How do work more creatively and innovatively to draw upon Elizabeth’s historic greatness and ethnically-rich culture to maximize its assets and ensure a dynamic future?
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Preface: Creative Elizabeth launches its Call to Collaboration

On October 23 & 24, 2014, we were thrilled to launch a creativity convening in the City of Elizabeth.

This Call to Collaboration welcomed a large, diverse group of dynamic community leaders, educators, environmental and sustainability professionals, artists, economic development and local business leaders, cultural advocates, elected officials, and a host of other individuals representing a wide array of industries, cultures, ethnicities, viewpoints, and talents.

It was a powerful two-day conference full of creative thinking that focused on this central theme:

**How do we work more creatively and innovatively to draw upon Elizabeth’s historic greatness and ethnically-rich culture to maximize its assets and ensure a dynamic future?**

We were hosted by the First Presbyterian Church and our conference was held in the newly-restored, historic Snyder Academy Building. This beautifully restored building pays tribute to its history while being designed for the future: its multi-use design accommodates rooms which are available for renting office space, artist studio space, and meeting space, and has an industrial kitchen and the capacity for smart classrooms.

Followers and members of our statewide Creative New Jersey movement know that we create the conditions for highly diverse groups of people to convene in order to think and act more creatively and innovatively as they grapple with the most important challenges facing their community. Our framework encourages collaboration and makes it possible for individuals to advance conversations around cross-cutting issues. Creative Elizabeth’s participants were articulate, committed, engaged and serious about working together, building new alliances, and leading a dialogue focused on a thriving future for the city.

A sampling of the topics discussed during the two-day conference included:

- How do we develop/enhance a culture where the use and continued learning of native language is promoted and valued as a social asset?
- How do we form a process that will engage the community at large in actions that will be taken to make our streets safer, cleaner, and will improve the cultural and business climate?
- Is there a role for public art to play in the continued development of a vibrant Elizabeth?
• How do we move from segregated tolerance of one another to respectful appreciation of cultural diversity?
• How do we educate families on the importance of early literacy - ages birth to 3 years?
• How do we infuse social justice awareness and action into everything we do across sectors (eradicating homelessness, hunger, violence, etc.)?
• How do we acknowledge and create an inclusive environment for the undocumented and day-laborers of Elizabeth?
• What Branding and Networks can we utilize to communicate the services and projects in Elizabeth?

In between the intense conversations, we were treated to two performances by some of Elizabeth’s most talented students: a young violinist who studies at The Institute of Music for Children and two dancers from Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy.

Hear for yourself as one participant shares his experience during this Call to Collaboration by clicking here.

We are extremely grateful to our Creative Elizabeth sponsors and partners who joined us in making this Call to Collaboration possible.

They are: The Snyder Academy of Elizabethtown and The First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth, Kean University, Union County College, Union County Human Services Department / Division of Youth Services, The Institute of Music for Children, New Jersey Theatre Alliance, The Citizens Campaign, plus our generous restaurant partners: Dolce, First Republic, Manolo’s, The Lobby, and Valença.

~Elizabeth Murphy
Director, Creative New Jersey
Originally posted on the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Blog (11.3.14).

If you’d like to connect with any of the Creative Elizabeth participants and follow the conversations, please visit the Creative New Jersey website, join us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter.

Creative New Jersey is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability by empowering cross-sector partnerships in commerce, education, philanthropy, government, and culture in order to ensure dynamic communities and a thriving economy.
DAY ONE

Session #1: How to increase civic participation beyond the ballot box?

Convener: Kimberly Vanderhoef

Participants: Arlene O’Reilly, Bernie Moriarty, Monica Eppinger, Dan Pagdon, Phyllis Reid, Shoubert Polynice, Shane Derris, Clara Fernández, Jose Sabater, Linda Caldwell Epps, Donna Bost-White, Katherine Craig

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   1. Elizabeth needs to promote a culture of responsibility and communication in families, neighborhoods, community, across the generational divide, and between citizens and their government.
   2. Need to educate the people that they have power to effect positive change in Elizabeth, and we need to start at an early age by establishing civics education on the local level in junior and high schools
   3. Need to coordinate and expand upon existing grassroots efforts and volunteerism to connect people to each other and their government, and inform them about existing opportunities to get involved
   4. Focus on spreading the message of culture, neighborhood identities and positive things that are happening in Elizabeth
   5. For civics to be effective you need civility and a mindset that promotes the highest good for everyone in Elizabeth
   6. Need to build community that is not based solely on geographic location, but on shared passion for the betterment of Elizabeth

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Communication & Education:

   1. Starting civics curriculum in schools that focuses on civic responsibility and participation on the local level
   2. Improving communication and education about opportunities to get civically involved
Session #2: How can we make our streets safer, more exciting and more useful to all?

Convener: Jonathan Phillips

Participants: Vanessa Ferrara, Ena Gomez, Bill Webb, Libby Reid, Giovanna Sarmiento, Dan Pagdon, Stan Neron, Molly Auciello, Clarissa Robles, Hawa Washington, Cory Storch, Jan Lilien, Tracy Parham, Bill Reyes, Maricella Nunez, Priscilla Machado, Christele Maignan, Rosano Caifera, Ted Freedman

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   Infrastructure improvements:
   - Make streets more beautiful and safe
   - More traffic crossing electronic signs
   - Time traffic lights
   - Explore traffic calming alternatives
   - Set up community based electronic bulletin boards for events, community meetings
   - Explore dedicated bike and skateboard lanes
   - Better lit bus stops
   - Better lighting and police/community interactions
   - Food kiosks, more food carts, trucks

   Community outreach and programming:
   - Bike rental program, bikeshare
   - Adopt a street programs for private sector or community
   - organize bike and walking groups
   - more crossing guards for safer walking to school.
   - more sharing of information to tie community together. (i.e. goelizabeth.com)
   - street ambassadors to address litter and answer questions
   - community surveys to public to address these issues.

   Funding for improvements:
   - Municipal and City funding sources are stretched
   - Look to large private sector businesses to bring them into issue, adopt, etc.
   - Look into public institutions, i.e. Kean U., UCC to assist in funding and in kind ways.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)
   - Survey the community at large, and survey public sector (City and County), 2 different surveys
   - Visit other communities to look for improvements
   - Look into musicians and artists who will visit community, set up regular music and art sessions in downtown.
Session #3: How Do We Develop/Enhance a Culture Where The Use and Continued Learning of Native Language is Promoted and Valued as a Social Asset?

Convener: Lisette Calvo

Participants: Tracy Crosby, Tracy C. Monteiro, Heather Kelley, Maria Mendez, Clinton Miller Jr., Cheryl Shiber, Dennis Argul, Lisette Calvo, Donna Bost-White, Stanley Neron, Ted Freedman

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Literacy in the native language
   - District demographics throughout NJ
   - Conversational language
   - Why are we not accepting/valuing native language?
   - Teaching parents/continuing education
   - Bringing in/teaching awareness on the importance of bilingualism
   - The school is a good place to bring parents together, all grades.
   - How do we get adults to come together to understand?
   - When different ethnicities come together, we begin to get out of our “comfort zone.”
   - We have to understand cultural patterns as well.
   - How can the media play a role to promote biliteracy/multicultural understanding?
   - Speaking other languages helps break down barriers.
   - Many people are aware of global economy.
   - In order to enhance programs you have to diversify.
   - A curriculum of inclusion.
   - Biliteracy can be a challenge.
   - Promoting multiple languages via arts education.
   - How do we hold up our cultures while becoming Americanized?
   - NJDOE promoting a child’s home language at the pre-school level.
   - How do we get a better collaboration?
   - The school is a common ground for cultures to come together (ie. food, arts, etc.).
   - How can we energize our community?
   - How do we demystify the stereotypes?
   - How do we strengthen a curriculum of inclusion?
   - How do we leverage technology?
Session #4: Why create an Antifragile Municipal System?

Convener: Richard Long

Participants: Krishna Garlic, Ted Freedman, Robert Dash

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   The dependencies of monies from alien sources (i.e. State, Federal) to the City of Elizabeth

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)
   No action was suggested
Session #5: How do we move from segregated tolerance of one another to respectful appreciation of cultural diversity?

Convener: Stanley Neron

Participants: Jonathan Phillip, Bill Reyes, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Phyllis Reich, Alan Cohen, Lisette Calvo, Shoubert Polynice, Marcela Nunez, Priscilla Machado

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Cultural diversity in the home
   - Cultural exchange between neighborhoods/cultures
   - Establish common grounds
   - Using arts/culture/music, etc.
   - Address stereotypes in schools
   - Exposure of different cultures/norms/languages
   - Make friends/accept the differences
   - City wide events - bicycle tours
   - More parent involvement
   - Marketing different communities (business)
   - Bringing together ward programming
   - Diversity through our restaurants
   - Starting at an early age
   - Faith based approach
   - Strong economic development opportunities
   - Engagement of private/public institutions i.e. nonprofits
Session #6: How do you communicate with your community/neighborhood about what you are doing within your organization to get them (community/neighborhood) involved? How can you do more?

Convener: Bernie Moriarty  

Participants: Jan Lilien, Susan Kronberg, Tracy Crosby, Linwood Bagby, Ted Freedman, Tracy Parham, Clarissa Robles, Molly Auciello

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

The common message in sessions leading to this conversation have been similar. It's all about COMMUNICATION!

Suggestions were as follows:
Send Emails; Host “free events”
Banners/Signage
Community Services Fair
Have information on organizations available to Parents on “Back to School” nights or PTA/PTO events
Post info on “Go Elizabeth.NJ
Post organization information on blogs and websites
Connect info to Google search
Telephone contact
Reach out to schools, Board of Education
Add information to BOE brochures, newsletter mailings
Churches- post in bulletins or arrange to speak to the congregation
News flyers
Add informational kiosks throughout the city

There are a few organizations that are using these methods already and several of these methods were suggested as new ways of communicating. Some of the suggestions might not be done easily if they require layers of approval.
Session #7: Is there a role for public art to play in the development of a vibrant Elizabeth? How? What? Visual, performing, other...

Convener: Abby O’Neill

Participants: Linda Caldwell Epps, Fran Sullivan, Arlen O’Reilly, Cheryl Shiber, Clara Fernández, Katherine Craig, Cory Storch, Alysia Souder, Susan Coen

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Do research on public art - how successful is it? Look at Philadelphia
What does public art mean? Visual, performing, free
Do we research and then model?
Look at demographics
  - Will people respond to/appreciate it?

Examples:
  - murals at WTC
  - bull on Wall Street
  - Newark - expansive mural project - 15-20 throughout the City by students and professional artists that Newark helps to fund; there is competition to get buildings
    - Newark murals don’t get vandalized - community education/communication, forums part of the program
    - Always need to get community buy-in
    - The community is a canvass for expression
  - NJPAC project - art school - Brick City Development Corp
  - Groundworks Elizabeth - established River Walk. Has concrete sides - art could make it more communal - sculptures, performances, etc., causes congregation, talking, laughing
  - West Orange has light bulbs
  - Adirondack chairs in Bergen County made a big impact - not expensive, mysterious, made you think

What is the arts community in Elizabeth?

  - Arts education (e.g. Institute of Music)
  - No community theater
  - Arts people (broad Latino/Hispanic) don’t form 501c3’s - they create and live with art
  - Pearl Street Gallery - art show change every 6 weeks
  - Art in the Freeholders gallery
  - Individual artists can use 501c3’s as fiscal agent
  - “Livingroom 501c3’s” - artists simply bring guitars, paint, wine, etc.
    - Art is living, part of your life
How can leaders put it on their agenda?

- Ripple effects of arts - economy - quality of life
- Lack of support for arts, history and culture
- People aren’t going to value art until they understand its impact
- Put a $ amount on it?
- Every arts organization is using arts to reengineer their downtown
- Have to educate from the bottom up - bring children and their families to performances and then discuss what they heard/saw
- Start with communities that already appreciate it - incubators that must be activated
- Get them to be ambassadors to others
- Internet - translate the energy of technology to public art
- Become better consumers of art,
- Use art as a weapon (Gordon Parks) to improve society - we can address community issues through the arts
- To build community, you want to see yourself represented in the arts that get elevated
- Create system to engage people in the process - don’t recreate the wheel - use what you have
- River Walk - diversity of arts projects, could include dance, visual art as a backdrop, etc.
- Harness the power of how people learn differently, whether through the theater, dance, etc.
- Arts is and needs to be organic - can’t just add a “cultural” component onto a festival

Where is it? Downtown? Residential?

Examples:

- Bus stops, Union County College outdoor spaces, lobbies, post offices, court houses, traffic control boxes - art relates to locality
- Unexpected, commonplace things become elevated
- Art to protest - chairs in Newark
- Art education - have kids be connected to projects as students, interns, etc.
- Your own student pieces displayed reinforces the importance
- Use of A-V equipment to loan out to emerging artists who don’t have their own

Initial Visions:

- Arts of all kinds
- Find the living room 501c3 artists - be inclusive
- Get diverse art and artists represented in the City
  Artists live in creative cloud - they don’t want to deal with bureaucracy
  Artists think differently - not a “business” mind
- The Academy
  - Open mike nights
  - shows, performances
  - Artists to paint, show work
- museum
  - cultural center
- Importance of archiving of historical artifacts throughout the City
Session #8: Who should be at the table for a conversation on the growing heroin epidemic?

Convener: Shane Derris

Participants: Vanessa Ferrara, Ena Gomez, Clinton Miller, Jr., Katherine Craig

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
There must be mental and physical support for those with heroin addictions. We need to utilize different pathways to ensure that addicts continue to stay away from using again. Among the most important ways that addicts can be helped is to provide them with the community and family structure that will make them want to rehabilitate themselves. The addict needs to know that they can be the person that they want to be and that they have the support and resources to become that person. We cannot force rehabilitation and expect that an addict will change. Instead, we need to work with them to make them believe they want to do it for themselves.

Additionally, we need to emphasize the importance of education in order to prevent use in the first place. This education has to be base in truth, meaning that scare tactics and misinformation and a zero tolerance policy may not be the best possible policy route. Instead we need to have honest conversations about all drugs and their real dangers - short and long-term.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

The community needs to come together with a plan that incorporates all aspects of life to prevent heroin use, and for those already addicted to provide an addict with the a strong plan that includes family members, religious leaders, health experts, sports and recreation activities, and other interests that will make someone feel like they are an integral part of the community.
Session #9: How do we create an artful, innovative, vibrant Elizabeth?

Convener: Alysia Souder

Participants: Vanessa Ferrara, Bob Dash, Susan Kronberg, Fran Sullivan, Susan Coen, Libby Reid, Arlene, Ena Gomez

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

We must first have the intention.
Become an Arts District---including having restaurants display art of local artist, music and poetry
Parks with visual art --bring your own easel.

Must find out-- is good art happening and we don't know? OR is it not happening? Perhaps combo of both
There are 62 ethnic groups in Elizabeth-- connect with ethnic leaders

BRANDING CAMPAIGN
Focus on our success- prominent individuals and celebrities from Elizabeth
“Things to do in Elizabeth”---Collaborative and very public (It must be used!)
Changing State’s message on what is valuable to visit in NJ
Engage and highlight city’s cultural diversity
Logo/Saying for Elizabeth that creates emotional response

All must be Collaborative

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Developing City Wide, cross sector Branding campaign
Session #10: How do we forge For-Profit & Non-Profit collaborations?

Convener: Alysia Souder

Participants: Vanessa Ferrara, Porche Hardy, Jonathan Phillips, Molly Auciello, Susan Kronberg, Heather Kelley, Clarissa Robles, Gordon Haas, Ted Freedman, Jan Lilien, Giovanna Sarmiento, Cory Storch, Susan Coen, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Dan Devanney, Bill Webb

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

   It has to be a collaboration! It must be symbiotic not a one way street. Businesses are not as prosperous as they used to be. It is difficult to forge relationships as there is no mechanism for exchanging information about what each other does and what each other needs.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

   A networking event or fair that will be a neutral event for both profit and non-profits to connect.
Session #11: How can we preserve the buildings in the Broad St. District and make for a more attractive downtown?

Convener: Linda Caldwell Epps

Participants: Katherine Craig, Phyllis Reuh, Shane Derris, Tracy Parham, Alan Coen, Donna Bost-White, Jonathan Phillips, Stanley Neron, Bernie Moriarty, Cory Storch

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

If ordinances for the upkeep of buildings exist, they are not enforced. There is a Downtown District Business Development structure that is obviously inactive. Aside from Jersey Gardens and the airport there is no point of tourist destination in the city. Those who life in the city and shop downtown have become accustomed to accepting low standards and do not expect anything better. Most of the business operate in buildings they do not own and the owners obviously have a slum lord mentality. Those who operate businesses in the city do not exhibit a welcoming attitude. The signage often covers up the beauty of the buildings. How does the common citizen measure success? The mall has a diversity of shoppers and stores. Why can’t Downtown offer the same? We need a business/government/private partnership to facilitate improvement and preservation.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)
Development of a business/government/private partnership to create and implement a development plan for downtown.
Session #12: How Do We Educate Families on the Importance of Early Literacy ages Birth to 3 yrs.?

Convener: Tracy Crosby

Participants: Maria Mendez, Lisette Calvo, Cheryl Shiber, Robert Dash

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Instill Values at Home
- Reach out to parents of children in the district who have younger siblings at home
- Encourage parents to bring other parents to early literacy workshops
- Reach out to organizations that work with young families or expecting families (YMCA, Trinitas)
- Encourage parents with young children to participate in the Library programs
- The district can reach out to families who are registering their preschoolers several months prior to the opening of school
- Use technology for teaching early literacy skills
- Teach parents how to interact with children/having conversations-spending less time on phones, computers, etc.
- Engaging older students in conversations/not just technology
Session #13: How to interest & engage Elizabeth residents in the educational and cultural activities and events within Elizabeth?

Convener:

Participants: Monica Eppinger, Richard Long, Libby Reid, Katherine Craig

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Internet
   - Schools
   - Public Areas (Senior Centers / Libraries)
   - Publicity Releases - newspapers & Trade Journals (?)
   - Shows - Fairs (Booths)
   - Incentives (door Prizes)
   - PSA - Comcast
   - Ward Meetings
   - Nixle
   - Robo Text
Session #14: How to Promote the Arts in Elizabeth?

Convener: Clara Fernández

Participants: Libby Reid, Dennis Argul, Tracy C. Monteiro, Arlene O’Reilly, Fran Sullivan, Clinton Miller, Jr., Rosario Coytuero

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

1. Find venues. Find BEAUTIFUL venues
2. Have steady locations dedicated to the arts
3. One place for artists/performers to gather
4. Bring arts to peoples homes
   o Local programming
   o Live streaming
   o GoElizabeth.com
   o EPSNJ.org
5. Have music/performances on the street
6. Share information about existing artistic/cultural events
7. Open space principle
8. Reach out to students
   o Start where young people are and gather
9. Reach out to performers. Bring artists/performers to schools
10. Make it big!
11. Piggy-back on existing events:
   o Bike tour
   o Car show
   o Taste of Elizabeth
   o Four Centuries Weekend
   o Spring Fling: 1st Saturday in June at Third Presbyterian Church. North Ave & Salem Rd.
   o Longest Day (June 21st-22nd)
     ▪ Cultural/Arts events from 4p.m. on.
12. Promote from within
13. Promote with time
14. Cross-collaboration and promotion
15. Communicate in multiple languages
16. Obstacles
   o Lack of communication
   o Lack of consistency
   o No single audience
   o Rethink audience base
Session #15: How can we help those who are disabled or stigmatized to become more engaged and better integrated into the community?

Convener: Cory Storch

Participants: Alan Coen, Heather Kelley, Jonathon Phillips, Linwood Bagley, Donna Bost-White

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

   Work is the best way to become part of the community. Overcome stigma held by employers by use willing employers to educate other employers on the value of disable workers

   Orient and educate non-disabled people to deal with stigma.

   Mainstream people with disabilities - they deserve to a part of a diverse community and not segregated.

   Early identification and intervention is key. Educators need to learn to identify mental illness early on and ensure that young people get the help they need. Training is available from local organizations like Bridgeway Rehabilitation Services: Mental Health First Aid

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

   Reach out to session participants to follow-up on above suggestions.
Session #16: How can we successfully and accurately record and preserve the diverse history and culture of Elizabeth?

Convener: Linda Caldwell Epps

Participants: Clara Fernández, Shane Derris, Bernie Moriarty

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

   - Create programs to record oral histories
   - Encourage organizations to Archive materials
   - Support historical organizations
   - Support public library
   - Create cultural centers and programs
   - Story Corps
   - Document programs using film and other technology
Session #17: How do we educate families about the importance of extra-curricular activities and youth volunteerism?

Convener: Porche Hardy

Participants: Maria Mendez, Giovanna Sarmiento, Christele Maignon, Stanley Neron, Rosario Caytero, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Shoubert Polynice, Lisette Calvo, Tracy Crosby, Tracy C. Monteiro, Dennis Argul, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Shoubert Polynice, Lisette Calvo, Tracy Crosby, Tracy C. Monteiro, Dennis Argul, Clinton Miller Jr.

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
One of the main highlights of the discussion was understanding the demographics and the challenges of Elizabeth.

Socio-economic challenges prohibit some families from allowing their children to participate in extracurricular programming:
- Cost barriers
- Need for children to be breadwinners; child care providers

Learning about different organizations that are already doing great work providing opportunities for children to work, get youth development and experience with community service (i.e. Workforce)
Building Future Leaders
Someone’s Daughter
Sons of Someone
Fraternities and Sororities
Engaging Churches
Ensuring translation to all documents and communication
Make families feel comfortable when discussing their children’s future

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Provide free workshops to educate families on financial literacy
Building entrepreneurial spirit in children at a young age
DAY TWO

Session #18: How should we acknowledge and create an inclusive environment for the undocumented and the day laborers of our Elizabeth community?

Convener: Jose Sabater

Participants: Clinton Miller, MaryFaith Chmiel, Shoubert Polynice, Kimberley Vanderhoef, Donny Bellamy, Lisette Calvo, Alysia Souder, Jan Lilien, Tracy C. Monteiro, Porche Hardy, Dan Pagdon, Linda Caldwell-Epps, Dennis H. Argul, David Winitsky, Tracy Parham, Alan Coen, Ena Gomez, Vanessa Ferrara

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Exploitation of the day workers discussion
- Need to have a compassionate approach and provide services to the populations
- to serve this populations is in the collective interest of the community - we all benefit
- this population Should be part of the community with opportunities to contribute to the community
- There is a need to have resources available - work with the churches to provide services
- The right of the day laborers vs. union - there are potential conflicts between them
- We as citizens need to become advocates for the undocumented
- Underlying lack of tolerance was the result of bigotry, racism and intolerance.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

- We need to provide counselling, legal services, information on their rights and available resources
- approach will be based on compassion with the recognition of our responsibility to assist this population in any way, shape or form
- the city should take a pro-immigration position and a resolution should be approved welcoming, appreciating and establishing the city as a sanctuary. It should also establish an awareness week for awareness and appreciation for undocumented immigrants and day laborers
- Establish a welcome/human rights campaign
- Slogan “Acceptance Starts Here”
- Support the library in the development of a list of resources available to this population
- Put more emphasis in the organizing of the community - not just the immigrants, but all of us
- Police training on sensitivity and rights of the immigrants
- Create a “Center” for the day laborers where they can gather and services can be provided there, with bathrooms, basic health services, etc.
• St. Joseph presently provides services to the Day workers
• Jose will call another meeting with this group - the library will invite all the service providers, and we will hold the meeting at the Snyder Academy
Session #19: How do we form a process that will engage the community at large in actions that will be taken to make our streets safer, cleaner, and will improve the cultural and business climate?

Convener: Jonathan Phillips

Participants: Heather Kelley, Clara Fernández, Priscilla Machado, Dan Devanney, Bob Dash, Dan Pagdon, Donna Bost-White, Chris Gore, Ted Freeman, Jessica Topolosky, Arlene O’Reilly, Tracy Pardon, Stanley Neron, Norma M. Nunez, Susan Kronberg, Bernie Moriarty, Kathey Kakaletris, Susan Coen, Fran Sullivan, Phyllis Reich

1. **Highlights & key points from your discussion:**

The group came together to address the topic title at hand. The key challenge was to keep the focus of “complete streets” as the real goal of this process and to form a task force which will meet in the future to determine specifics of the task.

The group outlined about 20 items for discussion. The priorities are as follows:

WE WANT:

1. Clean streets that are safe and attractive.

2. Infrastructure improvements such as better lighting, pedestrian friendly kiosks which enhance our use of public space, and electronic bulletin boards to alert the community to activities which will be in the City. These public spaces can be spaces which can host community activities such as “First Fridays”, art shows, music shows, historic reenactments and classes. A moveable stage was discussed. We want to make these activities intergenerational that cut across cultural barriers so that the entire community can be served.

3. We want to explore the possibility of shuttles from Jersey Gardens, or Newark Airport to bring out of towners into our unique downtown.

2. **What is your calling for action? (optional)**

**HOW WILL WE GET THIS DONE?**

Everyone who came to this session will be advised of a meeting which will occur in January. We will try to research what is already being done at the City, County, public institution and private sector level on this topic prior to the meeting. It is our hope that our task force be a driving force and can affect real measureable outcomes on our street/community environment.
Session #20: How can we recognize our Arts and History as Assets?

Convener: Susan Coen

Participants: Fran Sullivan, Arlene O'Reilly, Abby O'Neill, David Pagdon, Clara Fernández, Tracy Parham, Ted Freedman, Kathy Kakalitris, Lisette Calvo, Heather Kelley, Tracy Monteiro, MayFaith Chmiel, Katherine Craig, Linda Caldwell-Epps

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

We need a structure to go forward - we will meet in January as a committee - and everyone is welcome

History as “tool”
- Communicate our history to immigrant residents - it is now their history (ESL students)
- Schools are more receptive to collaboration
- Use events to showcase history BOTH ways - lunchtime programs that talk about the history of Cubans in Elizabeth
- People need to see themselves in History
- How do we get audiences -- be patient - the bike tour grew
- Opportunity for business community involvement
- Always find the connections - there are also, in addition the signers of the declaration, African-American graves in the First Presbyterian cemetery, and people with French surnames
- Ask the mayor to appoint an official city historian
- We need a book on Elizabeth translated into different languages - and WE need to pay for it.
- Collaborations with NJ Transit, parking and established events

Moving forward to Arts as community connector:
- There exists Second Sunday events at 1st Presbyterian Church which should be promoted regionally as well as locally
- Other places doing arts now
  o Arts in the gardens @ Jersey gardens
- How to find artists - look at the established websites, put out a call for artists, including through Kean U., Union County College and Elizabeth High schools
- Go to community leader for references
- Use Snyder academy as space
- Exhibits of Elizabeth artwork - posters, maps, poster etc. - historic in nature
  o --Charlie Shallcross have collections
  o --Michael Mitros have collections

Arts events piggybacking on other events
- Theatre artists working with youth - creation of plays - through social service agencies especially
- Coming Soon.... Improv for Teens at the Library
Communications:
- Word of mouth
- Cultural calendar
- Celebrate Elizabeth artists who no longer live here
- Showcase young people - bring in audiences, and is also intergenerational
- WORRALL newspapers (Local Source)
- Advocacy campaign to get them to cover Elizabeth
Session #21: How do we infuse social justice awareness and action into everything we do across sectors (eradicating homelessness, hunger, violence, etc.)?

Convener: Jan Lilien

Participants: Ena Gomez, Priscilla Machado, Linwood Bagby, Marcela Nunez, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Shoubert Polynice, Chris Gore, Donny Bellamy, Bernie Moriarty

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Working with young people - infuse hope, look for (and inspire) hopeful futures for everyone
   - Create city wide expectations for how people are treated
   - Helping to educate others to understand root causes of behaviors (child doesn’t stay for afterschool b/c has to rush home to get check from mailbox to insure getting food on table for younger siblings, not because child doesn’t want to stay)
   - Use existing venues to increase knowledge/understanding
   - Provide workshops to train and inform others
   - Infuse understanding of need
   - What stops people from being involved - understand that and address (i.e. providing food at evening functions or morning workshops)
   - Energize a movement around social justice
   - Businesses - what’s in it for them?
   - Businesses will look for financial or economic benefit (“If you do x, city does not have to spend money or you don’t have to spend money on Y)

What IS social justice?
   - Pertains to everyone
   - Equal access, equal welcome, equal treatment

   - What are models of hope that we can draw upon?
   - Are there institutions that are oppressive and if so, how do we address them, how do we identify a component within that institution that may still embody hope?

   - How do we take a situation/example like Ferguson and create a conversation/atmosphere here in Elizabeth so that either it doesn’t happen here, or if there is a similar incident we are ready/prepared to address it proactively

   - Violence within our community - why is there so little response?
   - Do people expect that this is the norm? If so how do we change that expectation?
• Change that by emphasizing hope - leads to expectation of change - take action

• Need to communicate to involve other people, find a way to get people to attend rallies, participate in events, etc.
• Word of mouth is best, building relationships

• Get the business community to see a need to volunteer, and see social justice issues first hand, see in a different light, this creates a sense of reward for that business.
• Volunteers may then become advocates for social justice causes
• Then share that information with “the outside world”

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

• Conversations/convene a coalition around race, social justice issues
• Kick off with an event that people will want to come to
• Other communities have similar models (i.e. Maplewood/South Orange)
• Make indifference to injustice “uncool.”
• Recognize that everyone has a voice
• Identify key person within companies to come to event/subsequent conversations/be part of coalition

• Could bring this issue together with topic around nonprofits/for-profits
Session #22: How do we share knowledge?

Convener: Alysia Souder

Participants: Vanessa Ferrara, Bob Dash, Susan Coen, Donna Bost-White, Phyllis Reich, Giovanna Sarmiento, Stanley Neron, Porche Hardy, Clinton Miller Jr., Arlene O’Reilly, MaryFaith Chmiel, Shoubert Polynice, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Norma Nunez

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

   create a hashtag #creativeelizabeth
   facebook/twitter
   Electronic Billboard
   Ted Talks
   a new community
   continue forums,
   public platforms: to post events, find information
   Who are our partners?

   AN INFORMED COMMUNITY: business, schools, faith, government, non-profit, residents, etc...

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)
   start a local journal
   in part with universities

   don’t take no for an answer

   Be the bridge: take ownership
   start a committee
   set short/long term goals
   Data Mapping
Session #23: What Branding and Networks can be used to communicate the services and projects in Elizabeth?

Convener: Alysia Souder & Donna Bost-White

Participants: Heather Kelley, Bob Dash, Arlene O’Reilly, Vanessa Ferrara, Fran Sullivan, Donny Bellamy, Abby O’Neil, Gordon Haas, Dan Devanney, Porche Hardy, Dennis Argul, Priscilla Machado, Stanley Neron, Shoubert Polynice, Kimberly Vanderhoef, Tracy Monteiro, Denis Argul, Listette Calvo, Phyllis Reich, Ted Freedman, Dan Pagdon, Clara Fernández

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

   It all starts here….Informed Community, Branding Elizabeth, Where are the networks: Chamber of Commerce ($$ from City via tourism /excise fees) GO Elizabeth NJ website; EDMO-- - they may take one member on board to represent all of creative Elizabeth; they will air a TV commercial coming soon on FIOS, In Boston, developing a logo,

   Focus on the Content/ the ‘IT’ what is already happening in Eliz. connect it all in one place.

   Need an umbrella organization

   Community Values *(what we can’t live without)
   Inclusive, respect, peace, love, understanding, equity, family, diversity, cooperation (everyone has to take responsibility); reliability, love, safety, expression, beauty;

   Standard of evaluation for the core values: part of the assessment; code of conduct, tool for solution, how to distribute the message? Via religious leaders, employers/ organizations, city
   Reach out to the people who are not here

   Bring council people to the table

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

   Try to get info on 36 hours in NJ (NYT travel section)
   Need a clearinghouse for everyone; need to identify all of the content in Elizabeth, figure out how to level the playing field,

   Meet again… SOON
Session #24: What resources do we have that could be cultivated to make Elizabeth a point of destination?

Convener: Linda Caldwell Epps

Participants: Susan Kronberg, Jonathan Phillip, Tracy Parham, Susan Coen, Bernie Moriarty, Phyllis Reich, Gordon Haas

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

   - Renovation of Train Station and surrounding area
   - We must be intentional in our efforts of revitalization. Nothing with a single purpose can succeed.
   - Heritage tours of the area around First Presbyterian and the midtown district.
   - The City of Elizabeth has excellent restaurants that could collectively be turned into a destination resource.
   - The waterfront area near the mall should be developed.
   - Singer’s could be a tourist attraction - perhaps part of it turned into an immigrant museum,
   - First St. could be turned into an Old Town and possible be developed into an artist community
   - How can the Mall (Jersey Gardens) be used to advance the City?
   - Can the Ritz Theater be used and become a destination point?
   - A systemic plan is needed to target an area to make it produce destination areas.
   - Public Private Partnerships needed to support change