Upstream Engagement Techniques
Community-Sourced Planning on Atlanta’s Westside

2018

www.apdurban.com
Today’s Agenda

1. What is Upstream Engagement?
2. Why Does it Matter for Planning?
3. What is Happening on Atlanta’s Westside?
4. How Was Upstream Engagement Incorporated?
5. Benefits of Upstream Engagement and Shared Ethics
30 years of urban planning experience

- APD-U established in 1990
- Minority-owned firm with offices in Atlanta, GA and Jacksonville, FL
- Over 30 years of national expertise on neighborhood planning, housing development, affordability policies, and community development
- Proven track record of success in management of acquisition, housing strategies, neighborhood redevelopment projects with a focus on quality affordable housing
- Perspective of a developer and knowledge of community based organizations
- Community capacity building training and expertise
What is Upstream Engagement?
1. Identify Water Source

2. Check For Contaminants

3. Draw Water
Upstream Engagement

• Developed in life science industries around genetically modified crops

• Public participation before significant research and development occurs

• Creating trust between:
  1. Public
  2. Funders
  3. Scientists
“The task is to make visible the invisible, to expose to public scrutiny the **assumptions, values and visions** that drive science”
What does Upstream Engagement mean for planning?
Shared Ethics + Democratic Participation

= Community Ownership + Empowerment
“Democracy must be built through open societies that share information. When there is information, there is enlightenment. When there is debate, there are solutions.”

-Atifete Jahjaga, Former President of Kosovo
Democracy Requires a Shared Ethical Framework.

Otherwise, the process fails.
Creating an Ethical Framework

• “Why?” vs. “How?”

• Helps form local conception of **justice** within recommendations

• Recommendations to be measured against
Impacts of Planning

• All communities are unique – but underinvested communities see planning as a moral undertaking

• Communities that have been left behind, suffering from long-term disinvestment

• Communities likely to gentrify

• Planners as educators, communicators, and public servants
Mission
Vision
Values
Goals
Objectives
Strategies

Why we are here
How we want to be perceived
What are our beliefs
How we get there
Values: What is Important?

Ethics: What is Right?
How is this different than Goals + Vision?

• Ethical component precedes vision and goals
• Requires an understanding of power relations and history
• Requires significant time investment
• Planner as facilitator
What is happening on Atlanta’s Westside?
Westside’s History

• A decline in occupancy and an increase in poverty since the 1980s

• Hope for revitalization in the early 2000s dashed by the Great Recession

• Collapse in property prices and many homes became dilapidated
Westside Demographics

Low levels of homeownership and low incomes contribute to a population susceptible to displacement without intervention and resources.

**Housing Tenure:**

- Population\(^1\): 15,079
- Households\(^2\): 3,938
- Renters: 3,292
- Owners: 646

**Income Distribution**

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $15k</td>
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<tr>
<td>$15k-$24.9k</td>
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<tr>
<td>$25k-$34.9k</td>
<td>573</td>
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<td>$35k-$49.9k</td>
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<tr>
<td>$150k-$199.9k</td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>$200k or greater</td>
<td>32</td>
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Growing Price Pressure

**Change in Median Rents for Select Westside and Comparison Neighborhoods 2012-2016**

- **Bankhead**: 1.38
- **English Avenue**: 1.22
- **Vine City**: 1.17
- **Washington Park**: 1.14
- **Downtown**: 1.17
- **Home Park**: 1.14

Data source: Zillow Rent Index (http://www.zillow.com/research/data/#rental-data)

**STUDY AREA**

3844 Parcels

Ownership Type:
- Investor (3+ Owned Properties)
- Non-profit
- Institutional
- City
- Other

Source: Immergluck, Dan
Westside’s History

• Planning Fatigue – 18 plans over 20 years
• Broken funding promises
• Widespread distrust of government
A New Planning Approach (2013 – Ongoing)

- Westside TAD Strategic Implementation Plan
- Westside Implementation
- Land Use Action Plan
- Community Retention Plan
- Land Use Framework Plan
- Land Use Zoning Work
Community Retention Plan

- Overall Strategies
- Homeowner Strategies
- Renter Strategies
- Business Strategies
Difficulties Encountered
1. Traditional Community Engagement Processes Not Effective

2. Shift in Neighborhood Leadership

3. Large, Difficult to Reach Renter, Homeowner, Investor Population

4. Trust Deficit

5. Competing Ethical Visions
How was Upstream Engagement incorporated?
1. Establish a System of Ethics Upfront

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Politics</th>
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Vision
2. Trust Requires Time
3. Keep Major Ethical Dilemmas in Sight
4. Big Geographies Benefit Ethical Discussions
5. Variety of Meeting Types
6. Focus on Individual Attention and Needs
7. Empower Leadership
8. Acknowledge the Rabble Rousers
9. Pursue Both Consensus and Compromise

Consensus

Ethics

Politics

Vision

Compromise
10. Action Breeds Trust

- Westside TAD Strategic Implementation Plan
- Westside Implementation
- Land Use Action Plan
- Community Retention Plan
- Land Use Framework Plan
- Land Use Zoning Work
Benefits of Upstream Engagement and Shared Ethics
THE REAL HOUSING MONSTER

NEW HOMES

NEW AFFORDABLE INCLUSIONARY HOUSING

TAX REVENUES

JOBS

NIMBY
BLACK PEOPLE ARE BEING PUSHED OUT OF ATLANTA
FEB 18TH
WWW.YOUWILLBEMOVED.ORG
PAID FOR BY BLACK CHANNEL FILMS
Recap

• Examines, evaluates, and proposes a new community ethical framework

• Compatible with neighborhoods with development issues

• Requires a lot of upfront work, over multiple years