

Pop-up Event

Event: Pop Event: Stitching Our Stories

Location: Asé Arts, 3400 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, CA 94611

Date/Time: 4/12/2022

Number of people reached: 9

Event Description: House/Full of Black Women and EastSide Arts Alliance staff conducted English outreach with West Oaklanders with a Stitching Our Stories Sewing and storytelling gathering at Asé Arts. This workshop included a group of BIPOC women who understood that the General Plan would be the focus of our conversation on this day. These chats have been taking place in front of BIPOC businesses, organizations, private homes, and in open spaces throughout Oakland. These chats are a series of informal gatherings to discuss topics and questions that will help shape Oakland's equitable vision and policies for housing, environmental justice, economic development, climate protection, and transportation over the next 20-30 years. There are no lead speakers, just folks interested in listening and sharing thoughts and perspectives on these issues. Porch chats can vary in size from 5-20 people.

Demographics: The Deeply Rooted in Oakland Partnership is committed to reaching people who have not traditionally been part of planning processes. At this event we spoke with adults, older adults, LGBTQ+ persons, tenant/renter, homeowner, and low-income persons.

The discussion flowed with the following questions:

- How do you want to see Oakland change in terms of housing? What's your experience with it?
- How do you want to see Oakland change to be more environmentally safe?
- What do you want to see happen with transportation?
- How do you want to be more engaged and supported in that?

Engagement Summary

The following is a summary of the main points that community members brought up during the event. Points under each topic are ordered by most to least mentioned.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **The engagement model.** Participants were insistent on understanding the context of the conversation about OGP, for example: Who is offering the forum on OGP? Who is asking for information? Where is the hard earned energy, i.e. information, going?

Pop-up Event

- **Fatigue and extraction.** Participants noted the general sense of fatigue in providing feedback coupled with a lack of faith that the information would be utilized well. There were concerns about extractive patterns of information gathering in which community members volunteer their time and energy but receive nothing in return (giftcards, groceries) and see no change as a result. Using the pandemic school closures as an example, one participant said: "I saw that no one did anything - no one who could do anything, did anything."
- **Gatekeeping and representation.** Participants expressed the insufficiency of one person or organization "representing" all of West Oakland, or other area. Often, models of participation "check a box" by using one well-known professionalized community member to speak on behalf of a constituency. Participants discussed this creating too much pressure on the single person and that this model lacks integrity; more people need to be involved to share their opinions.
- **Real people don't have the ability to participate.** Participants noted that the people who are able to participate in meetings on OGP and other issues do so because they have the luxury of time. Most people who suffer the brunt of systemic failures are unable to take time out to give feedback in established mechanisms for feedback. When the events happen, do gatherings feel welcome accepting of everyone?

HOUSING

"I stay in an apartment owned by Chevron. Chevron has bought up 300+ properties in Oakland. For these companies who buy up properties, while tenants want to stay in Oakland and eventually buy property. There is no landlord because they are a corporation and now they own up a lot of Oakland. What does that look like next for the tenants? They bought properties where there are already long-term tenants.

I put a lot of love into my place. It was a dump when I moved in, I've turned my place into a veggie garden for food and garden therapy. I'm always thinking, at any moment, are they going to turn me out? All the investment in the place I've put in could be no more, at any moment.

How can the city make it possible to own the places they already live in? For people to buy where they're at."

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND DISPLACEMENT

Renters:

- **Issues:** Big corporations are buying up buildings and large tracts of land where long-standing tenants have invested a lot into improving the property and creating a sense of place. These long-term renters often have aspirations to buy, in addition to

Pop-up Event

an attachment to their home and neighborhood. They are now faced with uncertainty and an atmosphere of insecurity as to when they might be unceremoniously forced out.

- **Solutions:** Create programs that allow for renters to move towards buying the property they have been renting long-term

Oakland is a hostile place to live:

- **Issues:**
 - "I watched my entire block - I watched all the people I grew up and went to school with move away. How do you think that feels? Is that hospitable? It's very hostile to live in Oakland now. What's making these things hostile? Is it the schooling crisis? Access to food for some people? Access to jobs? Childcare? It's all these things in combination."
 - "Part of the reason for moving out of Oakland is not having adequate schooling."
- **Solutions:** Get back to the days when mutual aid and belonging helped people get through challenges. Support each others' businesses, get to know each other's' children, and help teach each other.

HOMELESSNESS

- **Issues:** Living is so hard that people powering through everyday life become desensitized, especially to the people on the street who are houseless and how we interact with them. People create barriers because it is harder to let in the reality and contend with the difficulty of those feelings. The majority of people who are houseless in the community are from the community.
- **Solutions:** We should change how we talk to them instead of allowing ourselves to not communicate with them. Disabuse yourself of stereotypes and of the value judgements that follow from those stereotypes. Ask yourself "what can I do in service of you?"

Table 1. Engagement by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent
Black	7	78%
White	0	0%
Asian American	1	11%
Latinx	0	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0%

Pop-up Event

Multiracial	0	0%
Caribbean Islander	0	0%
Native American/Indigenous or Alaska Native	0	0%
South Asian	0	0%
Middle Eastern	1	11%
Decline to State	0	0%
Total	9	