Dignity Infused Community Engagement in Los Angeles

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Dignity Infused Community Engagement in Los Angeles

PSU TREC Friday Transportation Seminar

Caro Vera

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VZ DICE Definition

A planning process that *intentionally* and *holistically* incorporates the viewpoints, lived experiences, and perspectives of those *most impacted* by a planning project. It seeks to restore and atone for historic, systemic and institutional injustices.
VZ DICE Definition

A dignity-infused planning process involves community members in the process from the beginning, weaving both their perspectives and technical planning practices into a project.
Our Approach

• Street Team composed of local residents who live along the corridor

• University Fellows from Creative Arts, Social Science, Transportation, and Public Health

• Accessibility Partners
  • SCRS-IL
  • Liberate

• Memorializing Victims through Rainbow Halo Campaign
Our Approach

Social Climate Analysis

• **Social science analysis methods** used to assess community context and conditions

• Customized community engagement strategy for **each** corridor

• Collaboration with CBOs as **thought** partners and **project** partners
Street Team

• Our ideal candidate had **no prior experience**

• Our ideal candidate had a **history of facing barriers to employment**, such as people experiencing houselessness, recently incarcerated, veterans, seniors, and issues maintaining employment

• Street Team **composed of 15 local residents** who live along the corridor, recruited primarily via PATH in LA

• Conducted biweekly trainings on Vision Zero, professional development, conflict resolution

• Street Team became Vision Zero and safe streets advocates
University Fellows

Created four positions:

- Social Science Fellow
- Creative Arts Fellow
- Public Health Fellow
- Transportation Planning Fellow

Circulated the job description to thirty schools in the area

Hired based on innovation and commitment to community engagement

- Hiring people from different disciplines expands our community engagement practice and allows us to reach more people through innovative strategies
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

- Organized a CBO mixer where we made an invitation to all CBOs in LA area
- Opportunity to strengthen relationships with local community partners through intentional collaboration and partnership
- Released CBO Application to join our team:
  - No prior transportation advocacy experience needed
  - All CBOs who applied were accepted
- Goal: Bring on as many advocates as possible to expand VZ DICE reach and create a team of community experts committed to safer streets
Social Climate Analysis

- Assess and understand social and cultural factors on a project corridor and surrounding community
- Opportunity for planners and engineers to work with community members to identify meaningful ways to preserve community assets and address socio-cultural barriers a proposed project might create
- Use qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a community profile
  - Demographic Information
  - Collision history
  - CalEnviro Screen 3.0 Analysis
  - Displacement Analysis via rent burden
  - Qualitative assessment of existing community assets and amenities
- Conduct three rounds of walk audits with City staff, CBO partners, and community experts
- You can't plan for a community without understanding local dynamics and reaching community members
If you want vulnerable communities at the table, start with dignity.
Avalon Boulevard

• LADOT collaboratively developed events that uplifted cross-racial and intergenerational perspectives on the Avalon Blvd corridor.

• Approach focused on creating a series of culturally-significant events that would engage residents.

• Efforts were grounded by VZ Street Team

• Engaged local street vendors
  • Intentionally activated local economy and provided local vendors the opportunity to participate in events that might otherwise only be accessible to larger catering companies.
Avalon Boulevard
Thirty-Five Day Avalon Blvd Engagement

Some of the events held over the course of the Avalon 35-day Activation

• 52nd & Avalon Block Party
• After Church Lunch
• Instagram Live Discussion on Traffic Violence in South Los Angeles
• Street Team Business Canvassing
• SRTS Bike to School Day
• Commuter Days & Street Pop-Ups
• Mother’s Day Zumba
• Eloteros for Vision Zero
• Youth Engagement
• Interfaith Outreach & Events
• Active Streets Los Angeles (ASLA) Neighborhood Walks
• Bike Days on Avalon
• Intergenerational Walk and Fitness events
• Dog Day at the Wetlands Park
• Senior Bike Ride

Bike Day on Avalon with free Raspados and Elotes from local street vendor Don Victor

After Church Lunch with CBO partner, Mt. Salem Church
Eloteros for Safer Streets

- Partnered with local elotero on Avalon corridor
- Don Victor had been biking the corridor as a street vendor for 20 years and was known to the community
- Most effective engagement strategy of Avalon Corridor
- Averaged 200 surveys for every event
Eloteros for Safer Streets
South LA Open House

- Culminated 35 days of community engagement
- Involved different LADOT departments and local projects in South LA
- 1100 Attendees
- 12,000 residents engaged along Avalon
- 700 resident surveys submitted
Avalon Boulevard Outcomes

• 90% of community residents supported the implementation of a bike lane on Avalon Boulevard

96% support the installation of more crosswalks and signals along Avalon Boulevard

78% were willing to add 3+ minutes to their trips on Avalon Boulevard for improved safety conditions
Engaging communities historically siloed from the planning process requires unique, customized, and culturally relevant approaches.
Numbers-At-A-Glance

• 55 events attended/hosted
• 17,670 local residents engaged
• 36 local vendors and artists involved
• 42 Community Members directly hired
Key Takeaways

• Community engagement should be **culturally relevant** and reflect the community being served.

• Transportation projects can **negatively impact communities** if residents aren’t involved in the engagement process.

• **Partner, build, and pay** community partners as they are local experts.

• Community engagement requires building trust, **starting with a willingness to innovate, intervene, and invest.**

• It's the City staff's and Consulting team's **responsibility to build trust** with community.