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This Fence Makes No Sense: Developing a Community Engagement Curriculum for Swampscott, MA

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This Fence Makes No Sense: Developing a Community Engagement Curriculum for Swampscott, MA

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2022

MERRIMACK COLLEGE

CAPSTONE PAPER SIGNATURE PAGE

CAPSTONE SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CAPSTONE TITLE: This Fence Makes No Sense: Developing a Community Engagement

Curriculum for Swampscott, MA

AUTHOR: Elana Zabar

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April 20, 2022 DATE

DATE

April 20, 2022

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Lastly, to the town fence that inspired this entire project: some may see you as an ugly barrier, but I have always seen you as a blank canvas. You personify the very barriers addressed throughout this project yet also symbolize the very beginning of a new and improved Swampscott. While I hope you do not stay for long, I thank you for inspiring me to complete this project and explore new ways to improve my community.

Abstract

This project sought to understand the best way to integrate non-exclusionary community engagement into Swampscott, Massachusetts. A curriculum that would encourage municipal officials of Swampscott, MA to develop a more inclusive community engagement process was built and presented to local community engagement practitioners, both affiliated and not affiliated with the municipality, for their feedback. The curriculum suggests creative engagement solutions the town can offer to community members throughout a project's timeline, from idea generation to problem definition, to project development, to post-implementation feedback. These methods of engagement, written under the lens of the Transformative Paradigm, were specifically designed to reduce the barriers to participation marginalized populations often face as well as encourage integration by utilizing a Whole Community approach. Findings suggest a curriculum would enhance community engagement as a municipal priority and reduce barriers to participation for hard-to-reach populations so long as there is adequate and passionate staff and sufficient resources to support these initiatives.

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This Fence Makes no Sense: Developing a Community Engagement Curriculum for Swampscott, MA

Swampscott, Massachusetts is a small coastal municipality once revered for its strong community, now struggles with consensus building on town happenings. Demographically speaking, Swampscott is home to wealthy, white, aging folks. The town has more residents over the age of 65 than any other municipality in Essex County (Dowd, 2021). Moreover, Swampscott's mean annual income ranges between \$144,767 for households and \$175,567 for families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). While the white population of Swampscott did drop from 94% in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) to 87% in 2020, the community is still overwhelmingly white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). These shifting racial dynamics, as well as increased political polarization nationwide, have caused increased tensions between residents and distrust of the local government. Residents often utilize town community Facebook pages to air their grievances; a common complaint, here, is the perceived lack of transparency from elected officials and government employees regarding town decisions and projects.

Swampscott operates under a Representative Town Meeting government style wherein Town Meeting members are elected to vote on behalf of each of the six precincts (Swampscott Planning Board, 2016). The town's decision-making process mainly falls at the intersection of Town Meeting, the elected Select Board, and the employed municipal government. A variety of other boards, committees, and commissions represent special interests or specific town projects; these groups are made up of elected and appointed volunteers from the community. Sean Fitzgerald, the current Town Administrator, has received quite a bit of backlash in the past year as employee retention rates have plummeted (Dowd, 2021). The high rate of employee turnover has left some Swampscott residents feeling uneasy, especially regarding what residents believe to be a lack of communication (Lanzilli, 2021).

Swampscott's physical and social infrastructure have transformed over the last decade. Many of these community improvements have attracted negative feedback as residents feel decisions are being made without space for public comment. Some examples of this have been the implementation of a town-wide waste reduction program (Stygles, 2020), the development of a town dog park (Swampscott Reporter, 2018), and the revitalization of an abandoned railway into a trail to create designated pedestrian spaces throughout the town (Forman, 2017). Projects that should have been celebrated as community betterment were scornfully disregarded by nonaffiliated community leaders who felt they were unable to participate in the process and voice their thoughts. These examples have created a unique power dynamic between municipal officials and community members and highlight the need to develop new community engagement strategies tailored to *whole communities*. For the purposes of this project, whole communities will refer to the entire residency of a specific location regardless of ascription to various social identity groups.

This project aims to offer a solution for more inclusive, municipal community engagement by developing a curriculum for the Town of Swampscott to utilize to maximize community engagement on future projects and town decisions. This curriculum is largely informed by the Transformative Paradigm (Mertens, 2007) and Whole Communities Approach (FEMA, 2011). Said curriculum will be sensitive to marginalized identities but also prioritize engagement opportunities that attract whole communities. The goal of this curriculum is to provide town employees with new and developing community engagement techniques in order to reach the largest possible audience challenging the existing narrative of lack of transparency.

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Literature Review

Community engagement can be defined as "the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people" (CTSA Community Engagement Key Function Committee Task Force [CTSA], 2011, p. *xv*). In recent years, the community engagement field has expanded to create more inclusive techniques that build spaces for marginalized communities to participate equitably (Richardson et al, 2021). While this expansion of participation eligibility is a positive outcome of this research, it has come at a cost. Government leaders, in an attempt to build equitable opportunities for participation, either enlist new engagement tactics altogether – ostracizing the already engaged, typically white community (DiAngelo, 2011) – or rely on empowerment models to bring marginalized communities into existing spaces (Baur et al, 2009). Currently, academic literature focuses on minority and majority groups as separate entities rather than introducing techniques to target whole populations simultaneously.

Transformative Paradigm

Donna Mertens (2007) introduced the transformative paradigm as a framework for thinking about social justice research, particularly how marginalized communities are included, invited to, and are used in research opportunities. The transformative paradigm recognizes that traditional research methods often fail to adequately represent and address social justice needs (Mertens, 2007). This paradigm offers a new lens that centers marginalized populations in this type of research, keeping issues of power at the forefront of the researcher's mind.

There are four central tenants of any paradigm: 1) Ontology, 2) Epistemology, 3) Methodology, and 4) Axiology. *Ontology of the transformative paradigm* asserts that in all 9

situations there are multiple incongruent truths depending on one's varying sociodemographic identities (Mertens, 2007). Researchers must acknowledge the context in which these identities determine one's value and privilege. *Epistemology of the transformative paradigm* dictates that within transformative social justice research, researchers must demonstrate appreciation for cultural differences as well as name power imbalances within the context of the study (Mertens, 2007). Here, it is critical researchers develop transparent and communicative relationships with participants.

While *Methodology of the transformative paradigm* is not expressly defined as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, Mertens suggests participants should play an active role in the problem definition stages and researchers should ensure "methods [are] adjusted to accommodate cultural complexity" (Mertens, 2007, p. 216). That said, culturally competent research under this paradigm recognizes the lack of a one-size-fits-all participatory option and therefore heavily encourages heterogeneous mixed-methods options for participation. *Axiology*, typically dependent on respect, beneficence, and justice, is pushed further under this paradigm to alleviate any undue burden on marginalized participants. Researchers must illustrate express connections between participation and the intended outcomes of the study (Mertens, 2007).

Principles of Community Engagement

The CTSA Community Engagement Key Function Committee Task Force (2011) tasked with updating the original Center for Disease Control (1997) drafted document, outlined nine key principles of community engagement and things to consider prior to starting an outreach initiative. Firstly, one must *clearly define the goals for said engagement initiative and/or which particular communities will be reached* to clarify the parameters for engagement (CTSA, 2011). Clearly defining the goals and target audience can also help sway community members to participate. Next, it is imperative for practitioners to *invest in understanding the culture and history of the target population and understand the target population's relationship with decision-makers* (CTSA, 2011). Having this background knowledge in addition to *establishing relationships and building trust with community leaders of the target population* will enhance an outsider's ability to facilitate a successful engagement opportunity and create tangible change (CTSA, 2011). Similarly, practitioners must *allow the target community to hold autonomy over the problem-defining and solution-building experience* (CTSA, 2011). No one is better equipped to articulate a problem and find a solution for said problem than those who are directly impacted. Community involvement in the earliest stages also creates space to build trust between the community and practitioners.

In many instances, consultants and technical assistants are brought into an area to assess a problem and develop a solution. The CTSA Task Force (2011) expressed these efforts are largely unsuccessful because they negate the next major principle, *community involvement is key to effect change*. Partnerships must be formed with the community at large and community engagement practitioners must create spaces for community contributions. Additionally, those spaces must be created with *recognition and appreciation of community diversity as an integral part of each stage of the process* (CTSA, 2011). Certain socio-demographic groups hold power in each community, it is imperative practitioners work while acknowledging that power structure and factor it into their engagement efforts.

Practitioners must ground their work in asset-based community development and building community capacity to ensure sustainability of their efforts (CTSA, 2011). This means determining what skills and resources the community and community members have at their disposal and teaching the community members to combine efforts to continue creating solutions past an independent engagement effort. To further develop sustainability, *community* engagement practitioners must relinquish control to community leaders and continue to be flexible (CTSA, 2011). An outside practitioner's main goal should be to leave a community with the skills to continue engagement work beyond an individual project, which includes empowering and teaching community leaders to take charge of community-based projects.

Lastly, it is important for practitioners to remember *community engagement is a lengthy process and practitioners must be committed to long-term partnerships and collaborative efforts* (CTSA, 2011). Typically, the longer a partnership has existed, the stronger the potential outcomes are. These nine key principles have been widely accepted as standard practices for building community engagement partnerships but neglect to address barriers to participation for community members. Updated guides include additional discussion of increasing accessibility for whole communities and employing non-traditional engagement techniques (Seattle Office of Civil Rights, 2012).

Whole Communities

The concept of whole communities, or a whole community approach, stems from language put forth by the Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] (2011). FEMA defines this term as "a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests" (FEMA, 2011, p. 3). The whole community approach empowers all that are connected to a specific geographic location to take an active role in the emergency planning and response process. It also requires an understanding of community history and present-day capacity. Beyond community resiliency, furthered economic development, and increased social capital are additional benefits of the whole community approach (Myers, 2021).

FEMA has expanded the whole community framework for community resilience to incorporate the needs of civil community groups (Plodinec et al, 2014). Plodinec *et al* (2014) offer multiple ways in which one can determine and categorize who is included in the whole community. These include: 1) Breaking down the community into economic, infrastructural, and social components; 2) Division according to Elkington's Triple Bottom Line — people, planet, and profit (Elkington, 1998); 3) Categorization by Flora, Flora, and Frey's Seven Capitals Concept — natural capital, cultural capital, human capital, social capital, political capital, financial capital, and built capital (Mattos, 2015); and 4) separation by service area — arts/ entertainment/recreation, communications, community records, economy, education, energy, finance, food, housing, individuals and families, local government, natural environment, public health, public safety and security, solid waste management, transportation, water services, and workforce (Plodinec et al, 2014). These organizing methods allow those tasked with community resiliency efforts to better define community leaders from different sectors and ensure all perspectives are being included in decision-making processes.

While originally created to build more inclusive emergency preparedness/community resiliency teams, the whole community approach effectively complements the goals of community engagement. Incorporation of the whole community into the decision making process relies on six core strategic themes: "1) understand[ing] community complexity, 2) recogniz[ing] community capability and needs, 3) foster[ing] relationships with community leaders, 4) build[ing] and maintain[ing] partnerships, 5) empower[ing] local action, and 6) leverag[ing] and

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strengthen[ing] social infrastructure, networks, and assets" (FEMA, 2011, p. 5). These themes are not linearly ordered and must overlap throughout a project/initiative's timeline.

Understanding Community Complexity refers to the idea that communities are complex systems and understanding their makeup/interactions is vital before beginning any engagement initiative. This first theme requires a thorough understanding of how community decisions have been made historically and how different populations fit into the broader community dynamic (FEMA, 2011). Special attention should be paid to community members of marginalized sociodemographic identities. This "as is" definition serves as a starting point for progress. Here, municipal workers/community engagement practitioners should identify leaders of various community subgroups.

The theme of *Recognizing Community Capabilities and Needs* invests in defining community needs but also highlighting existing strengths (FEMA, 2011). Taking a holistic approach to community asset mapping requires transparency in which populations lack access to community resources. Defining community needs must occur prior to and separate from discussing community capacity. Residents and community leaders must feel safe to address their needs regardless of existing capacity. After adequately defining community needs, the entire collective can work toward delegating tasks to different community entities and seeking additional resources and assistance for components that cannot be accomplished within the existing community structure (FEMA, 2011).

Fostering Relationships with Community Leaders requires municipal government workers to invite the already identified community subgroup leaders to partake in community decision-making discussions (FEMA, 2011). These leaders have established trust within their subgroups and serve as a "critical link" between practitioners and successful community

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engagement efforts (FEMA, 2011). Community leaders have access to more authentic community opinion and typically the ability to advocate for those community needs. Maintaining collaborative relationships with these leaders is dependent upon continued collaboration efforts and transparency in information sharing. This theme is often overlooked but arguably the most critical in sustaining active ties to the community (FEMA, 2011).

Along with the former theme, *Building and Maintaining Partnerships* encourages connecting with existing community groups/organizations in the area to increase capacity. Recognizing municipal governments lack infinite resources, developing partnerships with existing groups already doing the work streamlines the ability to meet community needs (FEMA, 2011). Personal investment in the decision-making process sustains engagement and increases positive community response to changes (FEMA, 2021). Though it is critical these relationships are mutually beneficial for the municipality and external group. Municipal governments must work with individual groups to ensure their priorities and goals are met in addition to their own (FEMA, 2021).

Empowering Local Action refers to accepting that municipal governments lack the resources to adequately serve their communities alone comes with relinquishing total control over the community engagement process and allowing community members to take charge (FEMA, 2011). Community-led initiatives see higher success rates, and this also builds trust and helps sustain relationships with community groups (FEMA, 2011). Local groups serve as an extension of municipal power and enable the municipality to target more objectives at one time.

The theme of *Leveraging and Strengthening Social Infrastructure, Networks, and Assets* draws on the above sentiment of ensuring partnerships are mutually beneficial for community partners. By assisting with strengthening their infrastructure, a municipality benefits the partner,

subsequently forming a more productive asset to work with (FEMA, 2011). This theme relies on the idea that each community member has something to offer, and the municipality must work to develop systems that allow contribution.

Limitations of Whole Community Approach

While the whole community approach has been implemented as an emergency preparedness and response method, the framework has yet to be successfully integrated into broader municipal planning. As a framework that directly relies on strong community engagement and aligns with community engagement guiding principles, this framework should extend resiliency to more than just hazard mitigation but has yet to be tested. This lack of research prevents communities seeking new community engagement methods from using a welldeveloped national framework. Moreover, prevents municipal leaders from fully assuming the role of boundary spanner.

Role of Municipalities in Community Building

Municipal governments recognize the need for community engagement yet often fall short when it comes to developing strategies for targeting the whole community they represent. Often municipal governments cater to the constituents that have the capacity to continue showing up, thus mainly prioritizing the needs of the white and wealthy (Stephenson, 2020). Municipal leadership has a responsibility to promote the interests of their whole community; knowledge of which relies heavily on community engagement initiatives developed specifically for their constituents.

As they exist now, municipal governments are typically the final decision-makers on town happenings and laws. All community members deserve equitable access to share their opinions prior to final decisions as well as equitable access to information regarding changes. Therefore, municipal leaders should assume the role of *boundary spanners* — or someone who fulfills the following six main functions: "1) information exchanged, including information acquisition and control; 2) access to resources; 3) access to markets and commercialization of outputs; 4) organization or group representative; 5) trigger of organizational change; and 6) coordinator and facilitator" (Haas, 2015, p. 1033). Boundary spanners create spaces for engagement to inform future decision-making. When municipal leaders are trained as boundary spanners they act as guarantors of inclusive community-informed decision making (Weerts & Sandmann, 2016).

Swampscott, MA

Swampscott sits in the northeastern part of Massachusetts, just 15 miles north of the state's capital, Boston. The town is home to more than 15,000 residents including the state's current governor, Charlie Baker (Reilly, 2021). Baker's residency in the town has invited outsiders to take to downtown Swampscott — near the governor's home — to protest any and all political issues (Reilly, 2021). This consistent presence in town has been cited as a nuisance but has also served as a wake-up call for residents who are no longer willing to accept the status quo; residents have capitalized on the surplus of political energy and begun holding their own town officials accountable (Reilly, 2021).

Swampscott is no stranger to complaints of lacking transparency within government entities; however, residents are now feeling more empowered to advocate for change. High rates of government employee turnover have community members confused about municipal processes and are resulting in a general distrust of the current municipal leaders (Lanzilli, 2021). Between 2020 and 2021, Swampscott has had three Human Resource directors, the most recent of which, Tanya Shallop, left and shared that upwards of \$70,000 of taxpayer money was being THIS FENCE MAKES NO SENSE

used to pay the benefits packages of former town employees (Dowd, 2021). This exposé on mismanaged town funds cites several instances in which the Town Administrator, Sean Fitzgerald, was made aware of what was going on. Shallop claims her concerns were dismissed by Fitzgerald and despite supplemental evidence presented in the article, Fitzgerald wrote off Shallop's claims as "unfair opinions" (Dowd, 2021).

Distrust is not just reserved for Fitzgerald, criticism of Peter Spellios — a longstanding member and former chair of the Select Board — is frequently shared in two of the town's community Facebook Groups: *Swampscott Times* and *Swampscott Nest*. Spellios was initially elected to the Select Board in 2015 and has since been the Select Board liaison on many community development projects such as the rail trail, new markers for beach entrances, and the Swampscott Dog Park (2021 Voters' Guide, 2021). Spellios's involvement in these projects, in addition to a newly approved elementary school, has caused town residents to take to Facebook community groups and warn of what they believe to be suspicious behavior on Spellios's part. "IMO once a liar always a liar" (Palleria, 2021, para. 1). The lack of transparency and involvement in the decision-making process has resulted in a feeling of distrust of government officials for many community members (Tringale, 2021).

Swampscott, like all communities, has an immense capacity for growth. Swampscott's most recent Master Plan was published in 2016 and carries the community through 2025 (Swampscott Planning Board [SPB], 2016). While community engagement efforts informed this report, there is no indication that the town's efforts were evaluated. That said, in each of the themed community forums targeting specific topics included in the plan, the municipal government's transparency came under scrutiny (SPB, 2016). "Staying informed and having a voice in decision making" was the most voted for participant priority in the July 23 Master Plan

Public Forum (SPB, 2016, p. 106). This community continues to assert its desire to be involved in the planning process; despite this, there is no public documentation of the town's community engagement plans and/or techniques.

Curriculum to Help Municipalities Engage Communities

Curricula can be used as a format for integrating community engagement techniques that further the whole community framework into municipal use. Curricula are more often associated with the education sector but have proven effective in and outside education. In the education field, a curriculum serves as the blueprint for learning and holds all teachers in a school system accountable for teaching the same material (Glenn, 2018). Curricula are reviewed regularly to ensure continued relevancy for the population they are serving (Glenn, 2018). Curriculum theory can be split into four parts: "1) aims or objectives, 2) content of subject matter, 3) methods or procedures, and 4) evaluation or assessment" (Scott, 2002). Aims and objects refer to the intended outcome of a lesson or curriculum whereas the content of subject matter more so refers to the specific information being taught. Methods or procedures are defined as the specific agenda and tools used to convey that information. Lastly, evaluations or assessments are applied to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum.

William Pinar (1975) introduced the "Method of Currere" as a critique of modern education systems and curricula. He discussed the need to integrate experiential and autobiographical knowledge into academia. His four-part method outlined a strategy for further connecting a researcher and their research topic. *Regressive*, which is the first step, requires the acquisition of understanding how past experiences impact oneself in the present day (Pinar, 1975). The next step, *progressive*, encouraged vision-based planning for the future (Pinar, 1975). *Analytical*, forces the individual to recognize that at the moment one becomes aware of the present, that moment has already become the past (Pinar, 1975). *Synthetical*, the final step, is the culmination of all that was learned in the prior three steps (Pinar, 1975). The Method of Currere was introduced to expand curriculum theory as it existed in 1975. This processing method invited educators and practitioners to create transformative experiences for those in their purview.

Currere as a curriculum development strategy directly aligns with community engagement principles. Both require a thorough understanding of the past and systems that stall progress in the present. Given the effectiveness and alignment of Currere-informed curricula development, these concepts should be embedded into future community engagement plans.

Current Project

This project will create a Community Engagement Curriculum for Swampscott, Massachusetts. It will be influenced by the transformative paradigm for research (Mertens, 2007), FEMA's Whole Community Approach (FEMA, 2011), and Scott's (2002) four curriculum components. The curriculum will be broken into four sections that encourage community engagement be employed at all stages of a project from idea generation to problem definition to project design/development to post-implementation feedback. The curriculum will be evaluated by various community engagement practitioners in and outside of the Swampscott community. It should also be written into future Master Plans and continuously evaluated by municipal practitioners to ensure the best outcome for community residents.

Swampscott serves as a microcosm for all municipalities seeking to expand their reach. Building a community engagement repertoire sensitive to community demographics allows the municipality to empower the totality of resident voices. Investing in marginalized communities is no longer optional but shifting priority from one social identity group to another furthers the gap between populations. Separate but equal has been proven defective time and again, it is time to create singular spaces that force cohesion and engage whole populations. Community engagement techniques that bridge the divide between populations and are inclusive of all voices create stronger outcomes and allow communities to positively engage in community development work.

Curriculum Plan

Municipal governments are responsible for creating spaces that allow community members to actively participate in and comment on the decision-making process. Moreover, municipal governments have a responsibility to reduce barriers to participation for their marginalized populations and provide all residents with equitable access to participation. The inclusion of marginalized populations in the civic participation process broadens the conversation to focus on the whole community. Existing community systems lack representation of diverse perspectives, tearing a hole in otherwise strong communities; Swampscott, MA is no stranger to this issue. The proposed curriculum aims to highlight underutilized community engagement techniques that would allow the Town of Swampscott to update its outreach repertoire.

Situation Statement

It appears the continuous cycle of scandals within the Swampscott municipal government and high employee turnover has caused a bit of a rift between municipal officials and residents. Community members cite lack of transparency as their main reason for distrusting the current administration and utilizing informal, virtual community spaces to air their grievances, mainly about the lack of access to information about town decision-making. While the town does employ traditional community engagement efforts, residents often complain about a lack of advertising for said opportunities. The town's inability to advertise engagement opportunities has resulted in the same few "in-the-know" residents participating and this process neglects to consider other perspectives. In the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the town needed to shift to virtual meeting platforms which increased the ease of access to public meetings. This higher access invited more voices into ongoing town conversations and has already begun to benefit the town. Swampscott now stands at a crossroads as society adjusts to the new normal of a postremote world: should the community return to its exclusive outreach methods or should the town rethink what engagement should look like?

Define Your Goals

- Goal 1: Develop a curriculum of outreach strategies that encourages greater community involvement
- Goal 2: Promote community engagement techniques that are sensitive to changing population dynamics and reduce barriers to engagement for marginalized populations
- Goal 3: Increase transparency between government and community members in an attempt to reduce town tensions

Target Audience

This curriculum is specifically being designed for the direct benefit of municipal workers in Swampscott, MA, though will inevitably benefit the entire community if implemented. Having a fully fleshed-out community engagement curriculum will lessen the burden on town employees to develop community-specific outreach methods and therefore will streamline the engagement process. The conversation on government transparency has been growing amongst Swampscott residents as high rates of employee turnover and scandal continue to be reported in the town (Lanzilli, 2021). Swampscott stands to be a strong case study for developing a community

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engagement curriculum under the transformative paradigm as Swampscott is heavily resourced and the town leaders have expressed interest in improving their engagement methods (A. Fiske, personal communication, September 29, 2021).

Crafting a Clear Message

The town once revered for its strong, welcoming community has struggled to keep its reputation as town administrators fail to meet the needs of their changing constituents. Swampscott town officials are in dire need of updated engagement techniques to better understand and meet the needs of their community. An in-depth curriculum highlighting new, creative outreach methods that are inclusive to marginalized populations will allow the town to build back its reputation and better serve its whole community.

Identify Key Elements of the Curriculum

The proposed curriculum will be designed to meet the needs of the current and projected Swampscott population. It will be broken into four main sections: 1) Idea Generation, 2) Problem Definition, 3) Project Development, and 4) Post-Implementation Feedback. These sections follow municipal process and ensure opportunities for community members to weigh in throughout the entirety of the process. Within each section, three different engagement techniques will be offered as well as social justice considerations to reduce barriers to participation for community members of marginalized populations. Community engagement methods that will be included consist of, but are not limited to community walks, a letter-writing campaign, photo-walk exhibits, design charettes, focus groups, community surveys, and more.

Responsibilities Chart

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES
Elana Zabar	Merrimack College	Develop Curriculum; Sustain Relationships
Community Engagement Manager	Local Community Development Coalition	Review curriculum and provide feedback
Swampscott Municipal Employee	Town of Swampscott	Review curriculum and provide feedback
Chair of Municipal Board	Town of Swampscott	Review curriculum and provide feedback

Curriculum Review Plan

After being drafted, this curriculum will initially be reviewed by three experts, two of which are affiliated with the Town of Swampscott and one local Community Engagement Manager unaffiliated with the town. They will be presented with said curriculum two weeks prior to a formal interview. The interview will follow a question route designed to eliminate bias and elicit recommendations for enhancing the curriculum. The interview will include a brief presentation of my research, the theoretical framework, and the curriculum I produced. The feedback gained from these interviews will be used to determine the expected effectiveness of this curriculum in Swampscott as well as communities similar to Swampscott.

Implementation Timeline

January 2022	 Continued research for curriculum draft Draft curriculum for initial review
February 2022	 Continue drafting curriculum Develop curriculum presentation for partners
March 2022	 Present curriculum to partners Host review interviews with partners to garner feedback Analyze feedback and finalize curriculum
April 2022	 4/14: Full capstone draft due 4/27: Submit final capstone paper for publication

Logical Framework

SWAMPSCOTT CE CURRICULUM LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

I WILL

Develop a curriculum for the Swampscott Community Development Department that honors both the existing town population, is considerate of the town's changing sociodemographic dynamics, and offers alternative community engagement techniques for the department to consider

SO THAT

The local government can integrate new and developing community engagement techniques into their outreach plans for future town projects

SO THAT

The local government can increase transparency/communication skills regarding town projects

SO THAT

Increased community engagement becomes a priority of the department and expectation from community members

SO THAT

Historically marginalized community members can obtain information from more readily

available/easily accessible resources

SO THAT

Barriers to participation are lessened through increased access to information

SO THAT

All community members, regardless of identity, are able to effectively form educated opinions on town projects

SO THAT

All community members, regardless of identity, are able to take part in citizen participation efforts and/or engage with town happenings/projects

Methodology

The Swampscott Community Engagement Curriculum was presented to three municipal members and one community project consultant for the purposes of review and feedback. Using the qualitative thematic analysis, interview data was examined for key patterns and themes that will help determine if curriculum tools such as this are useful to municipalities seeking to engage more meaningfully with their residents.

Participants

Two municipal officials from the Town of Swampscott were invited to give feedback on the Swampscott Community Engagement Curriculum as well as one local community engagement professional who is unaffiliated with the Town of Swampscott. The two invited personnel represent the various factions of planning, community development, as well as town communications; one is a town employee while the other is a volunteer, elected official serving on a town board. The community engagement professional serves as the Community Engagement Manager at a local community development coalition and has more than three years' experience reaching marginalized populations, specifically immigrant, Latinx, and lowincome communities.

Materials

The completed curriculum (Appendix A) breaks engagement down into four parts: idea generation/general feedback, problem definition stages, project development, and postimplementation. The curriculum serves as a menu of suggestions for municipal officials to utilize when planning community outreach opportunities; each component includes three suggestions developed specifically to increase access for marginalized populations within the Town of Swampscott. To best present the curriculum's content, as well as the research that informed the curriculum, to the community partners a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix B) was used. This PowerPoint applies techniques suggested by the curriculum to a hypothetical capital improvement project in Swampscott. The example of building a playground in Precinct 6 was selected to help the interviewees understand how the curriculum should be applied.

An interview protocol (Appendix C) was generated to be orally presented to community partners to obtain feedback. The questions chosen were written in such a way as to not lead responses and to evaluate whether the goals of the curriculum were achieved. The first question explored the background of the individual being interviewed and their experience in engaging community groups. The second question focused on initial reactions to the curriculum and their thoughts about the presentation. In questions three and four, respondents were asked to reflect on concerns or opportunities regarding implementation as well as where they might perceive opportunities, challenges, and barriers to the specific techniques offered. Question five centered on assessing the value of the curriculum with regards to engaging typically harder-to-engage groups in the community such as marginalized, underrepresented populations. In questions six and seven, respondents were asked to consider how a curriculum could contribute to greater transparency, improve communication, and enhance community development as a town priority. The final question offered the respondent the opportunity to share any final thoughts about the curriculum.

Lastly, all the interview responses were placed into an Excel workbook for coding and thematic analysis. The content was listed by question and by respondent type so that any difference between responses could be better understood.

Procedure

The municipal officials selected to review the curriculum and provide feedback were chosen because of their capacity to implement the proposed ideas. They were selected because of the roles they hold in the community but also because of their interest in adopting new techniques and reaching more residents through their engagement. The community engagement professional was selected because they have a deep understanding of the field and would have the ability to offer an unbiased perspective. Their knowledge and work experience allowed them to assess the probability of success in reaching marginalized populations should the curriculum be adopted.

Each community partner participated in an informal introductory meeting in which they were able to ask questions and learn more about the proposed curriculum prior to agreeing to participate. These meetings took place over Zoom and lasted about an hour. No two meetings followed the same conversational direction as each conversation was tailored to explain how a curriculum of this nature would benefit their role specifically. After each partner agreed to participate, they were informed of the proposed timeline in which they would receive the curriculum in totality by the end of February or beginning of March 2022 and would be asked to schedule a time to meet by mid-March to be interviewed on their reflections on the curriculum.

Interviews were conducted virtually through Zoom and recorded to ensure exact responses could be transcribed following the interviews. Shorthand notes were also recorded during the interviews summarizing the partners' words and inflection while sharing their thoughts. Qualitative data analysis was used to group similar themes into categories to outline the partners' responses. First responses were clustered by question and a coding process was done. Codes included positive or negative responses as well as community-centered versus towncentered responses. Once the coding was complete, an iterative comparison was done to locate common themes. The themes were noted for frequency, intensity, and connection to community engagement.

Results

Three interviews were held in late March 2022. The first interviewee was a local Community Engagement Professional with no affiliation with the Town of Swampscott. The second interviewee was a municipal employee of the Town of Swampscott, working in town communications. The third interviewee was a resident volunteer on one of the Town of Swampscott's elected boards.

Curriculum Model

All three interviewees agreed that the curriculum would reach marginalized populations in the Town of Swampscott and that having said tool would enable the town to enhance community engagement as a priority. Interviewee 3 felt the curriculum would need to be written into the town charter to mandate an engagement process for it to be truly successful in Swampscott. The same interviewee felt while the tool was useful, it needed a stronger title than "curriculum" but gave no suggestions. All three agreed the curriculum would most benefit Swampscott's Community and Economic Development team and Planning Board but saw opportunities in most public-facing town departments, boards, and committees (i.e., Planning Board, Voter Engagement, Emergency Response/Hazard Mitigation, Town Communications, Town Administrator, Select Board, Zoning Board, and new boards/committees introduced for particular capital improvement projects).

Perceived Strengths

All three interviewees acknowledged that they liked the structure of the curriculum and the four identified stages of the process. Interviewee 3, in particular, focused on the problem definition stage, highlighting that Swampscott often excludes the public from or completely skips over the problem definition stage altogether. Interviewees 1 and 2 both mentioned the considerations section of each suggested engagement technique, specifically noting how considerations challenged them to think more inclusively than they currently were in their roles. Interviewee 1 specifically noted incentivizing participation while Interviewee 2 pointed to providing disposable cameras for residents who may not have a picture phone or camera access. Interviewees 2 and 3 both highlighted the opportunistic methods as options they could see being very successful in Swampscott and both identified the downtown area in front of Town Hall as a high-traffic location for hosting said engagement opportunities. Additionally, both Interviewees 2 and 3 liked the idea of capitalizing on town buzz about a project to garner feedback on the engagement process of said project. Interviewee 3 mentioned they had not seen the town ever use the feedback gained in one project to influence another and noted it was a wise idea they were planning to use moving forward. Interviewees 1 and 2 also mentioned how techniques introduced in the curriculum would have been beneficial in former projects.

Identified Barriers to Implementation

Each interviewee listed different expected challenges to implementation. Interviewee 1 listed funding as the greatest challenge as well as the lack of community-engagement-specific personnel in municipal boards, committees, and departments. They went on to say lack of funds may contribute to poorly executed engagement opportunities from the curricula because of a lack of resources, materials, and/or staffing. Interviewee 2 identified that the Town of Swampscott

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often has multiple capital improvement-type project timelines overlapping one another which may present challenges to developing in-depth engagement processes for each. They added resident recruitment is a current challenge that is not directly addressed by the curriculum. Interviewee 3 noted that even in inclusive, welcoming engagement opportunities people are, by nature, more or less willing to participate than their peers. Interviewee 3's fear is no matter the engaged population, certain folks will continue to dominate the conversation – this due to a lack of facilitation training held by most municipal officials.

Clarifications

Each Interviewee asked clarification questions while being interviewed and providing feedback. Interviewee 1 looked for clarification as to whether the Town of Swampscott had community-engagement-specific personnel on staff that would be able to implement the curriculum. Additionally, Interviewee 1 suggested a feedback section for the process, misinterpreting "post-implementation feedback" as feedback on the output rather than the process. Interviewee 2 had multiple points of clarification regarding wording used throughout the curriculum. Specifically, "highest level of community engagement" (page 11) versus "loudest level of engagement"; "post-implementation feedback" (page 14) versus "post-design phase feedback" or "post-engagement process feedback"; and "projects developed by community members" (page 11) versus "projects developed in collaboration with the community". Interviewee 3 asked for clarification on how the town can prove feedback was incorporated. *Suggestions for Improvements*

After reviewing the curriculum as well as the presentation, each interviewee brought forth additions they believed would increase the impact of the curriculum. Interviewee 1 suggested integrating small business owners and employees into the outreach process and ensuring municipal officials engage with Swampscott's economic community who may not reside within the town. Interviewee 2 recommended the addition of real-world examples of implementation into a future version. They felt these examples would make outreach opportunities more tangible to municipal officials and help with the visualization and planning process. Additionally, Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 3 both mentioned seeking tips for resident recruitment and advertising the engagement process. Interviewee 3 was also interested in adding disclosure statements to feedback opportunities acknowledging not every piece of feedback given can be implemented. They believe this would remind residents to be more intentional in their feedback rather than redirecting to feedback about the project outputs.

Discussion

My research focused on best practices for engaging marginalized populations on a municipal level. Through this research, I observed the majority of academic literature focused on bottom-up engagement in which municipalities and non-profit organizations empower marginalized populations to assert themselves in existing spaces. I noticed a lack of information on steps municipalities can take to lower the barriers to participation and develop more inclusive, welcoming community engagement opportunities for their residents. In addition to identifying the best practices, I sought the most appropriate method for delivering these materials and determined a community engagement curriculum was best suited for this.

The three main goals of my curriculum were: 1) Develop a curriculum of engagement strategies that encourages greater community engagement, 2) Promote community engagement techniques that are sensitive to changing population dynamics and reduce barriers to engagement for marginalized populations, and 3) Increase transparency between municipal officials and community members in an attempt to reduce town tensions.

A curriculum appears to be the best tool for introducing new community engagement techniques to municipal governments. All three interviewees agreed this tool would not only work to repair relationships between residents and municipal officials but also build new relationships with marginalized communities who are often left out of conversations surrounding town happenings. While each did have critical feedback and suggestions for improvement, they feel a curriculum of this nature would greatly benefit the Town of Swampscott and could be applied to other historically white, wealthy communities. One interviewee was adamant that this curriculum would have the intended benefits, though the community engagement process would need to be mandated for successful implementation. They did not believe the town would prioritize community engagement unless legally required to, regardless of having possession of a detailed curriculum such as the one proposed in this research. They also believed the format of the material was appropriate, but it needed a stronger term than curriculum, something that would sound more official and mandatory. Despite these critiques, it seems a curriculum structured like this is a beneficial format for communicating community engagement techniques with a municipality.

The specific structure of the proposed curriculum was successful. Each interviewee agreed with the importance of including engagement opportunities at all stages in the process. The Idea Generation and Project Development Stages were glossed over in the interviews probably because they are standard points for engagement. Interviewee 3 was thoroughly surprised at the inclusion of the Problem Definition stage, recognizing the town does not currently invest in that stage during projects. They continued to return to this stage as what I perceived to be their highlight of the curriculum. The considerations section of each proposed engagement technique also received high praise. The inclusion of this section was mentioned in

all conversations regarding how the curriculum specifically breaks down barriers to participation for marginalized communities.

Despite the support for the curriculum's breakdown, there was some confusion as to when Post-Implementation Feedback should occur. My intention with this section was to capitalize on the buzz around a project once ground breaks or the project completes the implementation phase. At this stage, the Town of Swampscott sees loud engagement surrounding the output of projects though that energy has never been captured to inform and improve future projects. Interviewee 1 identified a lack of feedback considered in the curriculum which points to unclearness of this section as well as Interviewee 2 outright naming their confusion.

The majority of the feedback received through this process was tangential to one another. Each interviewee focused on different components of the curriculum and their feedback rarely complemented one another, though it also did not contradict. This may have been due to the broadness of the interview questions which largely allowed interviewees to share their thoughts on how the curriculum connected to my project goals rather than inquiring about specific sections of the curriculum. Though, it speaks to the individualistic nature of the curriculum and how recipients can interpret the suggested methods to best fit their needs.

Curriculum projects such as these are successful tools for sharing ways that municipalities can engage hard-to-reach communities because it not only sets forth a clear set of directions for project implementation but also allows for touchpoints to assess and evaluate if the goals are being met. Further, curriculum documents can be accessible and public, allowing for greater transparency and community engagement between municipal officials and Swampscott residents. As such, this tool is a good way for communities to encourage greater engagement

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across all community groups, increase accountability, and provide space for community feedback and input.

Limitations of the Project

There were a number of limitations to this study, including the number of interviewees, the time duration and modality of interviews, and variance in time spent reviewing the curriculum by each interviewee. The results of this research are dependent on a three-person sample pool. While the individuals identified are qualified to weigh in on the topic, the small number of interviewees makes it difficult to assert outcomes as definitive. Interviews did not have a set end time or expected durations but averaged around an hour (20 minutes for the presentation, 40 minutes for the interview). Interviews were held on Zoom which hindered my ability to read any non-verbal social cues of each interviewee. Hosting interviews through Zoom two years into the COVID-19 Pandemic in which many people are "Zoom-ed Out" may have unintentionally rushed the discussion. Lastly, interviewees were provided with the curriculum seven to nine days prior to their interview. The amount of time they spent reviewing the materials ahead of time was not measured nor would personal time invested in reviewing be an accurate measure of comprehension. Though, differing time spent reviewing the interviews.

Implications for Future Projects

This research did not include revision of the curriculum in accordance with suggestions from interviewees to then be re-evaluated. It is unclear how accepting or rejecting suggestions would benefit the curriculum. In recreating this study, future researchers might consider preemptively including suggestions like writing in additional stakeholders such as local business owners and including real-world examples of implementation in the curriculum or intentionally

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including a revision and subsequent interview process to understand how these changes would impact the outcome. Something not directly considered in this curriculum was resident recruitment for engagement. Both town affiliates identified previous challenges with sharing out about engagement opportunities. Future researchers could extend this curriculum to include recommendations for advertising and resident recruitment.

All three interviewees agreed that implementing the suggestions in this curriculum would reduce barriers to participation for marginalized populations. While suggestions were based on research regarding building welcoming and inclusive spaces, there is no specific evidence these methods would produce more positive results as compared to more traditional methods. Using opportunistic engagement methods and relying on high levels of foot traffic rather than advertisements allows practitioners to suppress any biases that factor into marketing. The success of opportunistic community engagement techniques and specifically how they increase participation of marginalized populations should be included in future research.

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Appendix A

SWAMPSCOTT, MA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CURRICULUM

ELANA ZABAR MERRIMACK COLLEGE SPRING 2021



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Introduction

PURPOSE

Municipal governments are responsible for creating spaces that allow community members to actively participate in and comment on the decision-making process. Moreover, municipal governments have a responsibility to reduce barriers to participation for their marginalized populations and provide all residents with equitable access to participation. The inclusion of marginalized populations in the civic participation process broadens the conversation to focus on the whole community rather than just meeting the needs of those that have the time, money, and energy to contribute. Existing community systems lack representation of diverse perspectives, tearing a hole in otherwise strong communities. Swampscott, MA is no stranger to this issue. The proposed curriculum aims to highlight underutilized community engagement techniques that would allow the Town of Swampscott to update its outreach repertoire.

Swampscott residents have taken to various social media and print platforms to critique their elected and appointed officials, most recently citing a lack of transparency and communication between residents and municipal officials. This curriculum was developed to assist Swampscott residents and municipal leaders in designing opportunities for improved and more inclusive community engagement. Each section will highlight different instances in which community engagement could be employed and suggested approaches to meet the needs of each situation. The goal of this curriculum is to provide the Town of Swampscott with a repository of fleshed out community engagement techniques to add to their repository. These methods aim to bridge the participation gap between privileged and marginalized identities in the community.

GOALS

DEVELOP A CURRICULUM OF OUTREACH STRATEGIES THAT ENCOURAGE GREATER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

PROMOTE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES THAT ARE SENSITIVE TO CHANGING POPULATION DYNAMICS AND REDUCE BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT FOR MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS



()1

()2

INCREASE TRANSPARENCY BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND () Community members in an attempt to reduce town TENSIONS

Guiding Principles for Community Engagement

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

01	CLEARLY DEFINE THE GOALS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Initiative including which communities will be Reached
02	INVEST IN UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF The target population as well as their relationship With decision-makers and to the topic of engagement
03	ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS AND BUILD TRUST WITH Community leaders of the target populations
04	ALLOW TARGET COMMUNITY TO HOLD AUTONOMY OVER THE Problem-defining and solution-building experience
05	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS KEY TO EFFECT CHANGE; WORK To build trust with the target population before during and after the initiative ends
06	CREATE NEUTRAL & ACCESSIBLE SPACES THAT RECOGNIZE And appreciate community diversity as an integral part of each stage of the process
07	GROUND WORK IN ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT And Build Community Capacity to ensure engagement Sustainability; This process must be mutually Beneficial
08	EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE Process and practice flexibility as the community Adapts
09	COMMIT TO LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS RECOGNIZING THAT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS A LENGTHY PROCESS

Adopted from CTSA Community Engagement Key Function Committee Task Force's Principles of Community Engagement (2nd ed.), 2011

IDEA GENERATION & GENERAL FEEDBACK

In order to build trust between municipal officers and residents, it is imperative that community input is welcome at all stages of planning. Open communication and willingness to share ideas must be promoted regardless of whether or not there is an ongoing project. Residents must have direct avenues to connect with their elected and appointed officials outside of formal public meeting spaces and website e-mail functions, both of which can be inaccessible for different marginalized populations,

Barriers to participation in public meetings include physical accessibility, language barriers, working hours, and most recently new barriers like access to internet-capable devices and technological literacy have been introduced as forums are held virtually. Understanding that vulnerable populations do not have the same access to board and department meetings as higher-resourced individuals creates opportunities for municipal officials to solicit resident ideas in other ways.

GOALS



BUILD TRUST BETWEEN MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS AND RESIDENTS

DEVELOP SPACES FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS TO COLLECT NEW 02 IDEAS FROM RESIDENTS

BIANNUAL IDEA EXCHANGE

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Swampscott held a semi-regular idea exchange in which residents were able to present ideas to representatives of different town boards, departments, and commissions. The Town of Swampscott could reinstate this event twice a year, once in person and once virtually to create equitable opportunities for community members to participate. This event could transition to be more open-ended idea generation rather than facilitating conversations on specific topics

This event would allow residents to reserve time with a member of a particular board, department, or commission in which they would have a one-on-one conversation about the resident's idea. Each sitting board, department, and commission member should see different residents to ensure maximum availability. Residents should also be required to prepare visual aids they can share with the sitting municipal official such as a presentation or poster.

This event could be held outdoors in one of the town's parks where municipal officials are assigned a table and residents are scheduled to move around, similarly, it could be held in one of the schools where the classrooms and offices could be utilized as meeting spaces. Virtually, breakout rooms could be utilized to garner the same effect.

Following the event, each board, department, and commission should be required to discuss the ideas presented to them in their meetings as well as develop suggested followup recommendations for the resident who presented each idea. Boards have the option to pass on ideas but adding these discussions to the agenda will allow all ideas to be documented in the meeting minutes. This documentation serves as an undeniable acknowledgment of communication between the resident and municipal official. Should an idea be adopted, credit should be given to the resident who presented it.

CONSIDERATIONS

01	HOLD EVENT OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL WORK HOURS; WELCOME CHILDREN TO THE EVENT AND/OR PROVIDE CHILDCARE
02	ENSURE EVENT IS HELD IN A PHYSICALLY ACCESSIBLE SPACE on a public transit route
03	PROVIDE ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (E.G. Microphones, elevators, virtual translation services, etc.)
04	DETERMINE AN ACCOUNTABILITY STRATEGY FOR MUNICIPAL Officials; Assign someone the role of following up

INTERACTIVE ART INSTALLATIONS

The Town of Swampscott could commission local artists to develop an interactive art installation that encourages community members to share their ideas for further developing the town. This would be an opportunity to bring public art into areas with high foot traffic (e.g. the Rail Trail @ Bradlee Ave/Manton Rd, the Snack Shacks at the Middle School Baseball Field and Blocksidge Field, Upper Jackson Field, Humphrey Street/Lynn Shore Drive Boardwalk) for the purpose of community development.

An example of an installation could be a version of Candy Chang's "Before I Die" Chalkboard Wall like "Something I'd Love to See in Swampscott is..." with chalk left for residents to write their ideas down. Different questions could be placed around town to promote the town's outdoor spaces or the installation(s) could feature rotating questions in which the questions change every week or so. An installation like this would require some level of continued involvement to properly document the ideas shared such as a daily photograph.

Another installation idea could be to recruit local artists to develop murals for a particular theme or topic. Artists would create murals according to prompts like "Community development" or "Swampscott in 20 Years" which could, again, be installed in high trafficked areas. Each mural could have information about the artists and murals as well as a QR code that connects the audience to a virtual space where they have the opportunity to share their thoughts on the ideas raised by the art. Questions would be specifically generated to prompt the audience to think about the theme or topic and provide further ideas on what they would like to see in Swampscott.

Art exists to start conversations and can be utilized to generate ideas for community development in Swampscott. Interactive art installations provide a level of anonymity that allows residents to share their true feelings without fearing any backlash.

CONSIDERATIONS

- O1 INCLUDING A DIVERSE ARRAY OF ARTISTS, SPECIFICALLY YOUTH/AGING ARTISTS AND ARTISTS OF COLOR
- 02

THERE ARE SEVERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS FOR PUBLIC ART AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK; ARTISTS SHOULD BE PAID FAIRLY FOR THEIR WORK

B develop in-person and virtual options for engagement to reach the largest audience

COMMUNITY WALK

A community walk requires multiple volunteers but has flexible timing, meaning volunteers can participate on their own time. This option allows residents to walk through Swampscott with the sole intention of observing the town as it currently exists, transcribing what they see.

Residents could be given prompts to answer (e.g., questions about green space, infrastructure, community spaces, etc.) or assigned specific locations around town to walk through and comment on. Purposeful observation breeds creativity. An engagement opportunity like this would allow residents to bring specific development ideas to the town's attention

Residents should be encouraged to complete their community walk observations alongside a partner or small walking group to incorporate diverse perspectives. Municipal officials could develop a sign-up sheet for volunteers to help facilitate groups and may participate as residents but their status as officials should be separated from their input.

The information collected through these observation notes should be compiled and categorized and then publicized. These ideas should then be forwarded to the appropriate board, department, and/or commission.

CONSIDERATIONS



PARTNER VOLUNTEERS WITH ONE ANOTHER; HOSTING MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS SHOULD ATTEMPT TO CREATE DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITY

02 $\,$ ensure that all six town precincts receive equal $\,$ attention $\,$



ALLOW VOLUNTEERS TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN CAPACITY TO 03 Navigate the town, recognizing much of the town's infrastructure is inaccessible for people who rely on MOBILITY AIDS.

PROBLEM DEFINITION STAGE

After a board, department, or commission determines they would like to move forward with an idea, it is vital they continue to seek resident engagement throughout the entire process. Problem definition allows community members to assist in defining the scope of the problem and offer their perspective on how that problem subsists in Swampscott.

While the majority of municipal officials are Swampscott residents, current municipal officials mainly fit into the same or similar socio-demographic identities which do not proportionately represent the entire community. Outreach with those most impacted by the problem includes a more diverse perspective and increases the chances of proposed solutions being successful.

Oftentimes, residents who are less connected are not aware of opportunities to participate in the problem definition stage. Municipal officials should expand their existing advertisement reach in order to recruit the largest possible resident base to engage with this stage.

GOALS

 $\mathbf{01}$

INCLUDE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES IN THE PROBLEM-DEFINITION STAGE

O2 DEVELOP RAPPORT AND BUILD TRUST WITH DIRECTLY AFFECTED RESIDENTS



EMPOWER RESIDENTS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PROBLEM-DEFINITION STAGE WHICH WILL IN TURN RESULT IN MORE HANDS ON DECK THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROJECT PROCESSS

STORYTELLING EVENT

When a particular board, department, or commission determines they will be moving forward with a project and are seeking resident input on that particular project, they could host a Storytelling Event. This event functions much like an Open Mic Night where residents are provided an opportunity to share their experiences in relation to the problem. Municipal officers would act as audience members and notetakers but would not have an active role in the event beyond that.

This event creates a safe space for community members to share with their elected officials but removes the formalities and pressures of a public forum. Residents should be invited to share their thoughts through their preferred medium which could be a speech, a story, spoken-word poetry, etc.. Appropriate locations for this event would be any neutral community spaces such as Reach Arts, the Senior Center, or any of the schools. The goal would be to create an environment where residents feel comfortable and empowered to share their stories.

Municipal officers should prioritize hearing from abutters and residents most directly impacted by the project they are working on and should develop a plan to individualize the invitation process to ensure those most directly impacted by the problem are given a platform to speak. Creating a space where municipal officials are invited to listen rather than participate allows residents to feel more heard and will build trust between the two parties.

CONSIDERATIONS



CHOOSING A SPACE WITHOUT A STAGE OR PODIUM TO Develop a more welcoming environment in a Physically accessible building

02

SELECTING A WELL-KNOWN TOWN DIVERSITY CHAMPION AND/OR LOCAL ARTIST TO EMCEE THE EVENT



OFFER A ZOOM ALTERNATIVE TO ALLOW RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE FROM THE COMFORT OF THEIR OWN HOMES SHOULD THEY BE UNABLE TO ATTEND IN PERSON FOR ANY REASON

LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN

In Swampscott, residents have limited options for connecting with municipal officials in a professional setting beyond public forums and "Contact Us" virtual forms. Most boards and commissions are comprised of volunteer residents who should not have to broadcast their personal contact information but also do not necessarily have town-affiliated e-mails or addresses.

A board, department, or commission developing a project could host a Letter Writing Campaign in which they devote a singular month to more intentionally encourage residents to suggest ideas for the project. To promote this campaign, they could install a mailbox on Town Hall Lawn where residents could drop their letters off. Additionally, residents could be allowed to mail their letters or -- if the town mandated the development of a general email for each board, department, and commission -- residents could send their letters via email.

The hosting board, department, and commission could write a memo to the community that serves as an invitation to solicit ideas through this letter writing campaign. They would be able to specifically define the parameters of the project they are working on and include an ask to solicit resident input on said topic. They could also include prompting questions, if applicable, to help residents provide the most beneficial feedback.

Boards, departments, and commissions would have the opportunity to discuss the ideas raised in these letters and respond, should any response contact information be provided. Facilitating a communication campaign like this, in which residents expect to be responded to, could catalyze repairing the relationship between residents and their municipal officials by creating a space in which residents feel their thoughts and ideas are being valued.

CONSIDERATIONS



RESIDENTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO WRITE IN WHATEVER LANGUAGE THEY FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE COMMUNICATING IN; TOWN SHOULD MAKE TRANSLATION SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS



RESPONSE LETTERS TO RESIDENTS COULD BE USED AS A METHOD FOR ADVERTISING FUTURE PROJECT ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PHOTO-WALK EXHIBITION

A photo-walk exhibition allows experienced and novice photographers alike to show Swampscott through their lens. The municipal board, department, or commission employing this engagement technique would set the parameters for submissions. They could develop specific prompts tailored to projects for residents to respond to through photography, such as "We need a new X because..." or "A space I'd love to see redeveloped is...". These prompts would create spaces for residents to suggest how existing infrastructure is failing to meet their needs and make suggestions for future development.

This engagement allows for a diverse group of residents to participate as there are limited barriers to participation. However, this method assumes the majority of folks have a camera phone and/or camera in general. Residents should be able to submit anonymously should they so choose.

These photo responses would just be one layer of engagement for this idea. An added layer of engagement would be to display these photos in some sort of exhibition and allow other residents and those that originally participated to come and walk through these exhibition photos. Audience members could be given sticky notes to place around the photos to comment on the photographers' submission --- expressing anything from agreement, disagreement, or new ideas building off the available photos.

CONSIDERATIONS



DEVELOP A VIRTUAL GALLERY AND RESPONSE FORM SUBMITTED DIRECTLY TO THE HOSTS TO ALLOW THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND IN PERSON THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT



02

CONSIDER PURCHASING PHOTOS FROM SUBMISSIONS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ART AND USE FOR FUTURE TOWN PROJECTS

O4 PURCHASE DISPOSABLE CAMERAS FOR RESIDENTS WITHOUT CAMERA-ACCESS, UPON REQUEST

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT **STAGE**

Historically, resident participation dwindles as a project progresses. The highest levels of community engagement typically come after a project has been fully developed, in the beginning/end of implementation. This is usually because residents are expressing opposition to the project plan, where they may or may not have contributed. Therefore, it is pertinent to increase engagement during the development stages of a project.

Barriers to participation here often include the time commitment associated with working on a project and lack of awareness about ongoing projects. Projects developed by community members are more likely to be successfully implemented and receive less criticism.

The Town of Swampscott should prioritize town-wide engagement specifically in this phase in addition to the inclusion of those most directly impacted.

GOALS

O1

INCORPORATE DIVERSE RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES INTO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

02 introduce residents to leadership roles within the community engagement process

03 $\,$ prioritize town perspectives in project development over outside assistance

DESIGN CHARETTE

A design charette can be a one-day or multi-day process in which residents work together to brainstorm ideas for what a project should look like. A charette is a hands-on workshop with multiple components that require residents to envision their perfect solution(s). Charrettes are traditionally used to develop ideas for new infrastructure but can be applied to most community development work. These workshops can include drawing activities, vision-boarding, brainstorming partner sessions, and more.

The Town of Swampscott could host a design charette for upcoming projects to truly understand the community's needs. A design charrette works best when combining a wide array of perspectives. Hosts should plan to advertise to diverse audiences such as Senior Center clients, residents of the Swampscott Housing Authority, K-12 students, young family groups, and more as deemed appropriate for the project. Additionally, it would be important to have equal representation from each of the six precincts.

The charrette process could include a virtual vision boarding type activity (through Google Jamboard, Padlet, or other) to include ideas from folks unable to participate in an in-person charrette. Different questions could be used to prompt residents. The town could also separate these virtual vision boards by demographics to gain a full understanding of the needs of particular communities, recognizing that identities are not monolithic.

CONSIDERATIONS

- O1 OUTREACH TO DIVERSE POPULATIONS WITHOUT TOKENIZING PARTICIPATION
- 02 ${\scriptstyle \rm incentivize\ participation;\ offer\ meals\ or\ financial\ compensation\ for\ those\ able\ to\ commit\ }$
- 03 $_{\rm MORE\ FREELY}^{\rm HIRE\ EXTERNAL\ FACILITATORS\ TO\ ALLOW\ RESIDENTS\ TO\ SPEAK}$
- O4 HIRE INTERPRETERS TO ENSURE ALL RESIDENTS ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE DESPITE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

VISIONING TOURS

This strategy is recommended for proposed infrastructural changes. Visioning tours invite residents to join municipal officials at the site of the proposed change and engage in dialogue surrounding suggestions for the site. Here residents would be given the opportunity to advocate for their needs by explicitly demonstrating said needs on-site. This outreach method would work best if the town has chosen a development site and/or of the town is between two locations. In the latter case, residents would be able to share insights on the site location as well.

After giving residents the ability to walk around the site for a while and make observations, facilitated conversations should be held to receive first impressions and address resident concerns. Being on-site will allow residents to best envision the future development and provide commentary as such.

Municipal officials would be wise to invite facilities/maintenance workers and/or the Department of Public Works to offer insight into the practicality of the needs raised in conversations. This would offer a collaborative working space to reach decision-making that best incorporates resident needs within the scope of town capacity.

CONSIDERATIONS

PLAN A SPECIFIC VISIONING TOUR TO DISCUSS PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY AT THE PROPOSED SITE; ENSURE DISABLED RESIDENT VOICES ARE INVITED TO THE CONVERSATION

02

O1

INCLUDE ABUTTERS IN THE VISUALIZATION PROCESS



INVITE RESIDENTS WITH SPECIFIC TECHNICAL BACKGROUNDS O3 who may be an asset to the process (e.g., CONSTRUCTION, DISABILITY ADVOCATES, COMMUNITY PLANNING, ETC.)

COMMUNITY RFP COMPETITION

A Community RFP Competition allows residents to take a much more active role in the project development process. Given the full scope of a problem, this engagement technique encourages residents to independently (or in groups) develop their ideas for solutions. Residents would be able to record themselves delivering their proposals to be uploaded in a virtual space. Municipal officials would develop a rubric for evaluating proposals and would assign each video a score, with a completed rubric attached to each video. A rubric might include feasibility, expense, timeline, etc.; then Swampscott residents would have the opportunity to vote for their favorite proposals.

Community development proposals often come from outside the community as they require in-depth technical knowledge of the project, which many residents do not have. An RFP competition allows residents to share their ideas for projects without needing to have a fully fleshed-out plan. Here residents could make suggestions for what they would like to see and/or what would meet their needs for this project.

Municipal officials would be able to combine high-ranking community ideas to inform their official RFP process with external contracts. This meaning, hosting municipal officials would use winning proposals as a baseline for development when working with contractors.

CONSIDERATIONS



LISTING VIDEOS IN A FAIR MANNER SUCH AS ALPHABETICALLY OR BY SUBMISSION DATE SO THAT NO ONE IS LISTED ABOVE ANOTHER FOR SUBJECTIVE REASONING

INCLUDING WINNING COMMUNITY RFP SUBMITTERS IN THE 02 formal project development process to hold team ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE INCLUSION OF SAID IDEAS



O3 PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TECHNICAL LITERACY SKILLS PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR INTERESTED RESIDENTS WITH LOW

POST IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Outreach after implementation allows municipal officials to understand the impacts of their work as well as continue to build rapport with the directly impacted residents. Municipal officials should seek to understand what new problems exist and work with residents to build solutions. Throughout the problem defining and project development stages, residents should be made aware of follow-up engagement opportunities to critique and offer feedback on the entire process.

Residents are often most willing to deliver post-implementation feedback, though sometimes through personal communication and social media rather than through specific civic outreach opportunities. Recognizing this as the stage with the highest engagement, municipal officials should use post-implementation feedback to understand how residents felt about their involvement in the process as well as if they believe their voices were heard.

This section of the curriculum includes more traditional engagement methods with more considerations for developing inclusive and accessible spaces for Swampscott's whole community. These methods can be used as an evaluation of the success of community engagement throughout a project.

GOALS

()1

PROVIDE METHODS OF EVALUATION FOR ABOVE MENTIONED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODS

O2 OFFER NEW CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRADITIONAL ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES



ENHANCE EXISTING TOWN ENGAGEMENT METHODS TO BE O3 MORE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TO MARGINALIZED SUBPOPULATIONS OF SWAMPSCOTT

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups bring together small groups of people (8-12 people per group) to participate in a facilitated dialogue regarding a particular topic. Hosting municipal officials should bring together residents that participated in previous outreach opportunities throughout a project to evaluate the methods used. A neutral facilitator would read through predetermined questions to understand how residents felt about the levels of community engagement involved in a project and which methods in particular they believed to be successful.

Focus groups allow participants to build off one another. One or more notetakers should be present to transcribe commentary as well as record observational notes about the interactions between residents. The goal of these focus groups would be to evaluate the community engagement specifically, not necessarily the outcome. Conversations on outcomes should only be entertained if it pertains to the accountability of municipal officials, such as the municipal officials did well to incorporate resident voices and if not how residents would like to see future engagement.

Focus groups can be held in person or virtually. While all residents that previously engaged should be invited, hosts should prioritize bringing community leaders as well as residents that continuously participated to best determine the success of each method.

CONSIDERATIONS



INCENTIVIZE PARTICIPATION TO ENCOURAGE THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS



TO THE BEST OF THE TEAM'S ABILITY - INVITE RESIDENTS OF VARYING SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC IDENTITIES INTO THE SAME FOCUS GROUP SLOTS



HOST A FOCUS GROUP OF RESIDENTS THAT DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS AND/OR STOPPED PARTICIPATING TO BEST UNDERSTAND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

Key person interviews allow for a more detailed reflection of resident perspectives. A question route should be generated to best understand how residents felt about the community engagement process. Key people to include would be community leaders, residents that continued to engage throughout the entire process, and residents that were originally invested but withdrew at some point.

Interviews can be conducted by municipal officials in person or virtually and should follow the snowball method. The snowball method invites interviewees to share whom they identify as other key people that should be interviewed. Municipal officials should seek to invite a diverse group of people for their initial interviews as residents will be likely to recommend another resident of a similar demographic background.

Questions should be written in a neutral manner as to not lead residents in any particular direction. Key informants should be given space to give general feedback as well as answer more specific questions that outline whether or not the goals of engagement were met through the project's outreach process.

CONSIDERATIONS



SEEK UNINVOLVED PERSONS TO FACILITATE INTERVIEW PROCESS TO ALLOW FOR MORE HONEST RESPONSES

02

MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE RESIDENTS THAT HISTORICALLY ARE OFTEN INVOLVED; THEIR OPINIONS ARE VALID HERE BUT MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS SHOULD REACH OUT BEYOND THOSE THAT WILLINGLY VOLUNTEER



ENLIST THE HELP OF A TRAINED NOTETAKER OR 03 observational researcher to receive the best results FROM AN INTERVIEW

COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey is perhaps one of the most well-known outreach strategies. All residents that interacted with a project, no matter their level of involvement, should be sent a survey to rate their experience. This survey should be available in as many languages as possible to build accessibility as well as include contact information for additional translation services if needed.

The survey should include a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions to best understand the resident experience. Quantitative ranking questions should lack neutral/middle-ground options to push residents to express their opinions as strictly positive or negative (i.e., on a scale from 1-4, strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree ranking). Qualitative questions should be written as clearly as possible and be reviewed by an external party to ensure respondents interpret the questions as the authors hope they will.

Survey responses will give the hosting municipal officials clear-cut data on what components of engagement residents enjoyed and which methods need more tweaking to fit the needs of the residents. Additionally, this survey should include demographic questions to showcase the diverse perspectives included in the process. Municipal officials should strive to have identity parity between the community and those that participated in the outreach process (i.e. if 18.8% of town residents are 65+ years of age then around 18.8% of participants should be 65+ years of age.

CONSIDERATIONS

HIRE A CONSULTANT TO ANALYZE THE SURVEY RESPONSES TO ()1REDUCE MUNICIPAL WORKLOAD



IN THE INTRODUCTION INCLUDE AN AVERAGE TIMETABLE FOR 02 HOW LONG THE SURVEY MIGHT TAKE; PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN SHORTER SURVEYS



ALLOW OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES TO BE ANSWERED IN ANY LANGUAGE

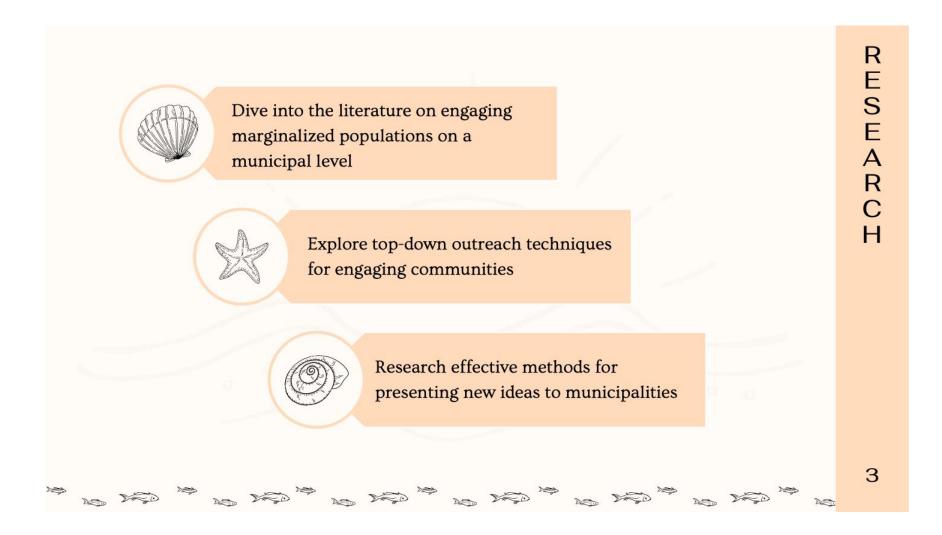


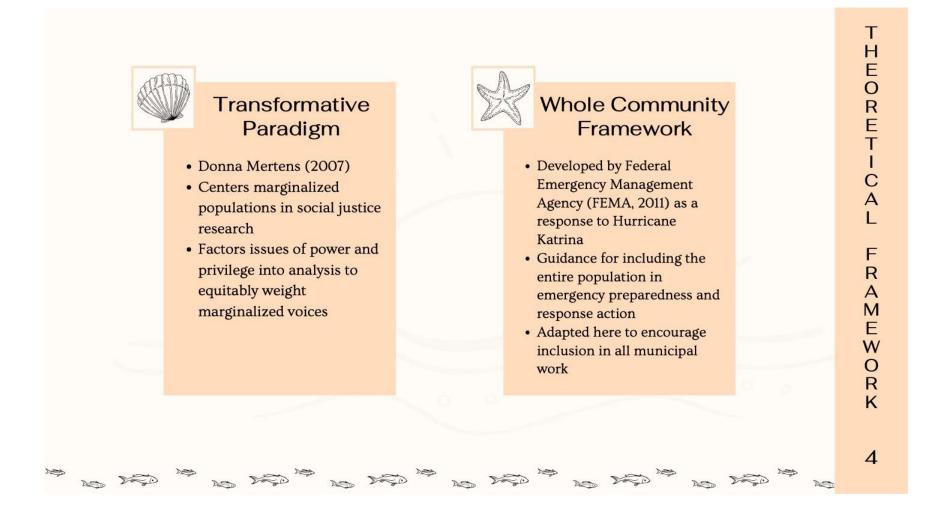
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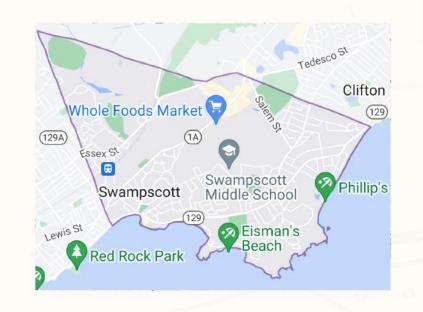




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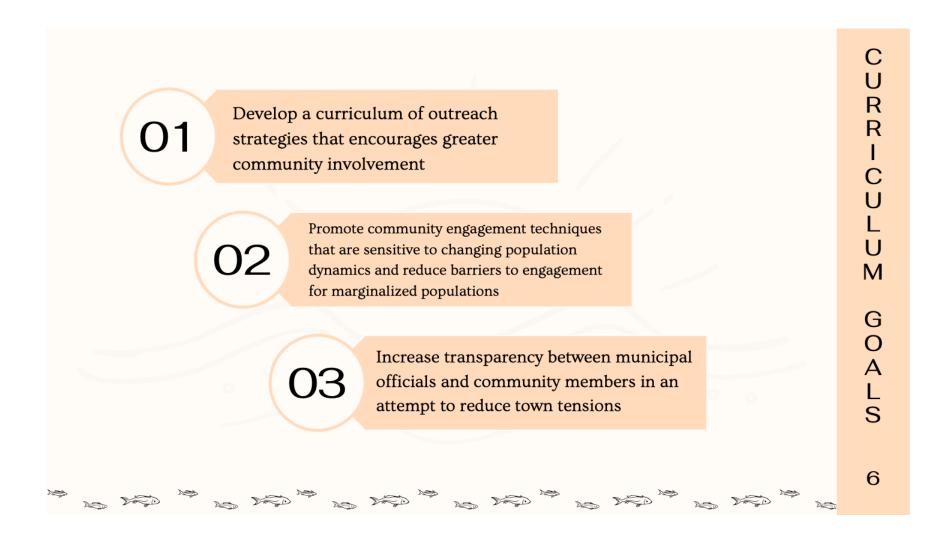
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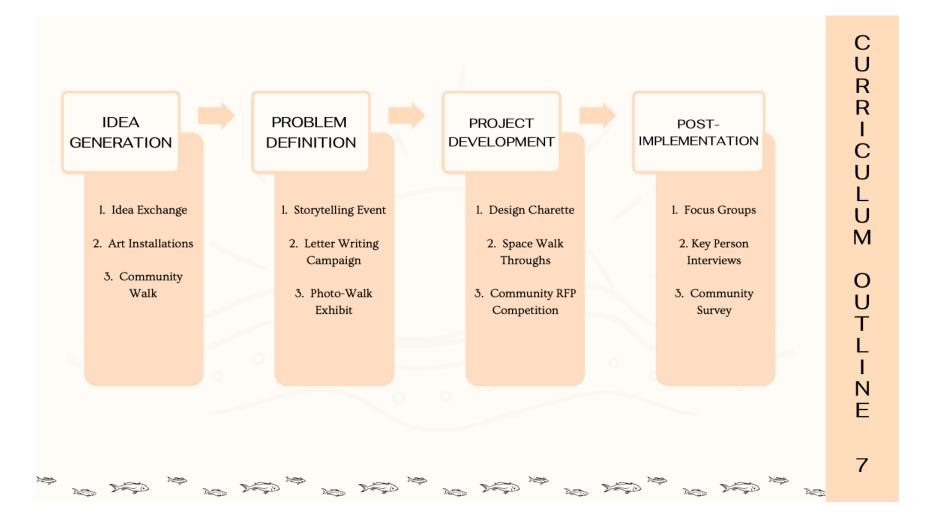
SWAMPSCOTT, MA

Settled: 1692 | Incorporated: 1852 Area: 6.7 sq mi (3.1 land/3.7 water) Population (2020): 15,111 | ~87% White Median Household Income: \$113,407 Median Age: 44.8 Senior Population (65+): 18.8% Homeownership Rate: 77.1%

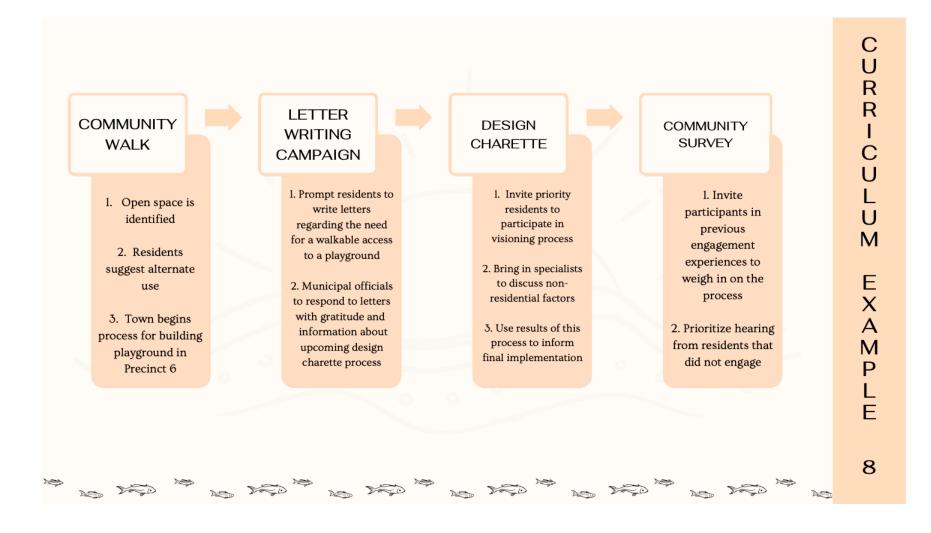
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INTERVIEWS:

- Working with Swampscott municipal officials as well as external community engagement professionals
- Understanding if a curriculum is the best way to go and if so, what should be included to build more inclusive engagement practices on a municipal level

Appendix C

During the Presentation:

General Observation Notes

(Did the interviewee interject at any point? What did they say? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? Etc.)

During the Interview:

Thank you for taking the time to review my project. As a reminder, this is a research capstone to understand if a curriculum is the best fit for dispersing this information to a municipality such as Swampscott and if so, what information should be included. Your feedback is much appreciated, the more critical the better! Know that your responses will be kept confidential. No identifying information will be shared in my capstone, and you will be listed as a community or municipal reviewer.

What is your community engagement background? How long have you been involved in municipal affairs? Swampscott?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

What are your first reactions to the curriculum/presentation?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

Do you think having a curriculum of this nature in Swampscott's repertoire enhance community engagement as a priority during future capital improvement/community development projects?

Follow Up Prompting Questions (check if used):

- IF YES: Any ideas how?
- IF NO: What could be added to the curriculum to address this?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

How do you see this curriculum or a curriculum like this being implemented in the Town of Swampscott?

Follow Up Prompting Questions (check if used):

- Asking to elaborate on one or two of the suggestions
- If no suggestions, why do they think this curriculum/a curriculum like this could not be implemented?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

With a curriculum like this, there are always opportunities and challenges.

Where do you see there being opportunities to increase community engagement through these methods?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

Where do you see challenges and/or barriers to implementation with community engagement techniques such as these?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

An intentional piece to this curriculum is trying to increase engagement for marginalized and under-represented folks in Swampscott. In your opinion, would the implementation of the community engagement methods described in this curriculum present more opportunities for residents of marginalized identities to participate?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

Recognizing that transparency between residents and municipal offices/boards is a growing priority in Swampscott, how do you see a curriculum such as this supporting transparency/communication efforts between officials and residents?

Follow Up Prompting Questions (check if used):

- If you don't see it helping, what should be added?
- If you do see it helping, any concerns about this that I should consider?

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

Recorded Response (Interview is being recorded so it's okay to worry less about this)	General Observation Notes (What was the tone of their voice? Did they have any obvious facial expressions? etc)

Any final thoughts or ideas for me about this curriculum or this concept overall?

I'd like to thank you for your time, your feedback is very valuable in improving this project and creating a useful tool for the Town of Swampscott and communities overall. As I review my notes from our discussion, would you mind if I follow up with you in case any additional questions arise?

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via email. Thank you so much for your feedback and have a great morning/day/afternoon/evening.