

Community Based Planning – Best Practices
Proposition 84 Statewide Park Program (AB 31 De Leon)

1) List 5 to 10 tips for other agencies about your entire process. In other words, what were the “key ingredients for your recipe”?

1. Plan early and thoroughly.

Take the time to plan well before starting the outreach process. During the planning phase, do an extensive search of potential outreach partners (community organizations, neighborhood councils, community/parent representatives at public schools, etc.) and connect with them to discuss outreach opportunities and get any tips or suggestions they might have given their experience working in the community. Also do an extensive search of potential locations/existing events for outreach activities (farmer’s markets, food bank distribution centers, block parties, community facilities like churches and health centers, etc.) and create a list/calendar of when and where you will be conducting your outreach. Plan to make multiple and frequent contacts with community members and give yourself at least 3-6 months for the outreach process alone.

2. Diversify!

Plan a diverse portfolio of outreach methods to reach as many people as possible. Include flyering, door-to-door engagement with your core park community living within ½ mile of the project site, social media alerts, e-mail blasts, tabling at community facilities, live announcements at key community events such as farmer’s markets, commission meetings, local access cable channel commercials, etc. as well as other creative methods to spread the word about your events. Consider scheduling events on weekdays as well as weekends and at varying times so that community members have multiple opportunities to attend. And make sure your materials are accessible to community members. Use font that is easy to read and text and images should be large enough to clearly understand. Consider the languages community members speak and make your materials bilingual (or even trilingual) if necessary.

3. Amend your outreach methods if they do not work.

If you host a formal workshop to capture input and it is poorly attended, put more efforts into other forms of outreach like door to door surveying or



tabling outside the local grocery store. In addition, return to the community partners you connected with during the planning phase to help strategize alternative outreach measures and get further input on when and where you will make contact with the greatest number of community members.

4. A flyer on its own is not outreach.

Think of the flyer as a tool that you can use while engaging people in the community. Use it to help illustrate your talking points and leave it as a take-away to remind community members about upcoming events. When you create a flyer, create an action plan for that flyer as well. Plan to distribute the flyer widely at businesses and homes. In addition, take it to community events like a senior luncheon or parent meeting at the elementary school and, if necessary, read it out loud to participants. Utilize the flyer electronically by sending out to all of the community partners and contacts you have. Post it on your organization's Facebook page and ask your community partners to do so as well.

5. Go where the people are.

Not everyone is comfortable or willing to attend a formal workshop. Hosting non-traditional engagement events such as tabling outside the local market or presenting at an already existing meeting or event allows organizations to reach the public in a non-intimidating way at a location where they feel comfortable. This allows community members to express their input and take home vital information regarding the resources in their community.

6. Implement strategies that empower community members.

Encouraging community members to contribute to the planning and development of any greenspace is important because implementing their ideas and suggestions allows them to be a part of what is happening in their community. Communities that are involved in the planning and design of parks are stakeholders in that space and are more likely to be active park stewards who will ensure the park will be a successful and active space for many years. In addition, strategies like encouraging and supporting participants to take a facilitation or leadership role in meetings, events for the park, etc. is a useful tool to empower community members.



7. Follow up to show you listened/heard the community.

After the outreach process is complete be sure to go back to the community periodically to provide them with updates and keep them in the loop on the project. Allow for community members to continue to provide input and voice concerns. Although the more intensive outreach process may have come to a close, the community will still need a regular forum to express their ideas and get more information.

2) What were the most effective outreach/invitation methods used to notify residents of the opportunity to design their park? (what got the best results in terms of residents showing up?)

Non-traditional methods like sidewalk engagement allowed for more open and informal discussions where community members felt less constrained and more willing to share their input. It was also very effective to go to existing meetings/events like soccer games, senior luncheons, open house events at the local school, etc. During meetings/events like these, you are guaranteed an audience and since people feel more comfortable at a familiar meeting/event, they will be more likely to share their thoughts and opinions.

3) What were the most memorable moments?

During our door-to-door outreach, we encountered many residents that were not aware of the community planning meetings for the new park. Once we communicated the park's progress, we could see their excitement in the way that they started talking about how they would utilize this new space in their community once built. One child turned to his mother and said, "Now I'll have somewhere to ride my bike mom!" Another senior community member expressed her gratitude because there will now be a park to exercise in that is walking distance from her home.

4) What surprised you?

While holding our community workshops for feedback on the design of the park, young children who are usually quiet, were highly involved in the discussions. This showed us the level of empowerment and ownership they felt in creating a new space.



5) What would you do differently?

Since street outreach was most successful with this particular community, we would add in more sidewalk engagement activities. In addition, we would conduct more outreach at established community facility events, for example with a local church congregation.

For more information visit:

[Trust for Public Land](#)



Sidewalk Engagement:



Outreach at an all-day youth basketball tournament



Choosing park features at the Lawndale Youth Day Parade



Student selecting fitness equipment and playgrounds



Street canvassing in Lawndale, CA



Community in Action:



Community illustrating the perfect park



Sharing ideas during a community workshop



Presenting their ideal park



Listening to each other's ideas while drawing



Community bike ride greenspace discussion



Community Workshops:



Discussing initial concept plan



Child visualizing possibilities for the new space



Giving feedback on the updated concept plan at a community workshop



Seniors voting on desired park features



Designing the ideal park

