

# **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: ACHIEVING MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT**

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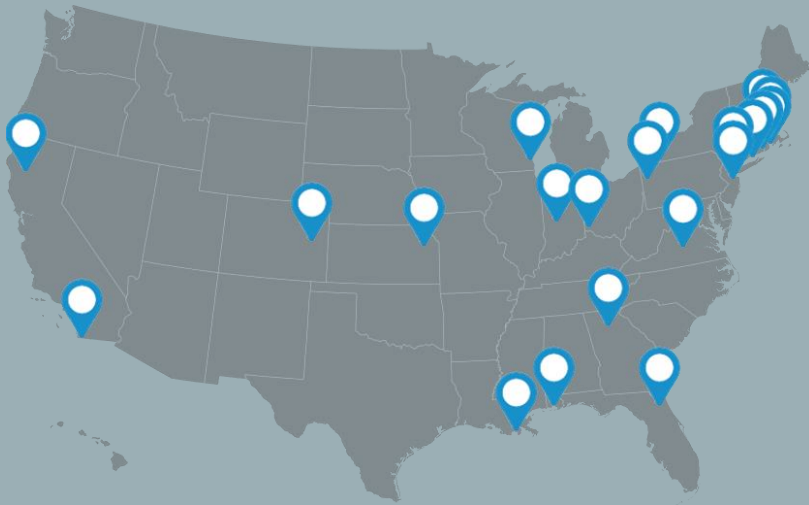
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**GROUNDWORK**  
**USA**

*Changing Places, Changing  
Lives, Changing Systems*



# WHAT WE DO

- Transforming neglected land and waterways into community assets
- Increase resilience to climate change and environmental crises
- Increase access to healthy food
- Cultivate the next generation of environmental leaders



# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Low to moderate income neighborhoods and communities of color, have experiences inequitable health outcomes

Equitable development can:

- Help to right history of injustice
- Respond to community needs
- Wiser, stronger, stable solutions



# **EQUITY-CENTERED ENGAGEMENT**

# SHARED LEADERSHIP & DECISION MAKING

- Center the community
- Listen more than you speak



# LEARN & ACKNOWLEDGE CONTEXT

- Listen deeply
- Honor & acknowledge painful legacies



## MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AT

- Literally & figuratively
- Minimize barriers to participation
- Provide multiple and varied points of entry





# BUILD INTENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Develop local relationships
- Build diverse partnerships
- Find common ground
- Work humbly



# RECOGNIZE & VALUE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

- Compensate people for their time
- Rethink the experts or who can BECOME the expert



# TOOLS YOU CAN USE TODAY!



## Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement

*Tips for Engaging Historically Underrepresented Populations in Visioning and Planning*

The wider the variety of world views and lived experiences that inform a community visioning or planning process, the more likely it is that the built project or resulting plan will address the needs and opportunities of even the most vulnerable or most marginalized person in the community.

Meaningful community engagement can take shape in a variety of ways and requires time and flexibility. Building trusting relationships with people—and finding a variety of ways to enable their connection to a project, a process, or a group of people—requires sustained effort. Here are some tips to help strengthen the interpersonal connections across your community:

**Identify who is underrepresented at your meeting or event.**

- Why do you define this particular population this way?
- How can this information guide your planning and outreach efforts?

**Put yourself in other people's shoes.**

- What factors (besides meeting content) would guarantee your attendance?
- How might you eliminate common barriers to showing up?\*

**Listen more than you speak.**

- Seek the perspective, expertise and lived experience of each person you meet.

**Gather input and buy-in on your project, its aims, and its marketing materials.**

- Seek input from the groups you are actively trying to engage.
- Invest time in building relationships with grassroots community leaders who may serve as information conduits. Acknowledge their time and efforts explicitly.

**Address language barriers.**

- Eliminate use of technical jargon and acronyms during meetings.
  - Define all new terminology on the white board, or in a glossary of terms, where everything is boiled down into easy-to-grasp language.
- Dedicate funds in your project budget for interpretation and translation services.
- Connect with community nonprofits and groups to gather information:
  - What language(s) does your constituency speak? Is literacy an issue?
  - Who might you recommend to do translation into X language? Can you introduce me to that person?




Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement Tipsheet

## Community Development Done Right: Putting Environmental Justice and Equity into Action Workshop

Equitable Development in Action Worksheet

**Instructions:** Review each principle and principle in practice. Then, share how you will apply these principles to a current or future land reuse project. See examples in the last column below.

| Principle                   | Principle In Practice   | How can this principle be put into practice in your land reuse project?  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Center the Community        | Everyone benefits from land development, re-use initiatives, and investments when local communities define those benefits for themselves and hold municipal leaders, developers, and residents mutually accountable for realizing those benefits. | Example: In my community, we spent time really thinking about who lives here, where they live, and how they could contribute to the overall vision for the community project by making space for residents to lead the work. |
| Develop Local Relationships | Seek out and develop relationships with residents and constituencies.   |  |
| Listen Deeply               | Listen deeply for community needs, hopes, visions, and dreams.  |  |



Equitable Development In Action Worksheet

# FINAL THOUGHTS

- Collaborative, community-led projects are driving healthy transformation
  - Follow the lead of the most vulnerable and disproportionately impacted
- We all have a role in shaping the future of inclusive, healthy, and environmentally-just communities.





Learn more:

<https://groundworkusa.org/ta-services/equitable-development-resource-hub/>

<https://urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/resources/>

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