Inviting the Angry Mob to Dinner: Strategies for Fearless Community Engagement

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YOU NEED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IF:

• The same five people show up to your public meetings
• You can’t get anyone interested in your projects
• You aren’t talking to a representative portion of your population
• Misinformation and mistrust are running rampant
• Comment sections (or closed groups) on Facebook and Nextdoor terrify you
• You’re sick of chasing after people for feedback just to get your job done
• Projects are getting derailed or aren’t seeing the finish line
• You know there are good ideas out there, but don’t know how to find them
• You’re drowning in open records requests
If people are the problem, then people are the solution.
Co-creation makes us haaaapppy!

- Be visible and vulnerable
- Loosen the grip – empower community groups
- Offer participants opportunities to engage online and in person
- Recognize what makes a community special
- Commit to inclusive, welcoming meetings
- Begin and end with clear communication
- Ask the difficult questions
- Admit when you’re wrong
- Ask for help
Yankalilla knows that transparency equals trust, and in order to be transparent, you have to be more vulnerable. More human.
Oregon Metro knows that partnering with trusted community groups is more authentic and welcoming than trying to foster those sentiments from inside the walls of government.
New York City knows that serving hyperlocal food not only support hyperlocal businesses, but serves to create a collaborative, welcoming atmosphere for all participants.
Boulder knows the value in asking questions that they don’t necessarily need to know the answer to, because it showed their community that everything isn’t about them.
Alone we go faster, together we go further.

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