

20 years strong AMERICA WALKS

On April 29th, 2019, America Walks hosted the webinar, “Equitable Development: Back to Basics (Equitable Development Training Part 1)”, where we explored the practice of Equitable Development and heard from experts on the ground who are on the path to creating communities for all, in the first of a three-part training in partnership with the 11th St Bridge Park Project.

It featured Adam Kent, Senior Program Officer in the DC LISC office, responsible for a wide range of LISC investments and community development initiatives, Irfana Jetha Noorani, Deputy Director of the 11th Street Bridge Park, a public/private partnership between the District of Columbia and the local nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River to build a civic space that spans the Anacostia River and connects the communities of Capitol Hill/Navy Yard and Anacostia/Fairlawn, and Vaughn Perry, the Equitable Development Manager for the 11th St Bridge Park Project.

Our inspiring panelists shared intimate details of the innovative processes, resources, and tools for how equitable development is implemented and the reasons for why it is critical.

America Walks received many questions and comments from attendees. Panelists took time to offer their expert answers, to continue the conversation and provide further insight on best practices they used for creating safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking conditions in their communities, so you can too.

Can you share specific strategies for investing in/supporting small businesses?

Vaughn: Micro loans and technical assistance via one on one coaching and workshops/seminars.

Can you expand on some of the organizations who funded this project on behalf of LISC?

Adam: www.liscdc.org/elevatingequity

What is available for small communities that do not have the economic base of a City like DC? Our Community is about 32K and divided by a freeway (economically and racially).

Vaughn: No matter the size of the community, the community engaged process for the equitable development plan is both needed and useful. There are grants opportunities available to assist like JP Morgan Chase's Pro Neighborhoods Grant.

Can you give specific examples of investments by lisc and how you got investors interested?

Adam: www.liscdc.org/elevatingequity

Has LISC put money into the home buyers club to offer mortgages to underserved residents?

Adam: No but LISDC supports MANNA, an organization who develops affordable housing and runs a very successful homebuyer program.

How did you obtain your input from the community? Was it through surveys or focus groups? How did you ensure all populations in the area had an opportunity to provide input?

Vaughn: We obtained input from the community via one on one meetings, town hall meetings, focus groups and surveys.

How far on either end of the bridge did you go out? Was any of this public ownership? When you indicated you wanted to mitigate gentrification, what was the baseline demographics that you were working from and just how many people are we talking about within the immediate neighborhoods on either end of the bridge?

Vaughn: The Bridge Park will span over the Anacostia River. The EDP focuses on the one mile radius around the future Bridge Park. A portion of the Bridge Park is on National Park Land. The infrastructure of the bridge will be owned by DC government.

Can you give us a breakdown on where the \$42 Million went and how you set the priorities for spending of that money?

Adam: www.liscdc.org/elevatingequity

Assuming the bridge was an access point for vehicles getting from one side of the river to the other; what alternative access points did you identify or have to build in order to compensate for the loss of that bridge to vehicle traffic. How far on either side of the bridge did you close the road?

Vaughn: The 11th Street vehicular bridge has already been constructed and is in use. The Bridge Park will reuse the piers from the former vehicular bridge.

What is being done to safeguard small local businesses that could also be displaced due to changing demographics or an increase in property value that leads to increased rents?

Vaughn: Currently reaching with small businesses and local municipalities to address this issue. One idea is the possibility of creating legislation for a property tax freeze. Another is looking at ways to include businesses in a Community Land Trust model.

Who administered the micro loans?

Vaughn: Washington Area Community Investment Funds.

What are some best practices for building strong public-private-community partnerships, specifically with city/state agencies when their priorities don't align with the community's interests?

Vaughn: Engage with the city/state agencies in the very beginning of your planning process. It is important that your plan is seen as complementary and not competing against their efforts. Make sure to keep them update throughout the entire process.