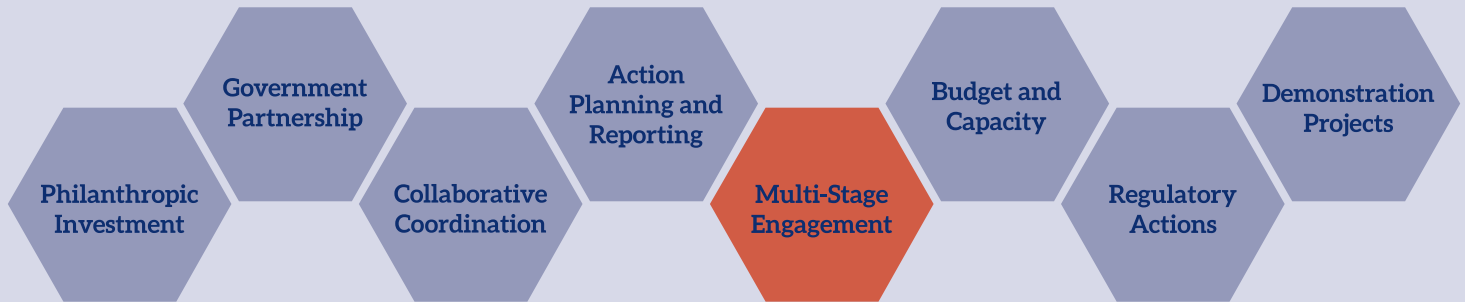


Factors that Drive Implementation of Equitable Land Use and Transportation Policies



Multi-Stage Engagement

Collaborative, culturally competent and sustained engagement leads to vital, more equitable project outcomes

Equity-focused policies depend on equitable processes to achieve intended outcomes. Processes are made equitable through the inclusion of community members.

Purposeful and well-designed engagement can be valuable if not essential to all policy stages, from base building to policy design, and from work on implementation to evaluating outcomes. Engagement in historically marginalized and disinvested communities also requires a commitment of sufficient resources and a reconsideration of traditional outreach methods¹ to elevate key equity perspectives, be consequential for policy and plan decisions, and generate vital public support for action following adoption. Practices that advance inclusive and meaningful participation include:

- Rebalancing power, resource and technical expertise differences between community members and policy decision-makers through shared leadership, facilitation and decision-making structures;
- Valuing community organizations as experts to amplify historically marginalized populations and those with relevant lived experience;

- Utilizing community-led research methods to inform policy approaches and planning on specific projects;
- Dispersing funding, resources and staffing for engagement activities, including contracts and just compensation to community- or equity-based partners for facilitation, consultation, and expertise;
- Engaging community members in “third places”² where they routinely spend time outside of home or work, such as events, parks, libraries, churches, and other neutral spaces

With considerable support and strategic guidance from the local organization **BikeWalkKC**, a diverse set of participants was **engaged in different stages of the Complete Streets planning process**, such as drafting policy language, project-specific design considerations, and tracking outcomes during implementation. To address concerns that roadway improvements related to Complete Streets and other policies had not incorporated enough experiential knowledge in Kansas City’s predominantly Black and low-income eastside, BikeWalkKC conducts walk audits. Through walk audits, city staff can better understand the type of roadway improvements community

members believe are necessary. The walk audits provide a forum to highlight challenges in safely navigating local street networks as seen and explained firsthand by community residents. This collaborative method of planning has built a shared understanding of needs and opportunities and has helped re-prioritize certain streetscape projects to better align with the community's vision.

A **continuum of varied engagement activities** that occur prior to and following a policy's adoption can give decision-makers and community members a chance to assess whether intended outcomes are advancing, and if not, adjust and create opportunities for improvement. During the policy development stage, policymakers should utilize insights from community feedback to formulate key objectives and identify appropriate solutions. Engaging key participants during this stage can also build a broader understanding between local government staff and community members on the purposes of policy decisions following their adoption. This can help mitigate potential opposition to later project work. Likewise, **close cooperation between policymakers and community partners** to draft policy together can build stronger intent and expectation for follow-through.

Sustaining community engagement into the policy implementation stage is important for advancing policies toward equitable outcomes. Community insight on project-level improvements allows infrastructure improvements to be contextualized for communities to center those most impacted. Communicating issues that come up during implementation also allows government staff and community partners to assess whether the policy creates unintended harms or reinforces existing inequities. It is important to **maintain the relationships and communication loops from the policy planning and decision-making stage** to avoid deviations from what was originally intended. Community feedback on projects

can also go beyond qualitative feedback from residents and instead collect anonymized data on project usage for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.

Complete Streets Tucson demonstrates a **continuum of collaborative engagement** that is transparent, consequential, intentionally representative, and de-siloed. The **policy** was developed over a two-year period (2017-19) when the local organization **Living Streets Alliance** worked with a diverse group of participants to strategize how to develop a safe, connected, and equitable transportation network in Tucson. It led the formation of a Complete Streets Task Force, composed of local government staff and community members, whose purpose was to inform development of the policy and ensure that perspectives provided by distinct pedestrian groups were represented. The Task Force also used trained and neutral facilitators to design a collaborative and iterative process, using **strengths-based methods focused on relationship building** and engaging everyone in the room on even footing, regardless of their level of technical or policy knowledge. Engagement activities included such nontraditional methods as on-street "pop up" events facilitated by youth partners, and training volunteer facilitators to lead small group workshops that were modifiable for the time and location constraints of underrepresented groups (e.g., youth with disabilities, people with undocumented status) and a variety of civic entities.³

Following adoption of the Complete Streets policy in 2019, oversight of implementation steps has been the responsibility of a **Complete Streets Coordinating Council** (CSCC), which maintains the collaborative structure of city staff and community members modeled by the previous Task Force. The CSCC continues to incorporate perspectives from distinct pedestrian groups as it reviews design proposals and funding priorities for transportation projects.

¹ Traditional outreach methods are structured to encourage participation amongst white and higher-income populations because of accessibility factors (e.g., language, jargon, meeting time/location, childcare) that preclude or discourage participation amongst other population groups.

² For more background on "third places" see **blog** authored by Buter, Stuart M. and Diaz, Carmen.

³ Both youth partners and volunteer facilitators were compensated through stipends and, as needed, supported with food budgets, materials and technology resources.