Facing the Critics:
Restoring Civility to Public Engagement

Kristin Hull, Moderator
CH2M Hill

Presentations
Tamika C. Gauvin
Maryland Transit Administration

Jeremy Madsen
Greenbelt Alliance

Aimee Custis
Coalition for Smarter Growth
A Multi-Layered Approach to Combating Inaccuracies

Affirming the Commitment to Honor Communities Along the Baltimore Red Line

Tamika C. Gauvin,
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MANAGER
Agenda

• The Baltimore Red Line
• Lingering Memories of Displacements
• Protecting Communities Against Displacements
• Protections Challenged
• Affirming No Homes Will Be Taken
• Outcomes and Takeaways
The Baltimore Red Line

- 14.1 Miles
- 19 Stations
- Construction: 2015-2021
- Cost: $2.6 Billion
• Interwoven Into An Urban Grid
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Lingering Memories of Displacements

- “Highway to Nowhere” in West Baltimore
- 700 Households Displaced
- Permanently Bisected Communities
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Protecting Communities Against Displacements

• House Bill 426 / Senate Bill 614
• No Involuntary Residential Displacements!
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Protections Challenged

- Constant Dissident
- Message of MTA Ulterior Motives
- Distributed Fliers About Plans for Displacement
- Used Inaccurate Information to Galvanize Community
Protections Challenged

"Baltimore’s Best Kept Secret"

The (MTA) Maryland Transit Administration has finally admitted that they will be “taking” property along Edmondson Avenue from Hilton Street to Cooks Lane (after lying for over ten years). On Thursday, May 12, 2011, 6:30pm to 8:00pm at Edmondson High School (Cafeteria) there will be a community meeting in which YOU ARE INVITED!

This may be your last opportunity to speak with the (MTA) regarding their plans to take your property along Edmondson Avenue and a number of blocks deep into the community to make way for the RED LINE! At this meeting, you will be informed of how your property will be taken, what property and homes will be taken, who will be taking your property and HOW MUCH YOU WILL BE PAID FOR YOUR PROPERTY!
Protections Challenged
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Affirming No Homes Will Be Taken

- Met with Meeting Attendees Separately
- Letter from Agency Heads to Attendees
- Community Liaisons Canvassed Corridor
- Developed Fact Sheet on Acquisitions
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Outcomes and Takeaways

• Outcome
  – Community Members Reassured
  – Community Doubts Constant Dissident

• Takeaways
  – Different Levels of Response Required
  – Thoughtful and Methodical Responses
  – Grassroots and Leadership Levels, Communications
  – Foundation for Assurance in Established Communication
    • Community Liaisons, Station Area Advisory Meetings, Outreach
Tamika C. Gauvin

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Facing the Critics

Jeremy Madsen
Executive Director Greenbelt Alliance

www.greenbelt.org
Natural Landscapes

Local Farms and Ranches

Homes for All

Thriving Neighborhoods
YouChoose Bay Area: A Silicon Valley Community Foundation initiative

**Your Challenge**

How would you plan for growth in the Bay Area?

**YouChoose Bay Area**

Your home, your future, your choice

Children born today are expected to have a shorter lifespan than their parents due to obesity and respiratory illnesses; how will further growth impact our health?

read below for more info
Workshop Design:
• Agency led

• Use video

• Create space for questions

• Answer *all* questions

• Use “verbal FAQs”

• Let people know they were heard

• Vote to move forward
At the workshops:

• Try to set a different tone

• Prepare people to their own perspectives
Focus on the media:

• Get out in front

• Frame the issues

• Provide examples of real people who support the process
Tea party activists interrupt regional planning meeting
Press Democrat, January 9, 2012

Tensions flared Monday evening during discussions about a long-range plan for land use as well as roads, trains and other transportation systems...

A vocal group of about 20 tea party activists interrupted the speakers and audience with charges that the government can't be trusted.

“When do you stop planning and just let people survive?”

“It's hard to get an idea in edgewise when you're working with that mentality ...”
Lively debate will be good for regional plans
San Jose Mercury News, January 10, 2012

... the laissez-faire tea party has been countered by environmental advocates such as the Greenbelt Alliance, which opposes sprawl but supports development within existing city borders. Residents not locked into either philosophy can learn from the exchange as well as speak their own minds.

The One Bay Area initiative grew out of SB 375 ... bill to produce cleaner air and lower greenhouse gas emissions by coordinating plans for transportation and land use. It is eminently sensible ... why should the public invest in a transit line if cities along it plan mostly suburban, car-oriented development that won't encourage use of transit or reduce emissions?
Other options:
• Fewer large workshops?

• More use of polling and public opinion research methods?

• Use facilitators trained to handle conflict?

• Direct outreach to stakeholders?

• Better use of technology?
GREENBELT ALLIANCE

www.greenbelt.org
Storytelling to Prevent & Diffuse Conflict

Aimee Custis
Communications Manager

Coalition for Smarter Growth
What we’re going to talk about

• **Why storytelling?**

• **Writing your story**

• **Telling your story**
How can I be a better facilitator?
How can I change hearts and minds?

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
MAKE THEM FEEL LESS THREATENED
TELL THEM A STORY
Why is storytelling awesome?

• Stories give context
• Stories give meaning
• Stories teach
• Stories transmit (shared) values and beliefs
• Stories guide behavior
• Stories give support and reduce threat

For more detail:
http://high-reliability.org/files/Story_Telling.pdf
What is storytelling?

- Storytelling is using a narrative to explain who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- Storytelling uses Plain English.
- Storytelling transports the listener out of their own frame and into someone else’s.
- Storytelling has characters who feel things and learn things.
The Kernel: What is your story about?

- Why is your audience involved in your issue?
  - Do they want to be able to live a walkable, bikeable, car-lite lifestyle?
  - Are they afraid changes will make their property values go down?

What do they want? or What do they fear?

This is the kernel you must speak to.
Start at the very beginning

• Spend a few minutes making sure everyone is on a level playing field for your discussion.

• Listening to a fairy tale, everyone starts out with the same information. Make sure everyone knows your characters and setting!
  
  – “The zoning code is ___. Three years ago, the Office of Planning started a 6-year public process to update the zoning code. That public process looks like....”
Introduce your characters

- Choose people affected by your project or issue who your audience can relate to.
- Doesn’t have to be named people. Can include parties like “local homeowners”, “parents of young children”, “commuters” “people who drive”, etc.
- Be sure to include characters who:
  - Share a characteristic with your audience, but who don’t share their fear
  - Share the fear(s) of your audience.
Explain what will happen to each character

- Using a chronological format often works best.
  - “In the first few months after the changes go into effect, people who drive will probably find that ___.”
  - “In the first year, (changes that will happen).”
  - “Within 5 years, (long term benefits).”
Pixar’s Rule of Storytelling #4

Once upon a time there was ___. Every day, ___. One day ___. Because of that, ___. Until finally ___.

From Pixar’s 22 Rules of Storytelling:
Set the stage

• Begin by outlining the event or meeting:
  – “Tonight, we’ll start with a 10 minute background from X, spend 30 minutes talking about the details of Y, and finish with 15 minutes of audience questions. We plan to end by X:XX. If we don’t get to your question, staff will be at the front of the room available to talk for an additional 10 minutes, and are happy to respond beyond that via email.”

• Stick to your outline, or you’ll lose trust and build suspicion
Be prepared

• If you’ve set clear expectations, you can easily enforce house rules
• Stay calm, don’t get emotional.
• Be honest. Never lie.
• Check all of your assumptions about your project, yourself and your audience at the door, because one might just get turned on its head.
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