

Transparent Planning Workshop: An Approach to Delivering Real Community Outcomes

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Background/Rationale

In every community, residents give up their time to meet with government and developers to discuss proposed plans, regulations and development. Conversations are often filled with angst and fear—both sides of the conversation not quite certain what the other wants as an outcome. Conversations occur similarly across the world, and results are often the same. Compromised community outcomes, a bewildered and confused public, and developers lamenting lost opportunity. Is this why we became planners? How can great community outcomes be achieved under this framework?

Methods

In both the United States and Australia, the answer is a combination of greater transparency in planning process and improved visualization of outcomes so that true public engagement can occur. Discussion of planning outcomes without meaningful reality checks regarding implementing regulations and finance tools leaves plans unfulfilled and on the shelf. Getting community buy-in relies on a more meaningful conversation surrounding outcomes that provide a win for the community, the government and the private sector. This transparent approach starts with open communication, defining principles, and visually communicating how change will occur. In many ways, this moves the role of planners and urban designers toward a stronger focus on visual communication.

Case studies from the United States and Australia will be presented. Each case study will unpack how a transparent, integrated approach with the community, government and developers can deliver sustainable urban outcomes, while also solving broader community trust issues. An interactive portion of the session using a Perth neighborhood will conclude the session.

Results

The key end results of a transparent process are a realistic plan and buy-in from the community, the most powerful tool to enable implementation of any plan. The session will leave workshop attendees with thought-provoking questions, relevant examples and hands-on tools to empower planners to lead within their communities.