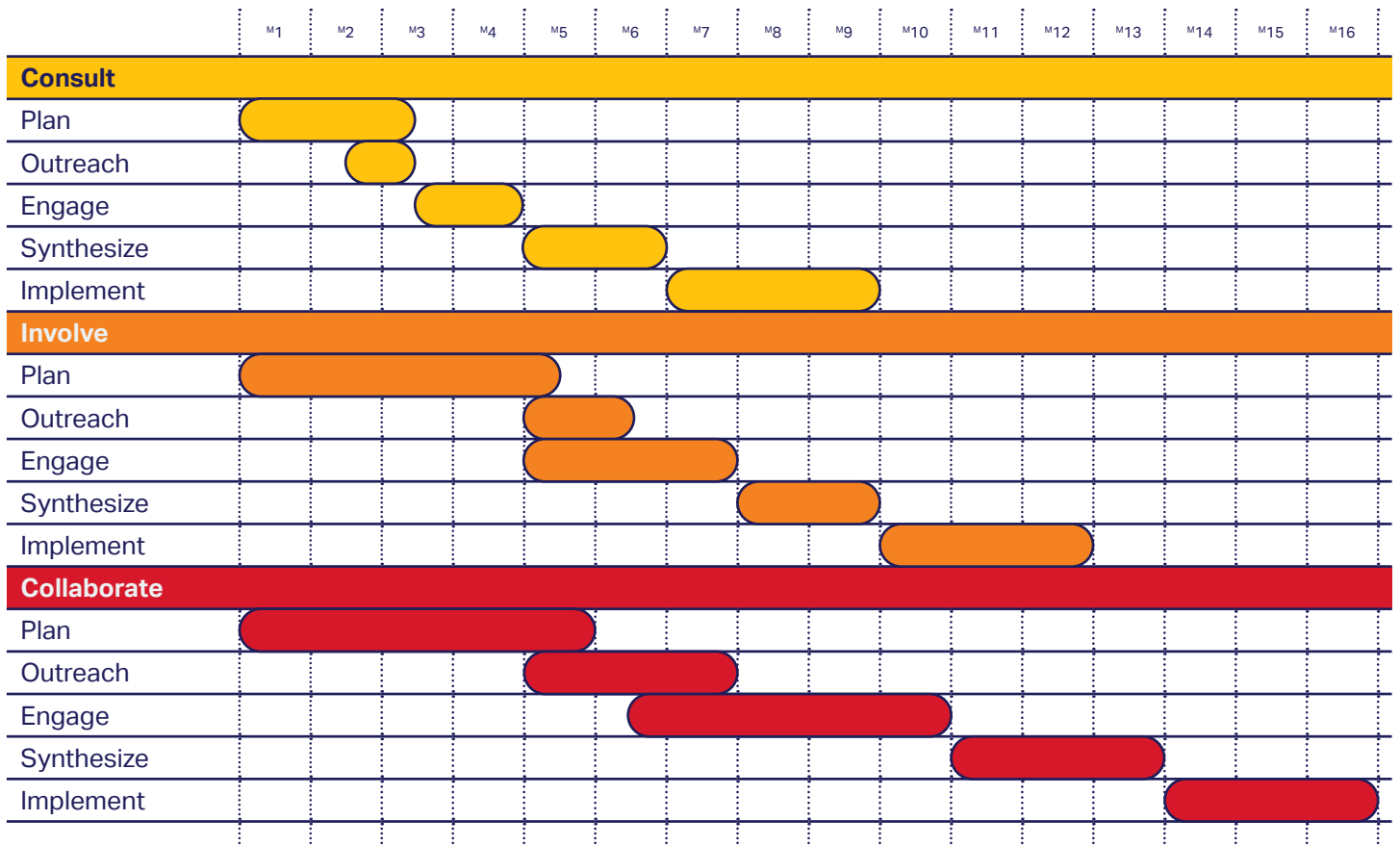


Engagement Timelines

Engagement strategies built with the intention of consulting stakeholders through focus groups, surveys, and community forums are largely driven by the needs and goals of the internal project team. At this level, engagement touchpoints with stakeholders are limited, and the onus falls on the project team to collect, record, and interpret community feedback. This allows for engagement to be conducted on a shorter timeline, but this also limits the feedback received from community members and constrains the modes of engagement with stakeholders.

Deeper levels of engagement call for involving stakeholders throughout the entire engagement process, from planning and outreach to synthesis and implementation, increasing the time it takes. One approach to achieving this level of engagement is by creating a cohort of key stakeholders to support planning and outreach before wider community engagement occurs. These same stakeholders might also lead engagement activities, leveraging their pre-existing relationships with target communities. Additionally, key stakeholders are involved in data synthesis and implementation, reviewing key findings from engagement activities, and making recommendations for implementation.

At the level of collaboration, stakeholders begin to play a leadership and oversight role in program design and implementation. Therefore, these engagements require frequent check-ins with key stakeholders at every phase of the process. At this stage, you might consider creating a working group to play an advisory role. This working group should receive training from subject matter experts and access to capacity-building resources to engage with the project team as peers. Strategies built at this level of engagement require buy-in from decision-makers, strong stakeholder relationships, and a deep commitment from project teams. This results in longer, sustained processes that unfold over months or years.





BREAKFAST
TABLE



Recommendations

The City of Cheyenne faces complex challenges related to planning and development and limited capacity and resources to confront them. Housing development has been especially challenging to address in the city.

Cheyenne’s population has been steadily increasing for decades. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated that growth by attracting new residents who work remotely. Retirees have also relocated to the area. Cheyenne also boasts a strong economy, with the F.E. Warren Air Force Base, the State of Wyoming, and the Cheyenne Regional Medical Center as employment anchors.

Cheyenne’s housing market has been unable to keep pace with population growth, and housing costs have become more competitive, making it harder for people — particularly low- and moderate-income residents — to find suitable housing. As a result, many long-term residents have been displaced, and a growing percentage of the Cheyenne workforce is commuting into the city from as far as an hour away. It is estimated that the city lacks 3,000-4,000 housing units necessary to adequately serve its population and is in urgent need of many types of housing at various price points, particularly housing to serve those earning below 70 percent of the city’s area median income.

Increased resistance to any new housing development in neighborhoods and historical zoning ordinances, which have prioritized single-family zoning, have also exacerbated the challenges of Cheyenne’s housing shortfall. Residents express fear that new development — particularly multi-family development when proposed in proximity to their property — will change neighborhood character and reduce their home values, to which much of their wealth is tied. Because multi-family and affordable housing often requires zoning changes or conditional use reviews, public and private efforts to build this type of housing often fail.

Conversing with the Cheyenne team made it clear that the city has a need and passion for housing and development. Like many communities nationwide, housing advocates face headwinds in getting projects off the ground. The team has identified possible avenues for progress — building community support at different scales, educating decision-makers, and building relationships with the public. But to successfully deliver the homes Cheyenne needs, a coalition of stakeholders must develop a comprehensive strategy of inclusive, multi-tiered community engagement that can serve all residents and create a more resilient Cheyenne.

Left: A facilitator engages residents of Chelsea Houses in a discussion about their community.



I. Think big and start small

Building an effective and inclusive community engagement strategy requires critical systems thinking, patience, and flexibility. Crucially, the most successful engagement work is centered around people, with special attention given to underrepresented communities, and requires building authentic, meaningful relationships throughout the networks we work in. These plans can be demanding to develop and require time and funding — resources that might be hard to come by — because the work is so far-reaching. But taking a long-range view when designing a community engagement plan’s frameworks, expectations, and goals will strengthen implementation and set projects up for success.

While it is important to be ambitious with community engagement goals and priorities, it’s crucial that work is scaled appropriately to start things off. We recommend identifying one program, plan, or policy to build a pilot engagement strategy around. This pilot should be implemented early enough in developing the program, plan, or policy so that community feedback can be meaningfully incorporated into the final outcomes or deliverables. For this pilot, identify one or two stakeholder groups that you are interested in deepening your relationship with and engage with them using one or two new strategies. By focusing on the relationship-building aspect of community engagement, you can begin to foster connections with communities that will support future work and build your capacity to tap into the knowledge and lived experience of more, and more diverse, stakeholders.

Some community members may distrust government officials due to past experiences or trauma. When there is a lack of trust, it can take a long time to build productive, collaborative relationships. You can start building relationships by working with trusted messengers like community or religious leaders, small business owners, teachers, or family members.

II. Create brave spaces

It’s critical to implement new engagement strategies and tactics that allow for the full participation of all stakeholders to share their expertise and lived experience freely and with confidence. Contrary to some beliefs, this does not call for eliminating disagreement (or dissensus), which can be generative and lead to shared growth and learning. Rather, this requires stakeholders to be engaged in ways that allow them to be fully present. This may take the form of community walks, small focus groups, or online engagements that allow for anonymity. It may also require asking questions in new ways, or utilizing trusted messengers who can comfortably meet with participants. Creating spaces where all feel that they can participate fully also requires meeting the access needs of participants, such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, open or closed captioning services, and language interpretation that fosters connection across languages.

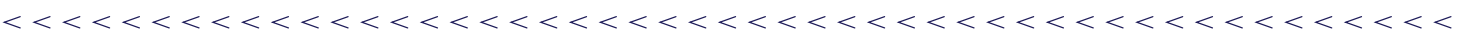
III. Communicate clearly and effectively

For all future engagement activities, communication is key. Creating and maintaining new communication pathways is time-consuming and difficult work, but it’s time well spent. There are three aspects to effective, clear communication: how you communicate, what you communicate, and who the messenger is.

How: It’s important to communicate in ways that community members can understand. Get support from community members to ensure that your communications are culturally appropriate and translated into all necessary languages. A key practice when developing communication materials is to use plain language. Some guidelines for using plain language include avoiding acronyms and jargon, writing for the average reader, keeping words and sentences short, using the active voice and simple present tense, and addressing the reader directly. Using plain language ensures that your communications are easy for

Bringing complex and controversial issues through the community engagement process requires framing and communication that is nuanced, sensitive, and nimble — especially if misinformation pervades the process. The FrameWorks Institute² is a nonprofit research organization that provides resources on topics such as framing housing issues.

² <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/issues/housing>



Popular education materials are an example of a communication tool that connects with the needs and concerns of community members. Messages that clearly connect to the concerns of communities are more resonant and foster greater participation.

everybody to understand and makes the task of translation easier. For some communities, exploring different communication mediums, like videos, posters, podcasts, or comic books may also be worthwhile to get their message across more effectively.

What: What you communicate is just as important as how you communicate it. When developing communications, it's critical to draw a connection to the communities' assets, needs, and concerns. Often, this will require deep engagement to understand what messages will be most effective.

Who: Empower community leaders to share communications with their neighbors. Some community members may distrust government officials and be unwilling to communicate with them. Building the capacity of community or religious leaders, small business owners, teachers, or family members to share your message is an effective way to engage with hard-to-reach populations.

IV. Compensate communities for their time and expertise

When we engage with community members, we are tapping into their lived experience and expertise. This should be considered an act of labor and compensated as such. When you compensate community members for their engagement and participation, you are showing them that you care about their time, and value the expertise and knowledge they possess. Often, compensating stakeholders for their engagement will lead to more active, joyous participation, and can encourage engagement with community members who don't have the resources to engage otherwise. Similarly, for engagement activities that take more time or occur on weekends or in the evenings, providing food, childcare, and access to transportation is also critical to ensure that all are able to participate.

Building and implementing systems that pay community members for their civic participation can be legally and procedurally challenging. A good place to start is to build onto existing procurement platforms or mechanisms. Remember, community stakeholders possess valuable insight and expertise and should be treated the same as any other consultant or subject matter expert.

V. Engagement as community-building

Developing a comprehensive plan for outreach and engagement can be a long, iterative, and unpredictable process. But it can also build the community support and ownership necessary to pull politically or socially challenging — but necessary — projects into reality. Development projects that cultivate freedom of housing choice, and policies that can assure our neighbors have access to safe and affordable homes, are particularly fraught and often emotionally charged. Building trust and nurturing dialogue, while uplifting all community voices, can empower civic participation and anchor community-driven change.

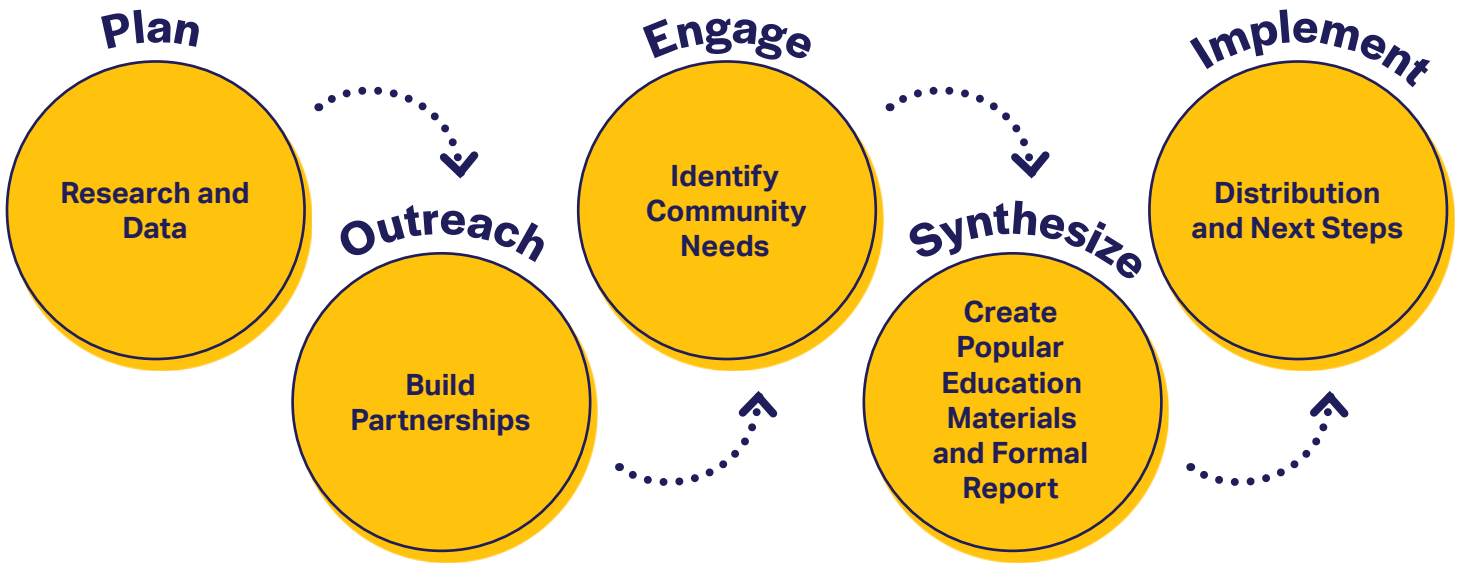
Community engagement processes are not extractive, one-way flows of information. While you are receiving critical information that should guide your planning and program design, equally as important is the capacity you are building within communities to advocate for themselves and shift power. Especially at the Involve and Collaborate levels of engagement, community members who engage with you gain critical knowledge and understanding of government processes and learn how they can continue to stay engaged and advocate for themselves. Build in time within your engagement processes to share information with community





Applying these Recommendations

We propose that Cheyenne develop and embark on a comprehensive, inclusive, and multi-tiered community engagement strategy under the auspices of a comprehensive community plan focusing on homes and housing. Through a series of workshops and popular education materials, this proposal aims at growing community trust and support. The proposal seeks to expand and improve existing stakeholder relationships, organize and amplify new support and communication pathways, give voice to underrepresented community members who are most impacted by housing shortages, and align messaging towards a future Cheyenne made more resilient through housing choice.



Plan	Activities
Research and Data 2 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map relevant stakeholders to identify community partners. 2. Conduct key informant interviews with local leaders to identify community assets (i.e., community organizations, schools, religious institutions, libraries, etc.).
	Deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder map • Transcripts from key informant interviews • Community asset map
Outreach	Activities
Build Partnerships 2-3 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct outreach to community leaders identified via community asset mapping. 2. Host formal and informal meetings with community leaders in multiple, one-on-one, or small groups.
	Deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplan and goals for outreach • Stronger relationships and contracts with community leaders • Topical education materials



Engage	Activities
<p>Identify Community Needs</p> <p><i>3-4 months</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In partnership with community leaders, develop schedules and curriculum to solicit broad feedback about community concerns and needs related to community planning and development priorities. 2. Draft focus group questions and a run of show to foster conversations about community concerns and needs. Design a data collection template to collect data from these conversations and evaluatory measures to implement during engagement. 3. Host a design charrette with community leaders to test the engagement materials. Gather initial feedback and update materials accordingly. 4. Share final engagement materials with community leaders in a train-the-trainer session to align messaging and prepare them to promulgate and support engagements with their communities. 5. Community partners carry out engagement activities among their respective communities. 6. Collect notes from focus groups and photos from community engagements. <p>Deliverables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement schedule and curriculum • Focus group questions and run of show • Data collection template • Train-the-trainer materials • Data gathered from community engagements
Synthesize	Activities
<p>Create Popular Education Materials and Formal Report</p> <p><i>2 months</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Host a debrief meeting with community partners and leaders and the community at large to review what was heard throughout the engagements. 2. Summarize and synthesize survey data and notes from focus group conversations into key insights and themes. 3. Draft popular education materials about key insights and themes, as well as documentation and formal reports that compile and synthesize data and suggest concrete next steps around development goals. 4. Share materials with community leaders for feedback. Update accordingly. <p>Deliverables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief meeting notes • Key insights and themes from engagement • Popular education materials • Community insights report
Implement	Activities
<p>Distribution and Next Steps</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Empower community leaders to share the popular education materials with their communities, particularly with stakeholders identified during the planning phase. 2. Develop plans for next steps for work planning participatory processes with future projects — specifically embedding lessons learned into current pipeline projects. 3. Review key insights and themes from engagement that you could not address through this process. Review evaluatory data to understand who has been heard and who has not. In what ways might you address insights and gaps? <p>Deliverables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of popular engagement materials • Program metrics to assess impact • Next steps to address additional key insights and themes





Library patrons respond to changes coming to their local branch.

Appendix A: Community Engagement Activities

Card Sorting

One popular method for understanding how participants react to presented information is through card sorting. This process involves writing key terms, concepts, or quotes onto cards and handing them to participants. They are then encouraged to reflect and group the cards based on categories they create. Through card sorting, participants' ideas, themes, and emotional responses can be captured and better understood. This process can also be used to group or synthesize qualitative data into key themes or insights.

Collaborative Data Analysis

Sharing and opening data analysis with community members can help build trust in the engagement process and develop a collective understanding among all parties on how to interpret data.

Collaborative Decision-making

Collaborative decision-making involves building consensus among decision-makers. To achieve this, it is important to introduce and clarify the issue clearly, explore ideas through balanced and equitable discussion, form a proposal, allow for opportunities to amend the proposal, and then test for consensus. If no decision-makers object to the proposal, it is accepted. However, if there are objections, amendments are made until a decision can be reached.

Community Agreements

Ground rules for meetings, workshops, or other discrete engagement activities. Community agreements may be developed by the facilitator or directly by the community members.



Community Walks

A walking tour with community members and stakeholders intended to highlight opportunities and challenges relevant to the engagement project. Community walks typically differ from traditional site visits in that they are community-led and organized.

Consistent Stakeholder Meetings

An essential component of community engagement. Consistent, regular meetings with stakeholders are designed to organize work, build trust and relationships, improve communication, and provide opportunities for community-led decision-making.



Design Charrettes

Hands-on workshops with stakeholders focused on design, not just consultation. Key activities may include developing working prototypes, role-playing different processes and scenarios, and collaboratively developing new processes or services.

Focus Groups

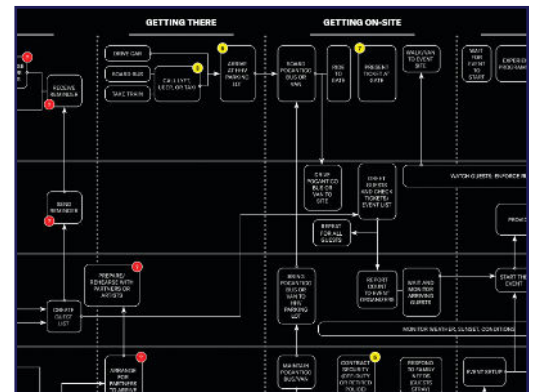
Conversations with small groups of stakeholders where key questions are asked and participants are encouraged to build upon the comments and ideas of others.

House Gatherings

Intimate conversations with five to ten neighbors in a comfortable, familiar setting such as a home, front lawn, or community park. Hosting these gatherings in comfortable settings not only creates a sense of community and comfort but can also be beneficial in eliciting specific memories or stories and lead to deeper conversations.

Journey Mapping

Participants use qualitative data to visualize how individuals and communities would interact with a proposed project or change to the area. Co-creating journey maps with stakeholders provides a systemic, visual way to understand how systems and services are experienced from the perspective of those who utilize them.



Key Informant Interviews

One-on-one conversations with key informants who have direct experience with the topic at hand, which could include community members, users, program administrators, workers, custodial staff, technicians, or others with direct or indirect knowledge.

Open Discussion

Open discussions provide opportunities for participants to voice their opinions on a wide variety of topics, speak for as long as they'd like, and openly ask questions, which can allow for trust-building and more honest, varied feedback. This form of discussion is less constrained than highly organized formats, where, for example, meeting attendees are only allowed two minutes to voice an opinion or ask a question. As a result, these discussions can be much more challenging to facilitate.



Service Mapping

Mapping internal processes and their impacts using qualitative data is accomplished by creating service maps. Service maps help visualize, record, and organize the internal and external processes required to successfully implement a service. Through service mapping, inefficiencies or bottlenecks that are hindering the service's success can be identified and eliminated. Service mapping can also reveal opportunities for additional touchpoints that can enhance the service implementation process.

Surveys

Questionnaires to gather feedback: either written, online, conducted as a street intercept, or by trusted messengers at locations where stakeholders congregate or gather.

Tabling

Attending community events and gathering spaces; using quick activities or questions to gather community feedback.

Train the Trainer

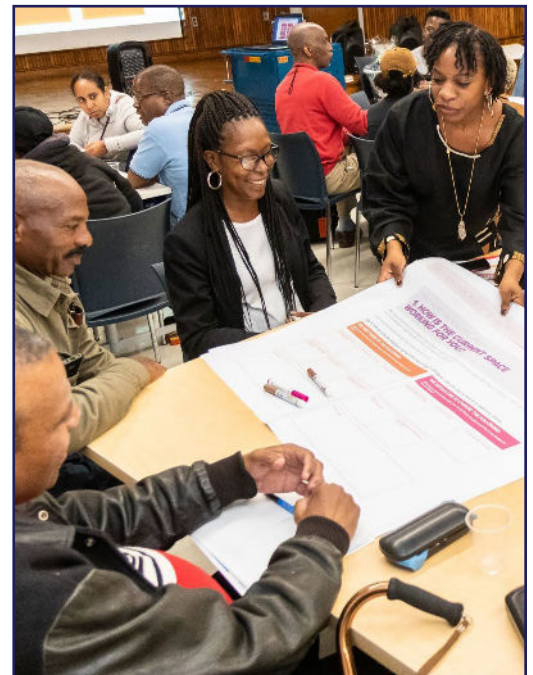
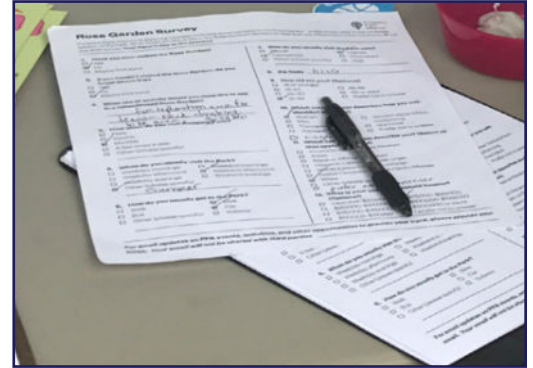
Subject matter and engagement experts train community leaders or other outreach members from outside the organization on how to carry out engagement activities. Train-the-trainer is often used when there aren't sufficient resources to fully carry out an engagement and also as a way to build capacity among community groups.

Trusted Messengers

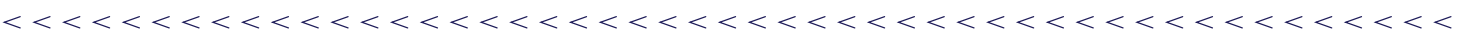
Individuals or organizations with significant credibility within the community being engaged. Trusted messengers can be used when there is low trust between community members and decision-makers, when there are barriers to communication (e.g., language), and when decision-makers do not have sufficient personnel capacity to carry out the engagement fully.

Working Groups and Advisory Committees

Smaller groups, typically a subset of a stakeholder group, organized around 1) achieving goals for a specific topic (e.g., working groups) or 2) governance and decision-making for the larger group (e.g., advisory committees).



Right: A young resident shares their vision for a climate-resilient waterfront space.





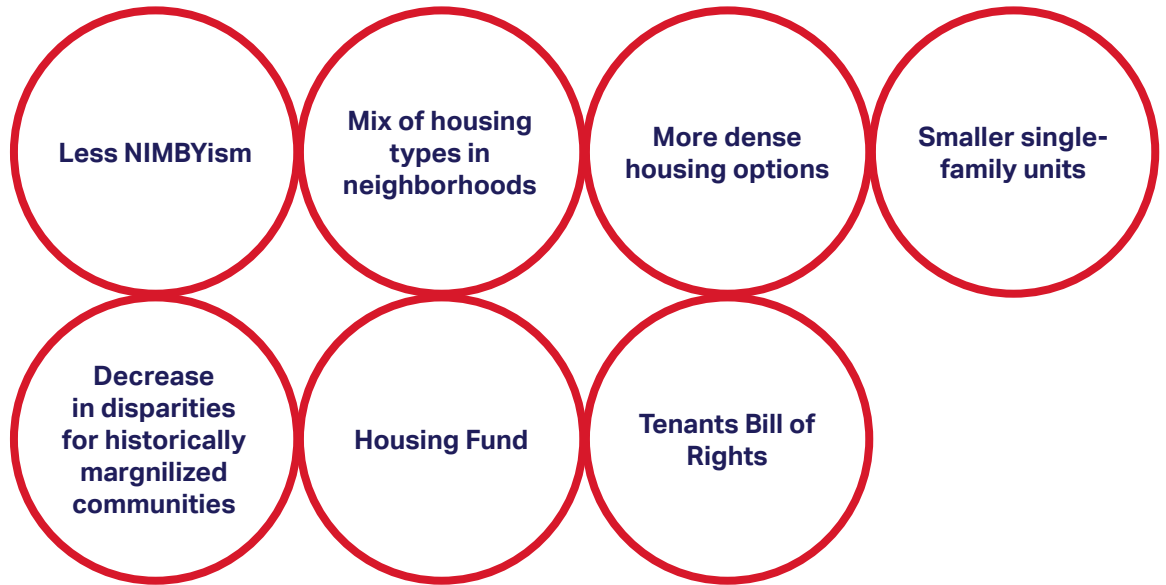
EAST RIVER

Appendix B: Cheyenne Backcasting

Hester Street worked with the Cheyenne team to map out a long-term vision for Jackson and determine the role engagement can play in the near-term.

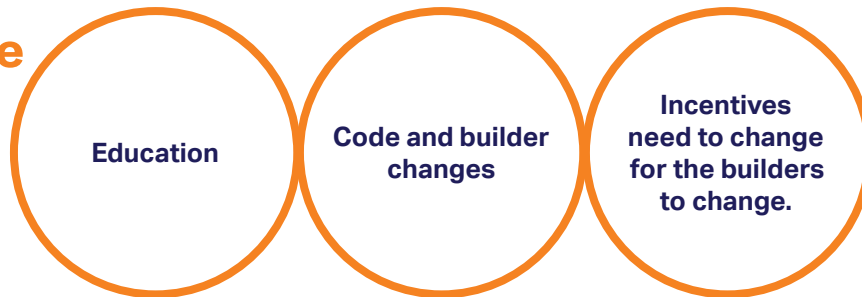
Goals

What does your city look like in 5-10 years?



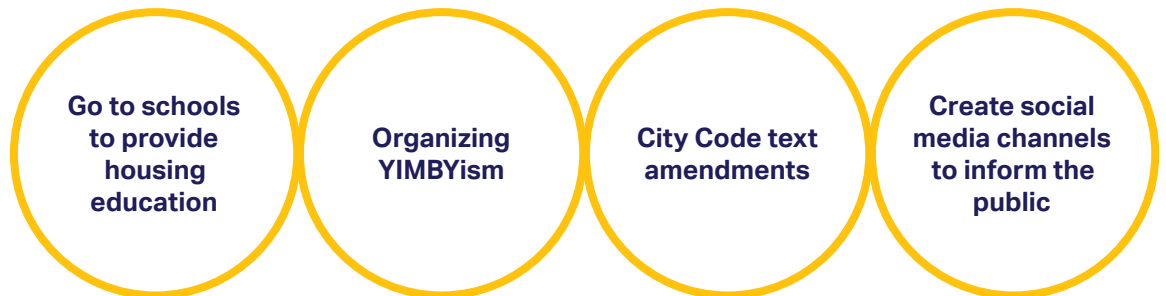
Getting There

What needs to happen to create that future?



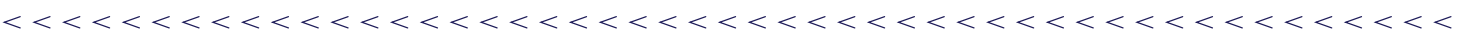
Next Steps

What do we work on now to get us there?



Current State

Where are we now?



Template

Backcasting can be used to strategically plan engagements, activities, or actions to take in the near term to achieve long-term visions and goals.

1. Start by describing the current state (at the bottom of the sheet).
2. Then, articulate a long-term vision or goal (at the top of the sheet).
3. Work backwards (from top to bottom) to determine engagements, activities, or actions you can take to achieve that goal.
4. Continue to work backwards until concrete next steps have been determined.

Goals

What does your city look like in 5-10 years?

Four large red circles arranged horizontally, intended for writing long-term goals.

Getting There

What needs to happen to create that future?

Four large orange circles arranged horizontally, intended for writing actions needed to achieve the goals.

Next Steps

What do we work on now to get us there?

Four large yellow circles arranged horizontally, intended for writing specific next steps.

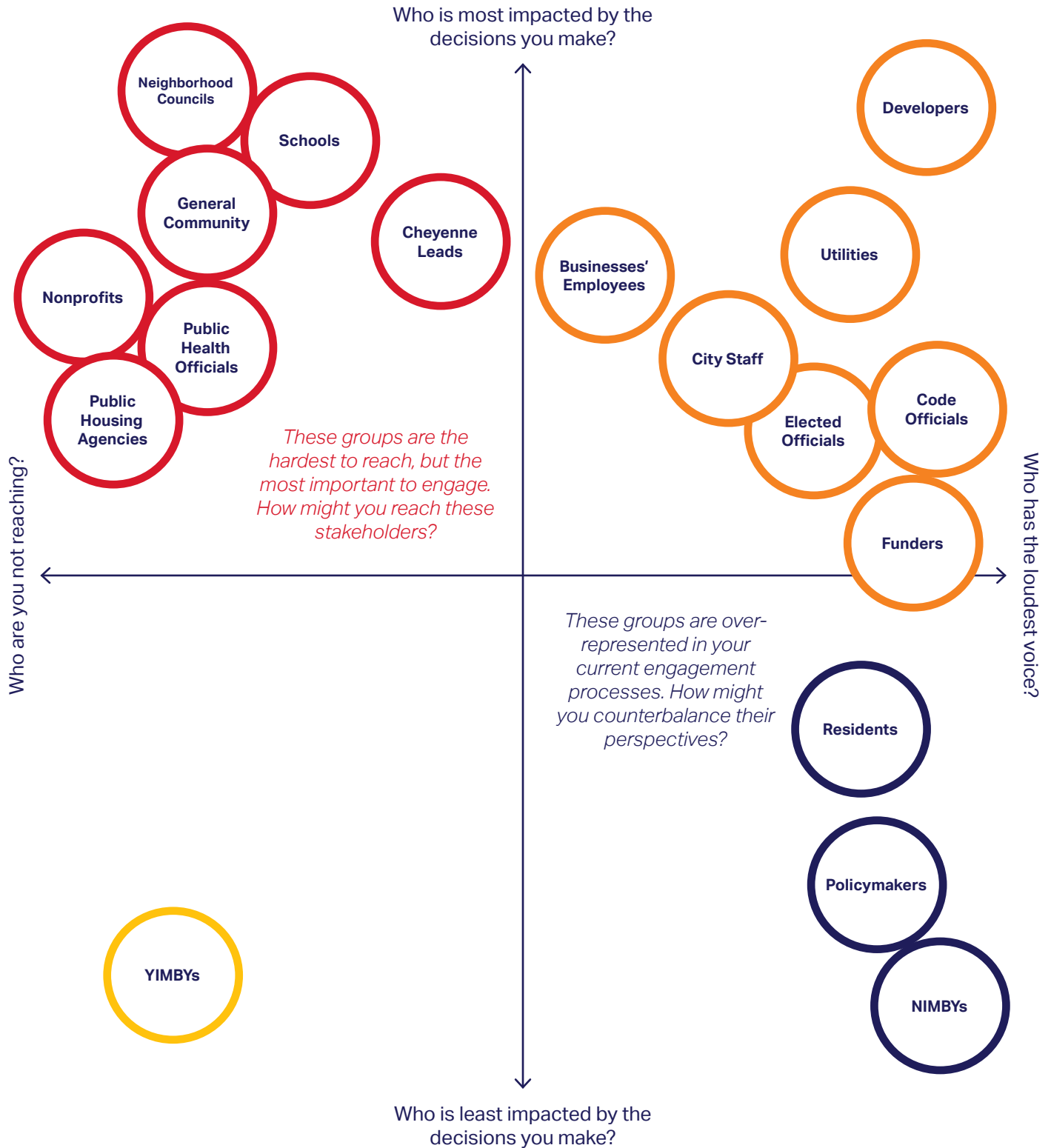
Current State

Where are we now?

Four large dark blue circles arranged horizontally, intended for describing the current state.

Appendix C: Cheyenne Stakeholder Power Mapping

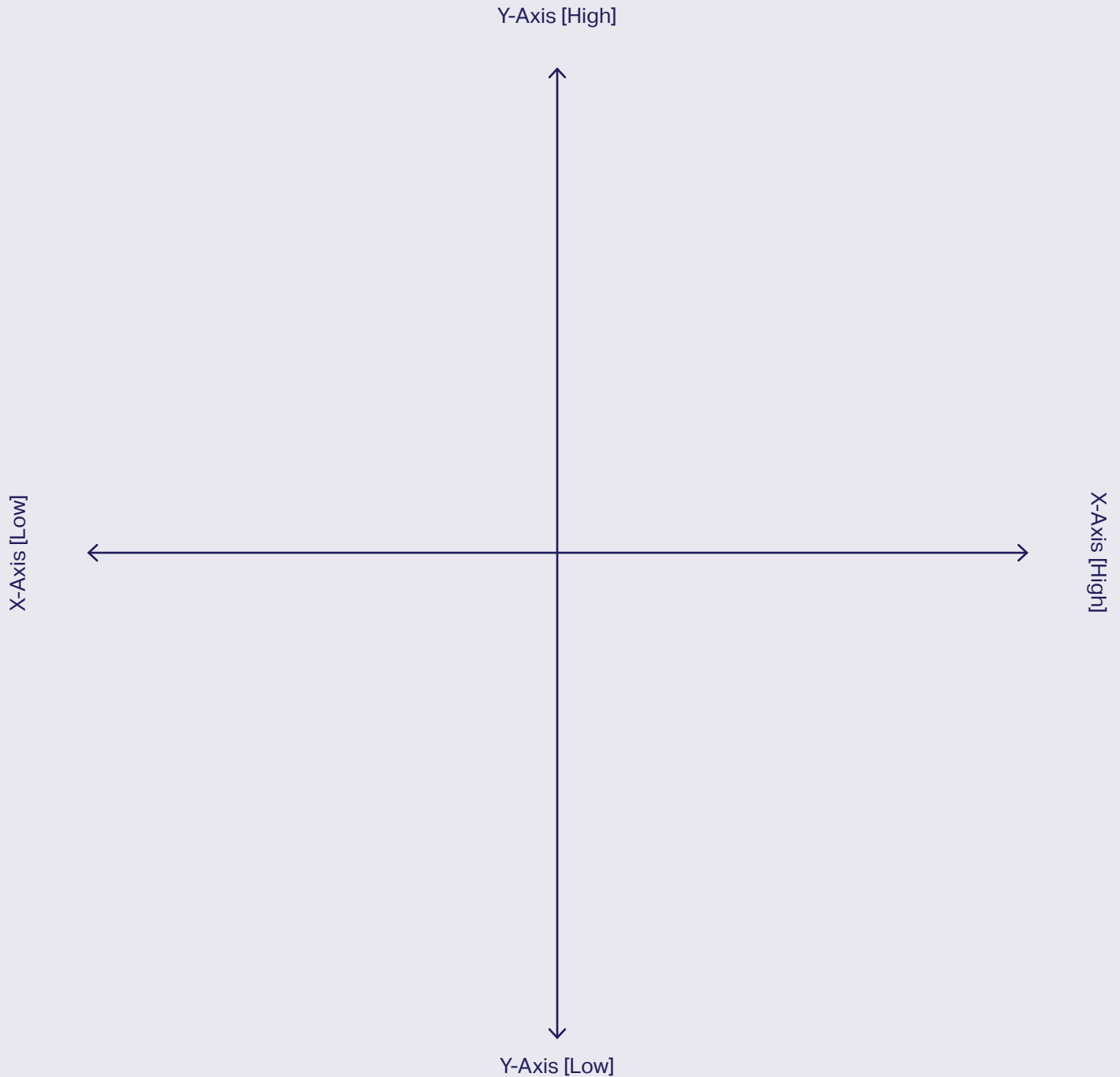
The Cheyenne team was asked to list stakeholders that were important to their engagement efforts and map them onto a 2x2 grid, visualizing who is most/least impacted by their decisions, and who they do/don't currently engage with.



Template

Stakeholder power mapping is an effective way to identify stakeholders, visualize gaps, and determine strategies to engage with communities in deeper, more productive ways.

1. Start by determining the spectrums for the X-axis and Y-axis.
2. Generate a list of stakeholders and arrange them along the X- and Y-axis according to the spectrums.
3. Give each quadrant of the map a name. Identify gaps and opportunities highlighted by the map.





Housing Solutions Lab
Building and sharing knowledge to
advance equitable local housing policy.

HESTER ST