

How to Engage

PUBLIC SPACE VISITORS



Highlights

- What segment of the local population are you trying to attract to your space? Those are the people you need to seek out.
- A public space visitor is a customer, and the customer is always right.
- The most valuable input you can receive is from the people who would go to your public space but currently don't.
- When developing questions, be careful not to impose your own ideas.
- People are experts in the places they live. Trust their expertise.

Overview

This two-page handout introduces the concept of engaging with public space visitors to better inform space development. It also provides tips to help you get started.

Who Should I Engage With?

What segment of the local population are you trying to attract to your public space? Those are the people you need to seek out.

If you're dealing with an established public space that already attracts people, find your target demographic on site, and ask why they love the place. But more importantly, find members of your target demographic that aren't there; these are your potential visitors, and gaining their perspective is essential.

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A public space visitor is a customer, and the customer is always right.

Tip #1: Go to Them

The most valuable input you can receive is from the people who *would* go to your public space but currently *don't*. They have their reasons, and it's important you know them.

The tricky part? These people won't be easy to reach. You'll have to meet them where they are. Visit where your target audience congregates, post on your community social media page, go door-to-door. But beware: they may be caught off guard that you're putting in the effort!

If you make a point to collect input from the population you are seeking to attract, you will gather some valuable information.

Tip #3: Trust the Expertise

You're not engaging with these people for kicks. And if you're engaging with them to check off a box on a regulatory form, you're doing it wrong. The information you are collecting from these people is valuable. They are experts in the places they live. Respect and trust their expertise.

Tip #2: Prepare the Questions

There are no stupid questions, but you face the risk of asking the wrong questions if you're not careful.

When developing questions for a survey, interactive presentation, or focus group about the public space in question, be thoughtful what information you're seeking. Then develop your slate of questions based on the information you want to know.

But be careful not to impose your own ideas. Instead of saying, "Do you think more garbage cans would fix the litter problem?", ask, "What things might work to fix the litter problem?"



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