

EQUITY

IN

DOWNTOWN OAKLAND

Keeping the Town in Downtown

Community Engagement
Summary Report
2017

Prepared by the Equity Team
Includes Community Voices Heard

www.EQTDTO.com



Community Leader Capacity Building Workshops

June 2017

In June 2017, the Equity Team launched the revised planning process with two Community Leader Trainings. These trainings were designed to invite community leaders into the downtown planning process, provide a space for community leaders to raise concerns or questions, and specify concrete ways community leaders might involve their respective constituents in the planning process. In addition, these initial meetings set out to cultivate a sense of anticipation and hope, that this renewed engagement process could realize a model of transparent, participatory democracy rarely felt and experienced by our most vulnerable community members.

Invitations for the Community Leaders workshop prioritized community sectors that have been historically locked out of downtown planning processes. The Equity Team over-sampled participation among community leaders who represented sectors that were noticeably absent from the previous planning process; this was one way in which the Equity Team sought to enact equity in practice and address historic barriers to participation. In total, roughly thirty community leaders attended the trainings, representing community activist groups; social justice, environmental, food policy, and youth-oriented non-profits; cultural arts advocates; affordable housing developers; economic development specialists; housing rights organizers; university students; small business retailers; urban planning think tank members; and members of city staff.

Community leaders voiced several questions and concerns, specifically, voicing a need for interim plans given that the Downtown Plan will not affect development before 2019 and given escalating rates of displacement. Other themes concerned growing displacement of non-profit direct service providers; the need to engage youth, homeless, low-income and differently-abled populations; and the need to identify economic and cultural assets as part of an intentional anti-displacement strategy. While participants expressed optimism and commitment to engage their respective communities, a final shared theme concerned the weight of previous efforts to engage communities that did little to affect real planning decisions.

Excerpts from a few community leaders reflect these sentiments:

“You talked about trust. People can collectively identify needs and solutions, but are there any ways to connect those people with social or financial capital so they can be a part of building those solutions?”

Charmin Baaqee, Art Is Luv

“Most of that plan does not have a lot of teeth in it, and there are no mechanisms to enforce it. . . For Chinatown, we put in six years into the plan and they don’t follow up on the plans that they actually set out to do. This makes our community wary of processes like this.”

Lailan Huen, Block By Block Organizing Network

“In 2007 and 2009 we did a lot of plans. There’s a measure that passed, the \$30 million dollar budget and the freeway... We have so many meetings, we do so much work, we did an air study, and I have my group around the tunnel and different areas from Broadway all the way to 2nd Avenue, from 6th Street to 13th Street... we have 16 groups in different blocks; [counting] how many broken houses, how many cars pass by? We did all that for like 2 months, we turned in everything, but guess what... they’re not going to do anything. Where does the \$30 million dollar budget go?”

Tina Diep, Asian Health Services

These comments, and others like them, reflect the very real stakes and lives affected by downtown planning processes. The trainings encouraged the team to consider innovative ways of going to communities and allow community members ongoing ownership over decision-making processes. The training concluded with an introduction to Streetwyze, a community driven data platform that collects local knowledge about how people experience cities. The power of the app is that it helps ensure that community voice is included in urban planning and decision making processes. Through participatory geospatial mapping, Streetwyze crowdsources data to identify the *good*, *bad* and *fix* stuff that can create feedback loops between communities and key decision-makers.

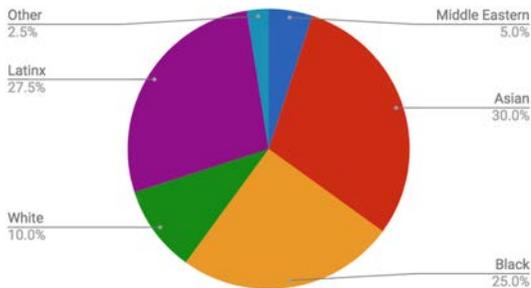
Following these initial trainings, the Equity Team sought to sustain engagement and provide ongoing opportunities for community leaders to plug into the downtown planning process, specifically, the Equity Working Group meetings held the following month.



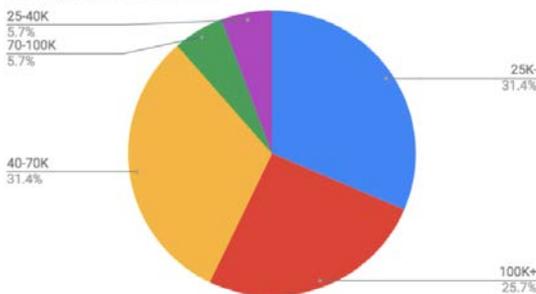
Key Demographics

City-wide & Greater Bay Area residents, Black, Latinx, Asian, Middle Eastern, White, Mixed income, Disabled, Queer, Youth

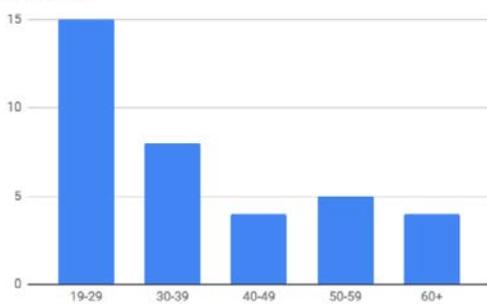
Race Distribution



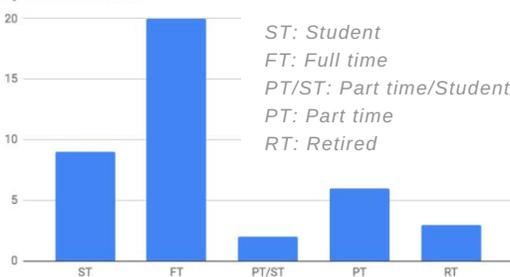
Household Income Distribution



Age Distribution



Employment Distribution



Recommendations to City

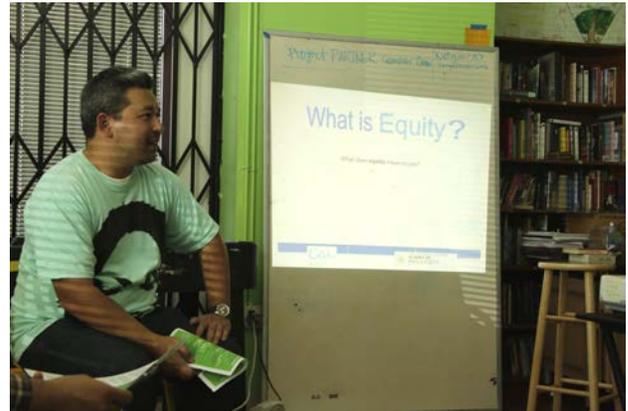
- Strong grounding in racial equity was appreciated - continue this in future meetings / engagements
- Overcoming mistrust and skepticism around City processes is critical - and needs to be authentically addressed and emphasized - as it was in these workshops - in all outreach and engagement
- City should make a commitment to use Streetwyze to listen and integrate community feedback into DOSP
- More clarity is needed regarding what will be done with community input in DOSP process
- More clarity is needed regarding what role does the community have in terms of decision-making in the DOSP process
- More written / web materials about DOSP process are needed to be able to effectively outreach to our communities
- Further inclusion of business owners, school personnel and Oakland youth is needed
- City should make commitment to ongoing community engagement throughout the whole DOSP process
- Shorter meetings in smaller groups where City / Equity Team travel directly to stakeholders would help disconnected communities get involved
- Need for short-term action - community is concerned that Displacement is happening now and will have greater impacts by time plan is complete

II.

Community Sub-Group Meetings/Workshops

June-August 2017

Between June-July 31, 2017, the Equity Team initiated a set of “Community sub-group meetings/workshops”. These meetings/workshops were designed to invite community leaders into the downtown planning process, bring community members up to speed on what has been done, and what is coming next in the process, provide a space for community leaders to raise concerns or questions about the process in general, and specifically as related to equity, and target concrete ways community leaders to attend upcoming Equity Working Group meetings. As with the Community Leaders workshops additional, and less tangible goals for these initial meetings, was to cultivate a sense of anticipation and hope that this renewed engagement



process could realize a model of transparent, participatory democracy rarely felt and experienced by our most vulnerable community members.

Community sub-group workshops were co-organized with Community Leaders who attended the Community Leader workshops, and prioritized by community sectors that have been historically locked out of

downtown planning process as identified in the Equity Team’s SWOT analysis. As with the Community Leader workshops, the Equity Team over-sampled participation among community groups who represented sectors that were noticeably absent from the previous planning process, to enact equity in practice and address historic barriers to participation.

In total, roughly 214 community members attended the Community sub-group workshops, representing the black, latinx, and asian communities, as well as community activist groups; social justice, environmental, food policy, and youth-oriented non-profits; cultural arts advocates; differently-abled; affordable housing developers; economic development specialists; housing rights organizers; university students; small business retailers; artists; and beyond.



Key Takeaways From Community Sub-Group Workshops

A Block-by-Block Organizing Network 3 Total, ~90 Attendees

Organizing Community Leaders:

Lailan Huen, Block by Block Organizing Network; Alvina Wong, Asian Pacific Environmental Network; Karolyn Wong, Community Coalition for Equitable Development

Key Demographics of Attendees:

Black, Latinx, Asian, White, Affordable housing advocates, Community organizers, Local artists and educators

Key Equity Challenges, Vision,

Goals: Accountability for new development including long-time Oaklanders; Preserving and strengthening cultural districts, supporting local economies and neighborhoods; Implementing progressive city-wide policy for anti-displacement; using Streetwyze Data in development of the DOSP and engaging in upcoming Equity Working Group meetings



Key Takeaways From Community Sub-Group Workshops

B Oakland Food Policy Coalition
Monthly Board Meeting
~20 Attendees

Organizing Community Leaders:
Shaniece Alexander, Director of OFPC

Key Demographics of Attendees:
Black, Latinx, Asian, White, Small
Business Owners, Local Food
advocates

Key Equity Challenges, Vision, Goals: Accountability in terms of
Equity Goals from the City; Better
Transparency; Making space for Food
Policy priorities in DTO; Broadening
Engagement to include a truly
representative sample of all
Oaklanders; Accountability that the
City will use Streetwyze Data in
development of the DOSP

Specifically...

People were bothered by how late the City went public with the plan and felt like the alternatives presented didn't meet their vision, goals, desires, concerns.

Many were happy that engagement is happening but hesitant to reinvest their time, if the City isn't going to respond to their suggestions/feedback.

There was a strong desire for communication accountability process as well as community decision making power through the CAG or elsewhere.

Many appreciated including a broader list of stakeholders, including Chinatown, and all users of the DTO instead of just those who live there.

Really appreciated the development of infographics as a tool for explanation, but want more clarity regarding the process of decision-making power within the Planning Department and among City Council members.

Key Takeaways From Community Sub-Group Workshops

C Chinatown Coalition and Asian Health Services Sub-Group Workshops

5 Total, ~60 Attendees

Organizing Community Leaders:
Tina Diep, Malaya Nordyke (AHS)

Key Demographics of Attendees:
Asian, Asian-American, Non-English Speakers, Immigrant populations, Elders, Youth Chinatown residents

Key Equity Challenges, Vision, Goals: Inclusion of Chinatown in the Downtown plan; Community input being acted on and implemented by City; Maintain affordability of Chinatown; Inclusion of Elders, Youth and non-English speakers in definition of Equity; Accountability that the City will use Streetwyze Data in development of the DOSP; Increasing safety in deteriorating buildings; High density traffic; Greenhouse gas pollution; Maintenance of community space and overall community health



Key Takeaways From Community Sub-Group Workshops

D East Oakland Building Healthy Communities Sub-Group Workshop

~20 Attendees

Organizing Community Leaders:
Nehanda Imara, East Oakland Building Healthy Communities

Key Demographics of

Attendees: Black, Latinx, Queer, Youth, Non-English Speakers, Immigrant populations, East Oakland residents

Key Equity Challenges, Vision, Goals: Make Downtown and Downtown development relevant and accessible to East Oakland residents; Opportunities for East Oakland residents to benefit from growth in Downtown; Maintain affordability of East Oakland; Maintain racial/ethnic diversity of East Oakland; Health Equity as a central goal for all populations



Recommendations to City

- Pursue community benefit agreements as a way to address displacement and gain accountability from developers
- Create a "Best practices for CBAs" - this could be useful if City enacts baseline policies around community engagement for new development
- Create clear requirements / guidelines about level of community engagement / depth of engagement required by developers
- Representation on Planning Commission is not reflective of all Oakland neighborhoods / council districts this needs to be changed so Planning Commission more equitably represents all of Oakland
- Include Chinatown in the DOSP to ensure impact on neighborhood and community will be fully assessed and factored into the plan
- Develop a communication accountability process that can reassure community engagement will be incorporated and responded to
- Create a route for genuine community decision-making power through the CAG or other avenue
- Create additional materials to clarify and explain the DOSP including the process of decision-making power within the Planning Department and among City Council members



III.

One-on-One Engagements

June-August 2017

25 Participants

Organizing Community Leaders:

Eric Arnold, Kris Tyler, Ethan Chang, Aekta Shah, Antwi Akom, Sarah Filley, Tessa Cruz

Key Demographics of Attendees:

Black, Latinx, Asian, Multiracial, White, Youth, Small Business Owners, Local Food Equity advocates, Cultural and Community Arts advocates, Affordable Housing advocates, Community organizers, Local educators, Entrepreneurs, Grassroots and Community organizers, Nonprofit and Social Justice Institute leaders

Key Equity Challenges, Vision, Goals:

What worked, what didn't, what could be improved from the Community Leader Workshops; Opportunities for engagements and promoting EQTDTO; Invitation to Equity Working Group Meetings; Discussion of how to use Streetwyze in their work; What the meaning of equity and equity in downtown Oakland is.



Participants

Nehanda Imara, *East Oakland Building Healthy Communities*

Charmin Baaqee, *Art is Luv*

Shaniece Alexander, *Oakland Food Policy Coalition*

Jeanne Robinson, *East Bay Housing Opportunities*

Stevi Dawson, *East Bay Housing Opportunities*

Marlon Ingram, *Studio Msi*

Ayodele Nzinga, *MFA, Ph.D., Lower Bottom Playaz*

Danielle Dehiter-Williams, *The Justice Collective*

Sarah Tiffany Baker, *Oakstop*

Chaney Turner, *Town Biz*

Adele Ray, *Filmmaker*

Nicho Medina, *Solespace*

Aima Paule, *Craft + Spoon*

Helen Wyman, *Community Bank of the Bay*

Jeff Perlstein, *Solespace*

Steve Snider, *Downtown-Lake Merritt Association*

Colin Miller, *Rooted in Resilience*

Kierra Johnson, *Rooted in Resilience*

Artkinlee Sulit, *Rooted in Resilience*

Danielle Beavers, *Greenlining Institute*

Lailan Huen, *Block by Block Organizing Network*

Samantha Morales, *Maikai Flowers*

Lina Torio, *Oakland Hot Plate Cafe & Musician*

Theo Aytchan Williams, *Samba Funk*

Holly Joshi, *Missey*



“[...] I’m really concerned this is becoming a playground for the elite, for the wealthy, and that we’re going to be left with a shell of diversity that’s really more of a... just an image. And it represents to me the commodification of cultural diversity that people have been attracted to Oakland for, but without the people who really make Oakland great.”

Colin Miller, *Rooted in Resilience/Oakland Climate Action Coalition*



“I do believe it’s going to start with young people voicing their opinions having them be involved in this process and [...] when we talk about creating, you know voices for young people, I think this is like a good opportunity because Oakland is thriving in the arts. [...] I’ve seen First Friday, how many young people come into this space, you know it’s just giving them a voice and trying to figure out I guess, where to begin, right? And it’s by having these conversations.”

Nicho Medina, *SoleSpace/Culturestrike*



“Giving community a real seat at the table. Truly listening to what people in community say. I think that it is disingenuous to collect information and to conduct studies and then to not act on the fruit of those studies. Or to incorporate some sort of strategy to really embody those suggestions. I think that community access to processes is a crucial thing in Oakland right now at this time.”

Ayodele Nzinga, *Lower Bottom Playaz*



“I would say that, [...] we would receive, that women of color, people of color, small businesses would receive some sort of stipend or incentive from the City to stay here. There are so many buildings that are just empty, but yet, they’re building new buildings. So I would say, let’s talk about programs to get these small businesses or people of color or women into storefronts and have incentives for them to run their business.”

Sarah Tiffany Baker, Oakstop



“[...] My hope and vision for the future is that we make sure that the Downtown is a space for everyone. And so as newcomers come in, you know, I think that as a community of activists, and as a community of people that have always being committed to activism, we need to be demanding in coming together to make sure that we’re demanding that people that are coming into our community to make money are responsible to the community.”

Holly Joshi, Misssey



“I think that Downtown Oakland in a lot of ways is the heart of Oakland [...] the issues in East Oakland, or in West Oakland around cyclical poverty, which are really not providing great access to educational opportunities or employment opportunities, could be addressed through a more robust approach of community building in Downtown Oakland that then spreads out through the city as a whole.”

Steve Snider, Downtown Oakland Association & Uptown/Lake Merritt District

Recommendations to City

- Focused interview format was appreciated by many community members - it allowed for more individualized feedback
- Video format is an excellent targeted engagement strategy which allows people to engage in the conversation from wherever they are, simply by viewing and sharing videos on other platforms (website, social media)
- Key concerns to be addressed in DOSP include what we have also heard in other engagements: homeless, youth, black residents, Chinatown, displacement / gentrification, tech influx not creating jobs for local residents
- Spotlight on individual voices also raised some issues which haven't been as widely voiced: connectivity to West Oakland, legacy of Ohlone, role of climate and environmental justice in DOSP
- Commission more videos to include more subjects that can spotlight a greater number of community voices, add to dialogue, and widen range of perspectives on the DOSP

