

Engagement Report

City of San José Citywide Community Engagement Framework

April 2024

This memorandum is a short summary of insights based on community engagement efforts in February 2024 undertaken to finalize the City of San José (CSJ) Citywide Community Engagement Framework.

Context

Led by the Community Engagement Working Group, the City of San José is finalizing its Citywide Community Engagement Framework which will serve as a guide for all City departments to use in engagement activities. To confirm and validate guidance within the Framework, CSJ distributed a survey regarding engagement that yielded 939 responses. To further complement these responses, the City held three open houses in the month of February 2024 and promoted the events to San José residents that do not traditionally engage with City departments outreach processes. The events were all held in person and at the following dates and times:

- February 12, 2024 at 6 pm, in the Bonita neighborhood (1300 San Antonio Mobile Park)
- February 15, 2024 at 6 pm, at Amigos de Guadalupe (1897 Alum Rock Ave #35, San Jose, CA 95116)
- February 16, 2024 at 10 am, at Amigos de Guadalupe (1897 Alum Rock Ave #35, San Jose, CA 95116)

These dates and the locations were chosen alongside CSJ promotores and community-based organizations. Promotores partnered with CSJ assisted in promoting the open houses as well.

Insights

At the three open houses, approximately 45 community members provided feedback on ways to encourage and incentivize San José residents to participate in CSJ community engagement efforts. The majority of attendees participated in Spanish and English, with several Vietnamese speakers also in attendance. Following are the key insights from the engagement across the three open houses, which closely inform the recommendations above.

Quality of Engagement

- The lack of City follow-up to inform residents on actions resulting from their feedback discourages further participation.
- Residents had mixed responses on whether it was easy to attend City community meetings.
- Many residents felt they were not given enough advance notice to participate in engagement opportunities.

Equitable Opportunities for Engagement

- Incentives will boost participation in City engagement, particularly in economically-strained communities.
- It is important to invest in services that reduce barriers to participation, including food and childcare.
- Residents need information and engagement opportunities to be available and advertised in their primary language to properly engage with the City.
- Residents want opportunities to engage both in-person and virtually.

Reaching Residents Where They Are

- One of the ways community members appreciate being informed is through community groups that they already have a connection with. Social media and physical flyers in community spaces were the second and third most selected options for how community members would like to be informed. Email and mailers were the least selected options.
- Engagement activities held during weekdays and evenings were more preferable to weekends and morning timeframes. It is important to note, however, that the three February engagement events were held during weekdays, potentially skewing this result.
- Residents emphasized the importance of community groups and their community's promotores.

Considerations

The following are items that CSJ may consider based on results from engagement activities, previous engagement efforts by the CEWG, and facilitated discussions with the CEWG. Many of these items have been incorporated into the Community Engagement Framework as best practices, with the intention of City staff to determine how to best implement the following:

Standardize Engagement

- Establish the Community Engagement Framework as a standard component of employee orientation and onboarding materials to address the inconsistency in experience reported by community participants.
- Invest in creating a standardized feedback mechanism that keeps participants informed on the status of projects they have provided feedback on, as well as how their feedback was used.
- Develop a central database, such as a Client Relations Management (CRM), that will allow City staff across different departments to track community engagement and decrease duplicative efforts among communities.

Build Capacity Among City Staff

- Allocate budget as possible for increased staff time to ensure proper implementation of this Community Engagement Framework. Project managers should have time for community engagement built into their project schedules, for example.

- Continue to support programs such as the promotores model and Neighborhood Services and Education Committee’s proposed Neighborhood Liaisons to maintain access for City staff into communities and reduce the amount of time City staff spends trying to gain community contacts and knowledge.
- Require all departments have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for staff conducting engagement to reduce guesswork and make conducting engagement more efficient. These SOPs should serve as a resource for City staff to refer to on commonly asked questions.
- Allocate resources to compensate City interns and part-time workers for participating in engagement that often occurs outside of their regular work day.

Improve Participant Experience

- Encourage community engagement consultants to obtain grants to provide stipends and/or gift cards to community members for participation.
- Revisit the Language Equity Policy to allow staff to create more accessible community engagement experiences for non-English speaking City residents. Consider ways to make it easier to secure interpretation and translation funding sources.
- Ensure that barrier-reducing services such as food and childcare are provided as necessary and incorporated into engagement budgets.

Compiled Results

Results are compiled below for the February open houses. For open response questions, the top responses have been gathered and summarized for the purposes of this report.

How would you like to hear about engagement opportunities from the City?

Through email blasts from the City	14
Through visual flyers for events in my community	27
Through mailers sent to my home	11
Through a community group I am already a part of (like a neighborhood association, Project Hope, business association, etc.)	33
Through the City's social media	24

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement by placing a dot along the scale.

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree
I know how to learn about and find opportunities to engage with the City.	10	11	4	7
The City of San José consistently asks for feedback from community members on the topics that I care about.	7	10	7	6
I trust that City staff mean well, care about my feedback, and will not misuse my information.	9	13	7	3
When I do engage in City processes, staff is good at explaining the issues and helping me provide meaningful feedback.	4	15	9	2
It is easy to participate in the City's virtual engagement activities such as online surveys.	10	11	8	2
It is easy to attend and participate in the City's community meetings.	5	11	10	4
The City is good at reporting back to the community about how they used the feedback and the outcome of the process.	2	9	12	13

I would be more likely to participate in community engagement if:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree
The City offered childcare at all in-person community meetings/workshops.	16	4	6	0
The City offered food at all in-person community meetings/workshops.	18	5	1	1
The City ensured that interpreters and translated materials are available at all meetings/workshops (both in-person and virtual).	19	8	1	0
The City made engagement events fun and interactive.	12	13	0	2

I have a preference for:

Strong preference	Slight preference	No preference	Slight preference	Strong preference
Week Days			Weekends	
6	12	5	1	4
Mornings			Evenings	
3	2	0	1	13
Virtual Events			In Person Events	
13	4	1	12	13

How would you like to participate in City decision making? Examples include making engagement more fun, more convenient, or less time-consuming. How would you like to participate in City decision making?

- Importance of promotores, continued funding, promotores in all areas of SJ (7)
- Info in our language/ appropriate interpretation (7)
- Partner with community groups and CBOs to advertise and host engagement (7)
- Less time consuming/more convenient (7)
- More fun/dynamic/interactive (5)
- Use community centers, libraries, and small businesses as gathering places (4)

Would you be more likely to participate if you were compensated for your time?

Response	Frequency	Additional thoughts
Yes	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation will incentivize my community and make them feel valued (6) • People are taking valuable time out of their day and economic times are hard right now (4) • The City can offer raffles, gift cards, or event concert tickets as incentives (4) • Food also feels like compensation (2)
No	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to volunteer (1) • I want to learn more regardless of compensation (1)
Makes no difference	1	