

Positioning Your Public Engagement for Success

How to Plan Effective Public Workshops

THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2026
12:00 - 1:00 PM

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY!



HOST & MODERATOR

Hanna Stelmakhovych

Program Manager

Institute for Local Government

WEBINAR OVERVIEW

Today's Agenda

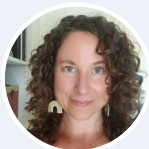


About ILG & Setting the Stage



How to Plan Effective Public Workshops

Presented By:



Kristen Law
City and County of San Francisco



Christal Love-Lazard
City of Elk Gove



Audience Q&A



Wrap Up & Adjourn



**WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU!**

*Type your
questions
anytime in
Zoom's Q&A
feature.*

TECH OVERVIEW & HOUSEKEEPING



All webinar participants will be on MUTE for the duration of the event.



Please type questions into the Q&A box at any time during the session.



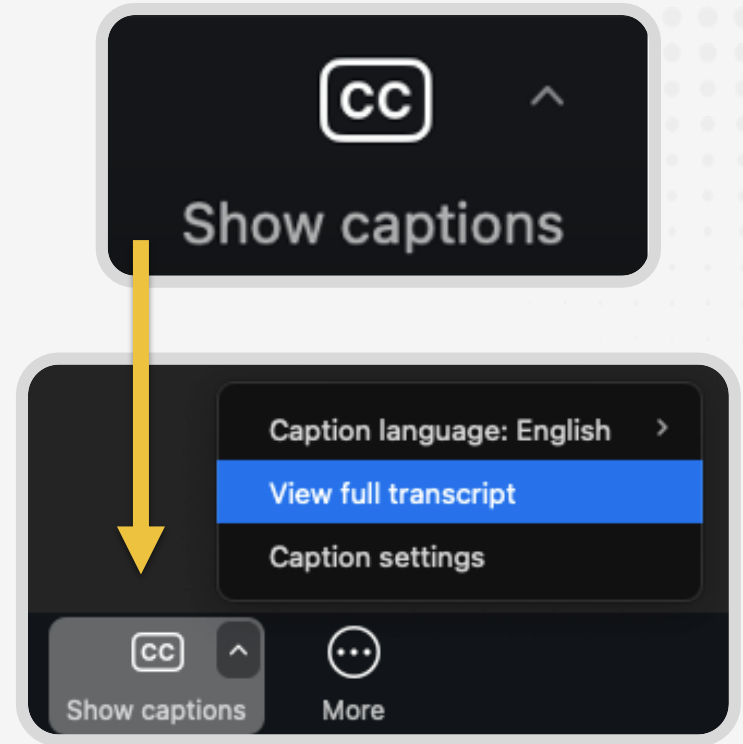
A recording of the session will be available shortly after the webinar.

IF YOU NEED CAPTIONS...

We have **closed captioning** available in English.

In the toolbar at the bottom of your Zoom screen, select **Show captions**.

The video recording will include captions as well.



ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ILG)

NON-PROFIT, NON-PARTISAN AND HERE TO HELP

- Supporting California **cities, counties** and **special districts** for more than 70 years.
- We turn emerging challenges and best practices into **practical resources you can actually use**.
- Whether it's **leadership, public engagement, workforce, or community resilience**, our goal is to help you do your work more effectively.
- We believe the best solutions are **practical, people-centered**, and built for the **realities of local government**.



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Technical
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Capacity
Building

Convening

Our mission is to help local government leaders
**navigate complexity, increase capacity &
build trust** in their communities.

TODAY'S PANELISTS



Kristen Law

Sr. Community Engagement Coordinator,
San Francisco Environment Department

City and County of San Francisco



Christal Love-Lazard

Community Engagement and
Government Relations Manager

City of Elk Gove

ZOOM INSTANT POLLING

Who is in the audience?

What components of public engagement are you involved in?

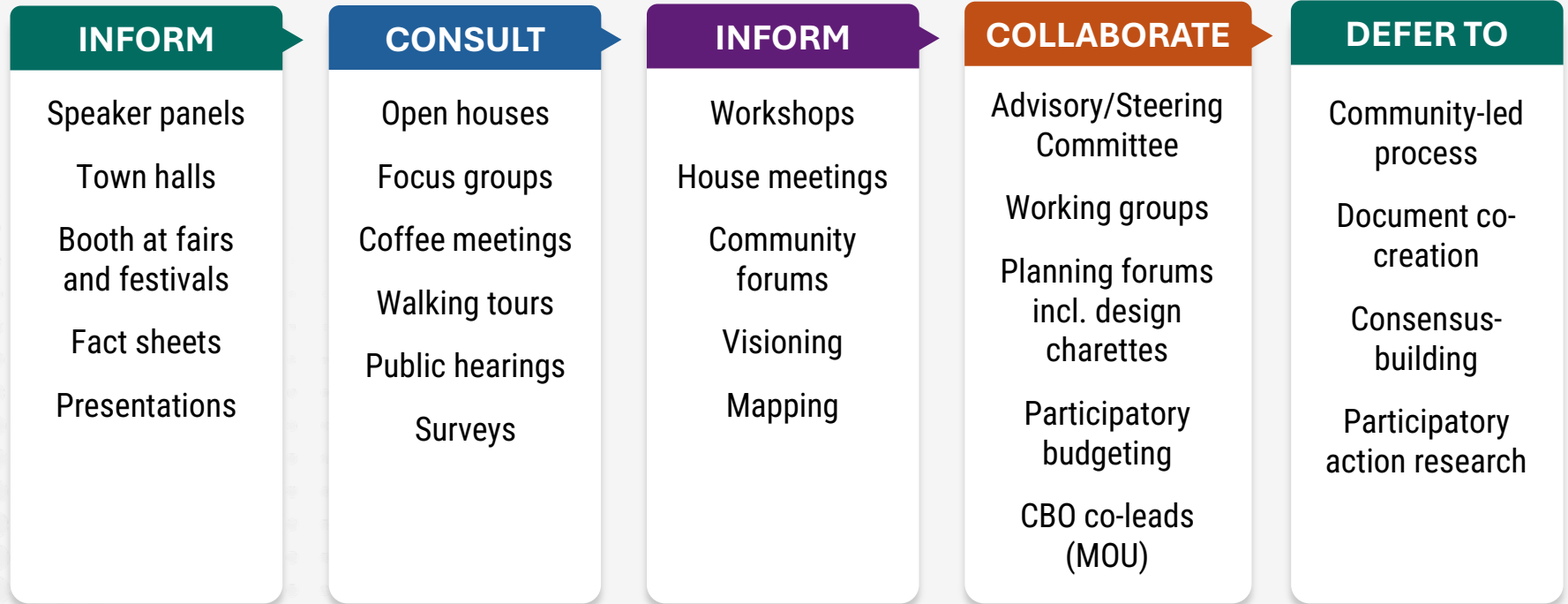
- A. Design and plan public engagement opportunities
- B. Lead or facilitate PE opportunities
- C. Data analysis and reporting
- D. I do it all!
- E. Other



SETTING THE STAGE

SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT FORMATS

INCREASING COMMUNITY INFLUENCE →



BUILDING EFFECTIVE MEETING DESIGN

Align clear outcomes with purposeful structure and activities



Meeting Goals & Outcomes

Define the purpose and the results we want to achieve.



Effective Meeting Structure

Design the flow, choose the right activities, and engage participants.



Purposeful Meeting Design

A focused meeting that drives results and value.



Key Insight

Carefully developed meeting design encourages dialogue and limits grandstanding

MEETING DESIGN TECHNIQUES

Tools to drive engagement, participation, and decision-making

**Small Group
Dialogues**

**Small Group
Report Out**

**Individual
Writing**

**Real Time
Mapping**

Dot Voting

Round Robins

Sticky Note

Ice Breakers

Ranking

Word Cloud



Key Insight

Meeting goals should determine which techniques are used.

MASTER THE MEETING

Struggling with attendance and
constructive engagement in your
community workshops?

Interested in making your meetings
**more accessible, relevant, and
engaging** for the community?

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ENGAGE



WED, SEPT 16 & THURS, SEPT 17



10:00 AM - 3:00 PM



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TODAY!**



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The Participant Journey:

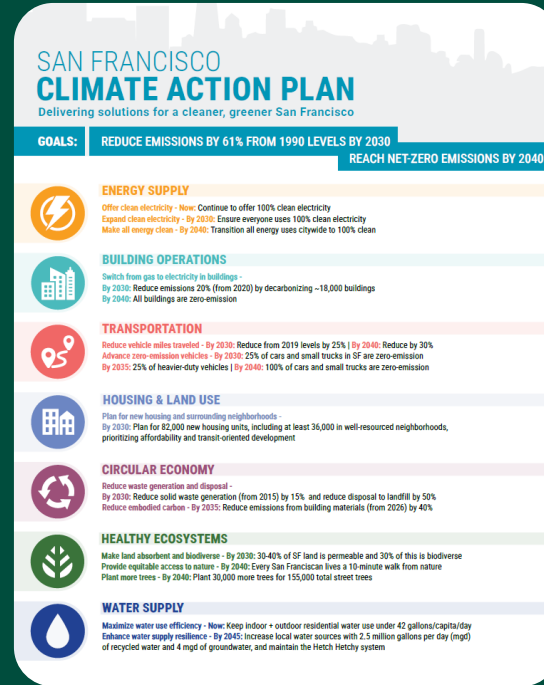
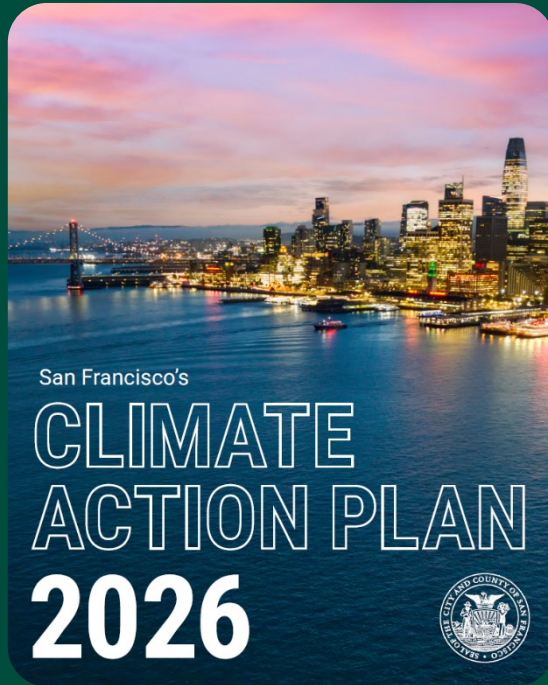
Designing public workshops that help communities learn, imagine, and shape the future

SAN FRANCISCO

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Purpose: Shape SF's 2026 Climate Action Plan



The Typical Meeting

What usually happens when the facilitator asks, “any comments?”

SFE



Credit: Adobe Stock

Designing for the Participant Experience



Foster Connection

We created opportunities for informal relationship building.

SFE

Credit: SFE



Build Understanding

Before we asked people to contribute, we helped them understand the topic.

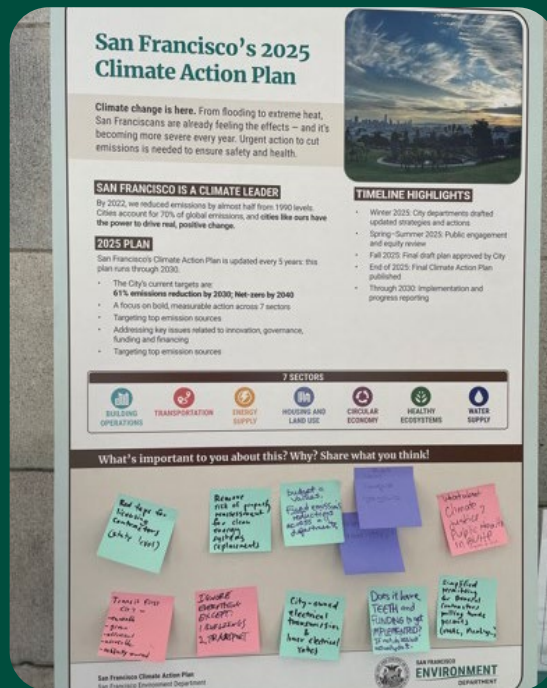
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Credit: SFE

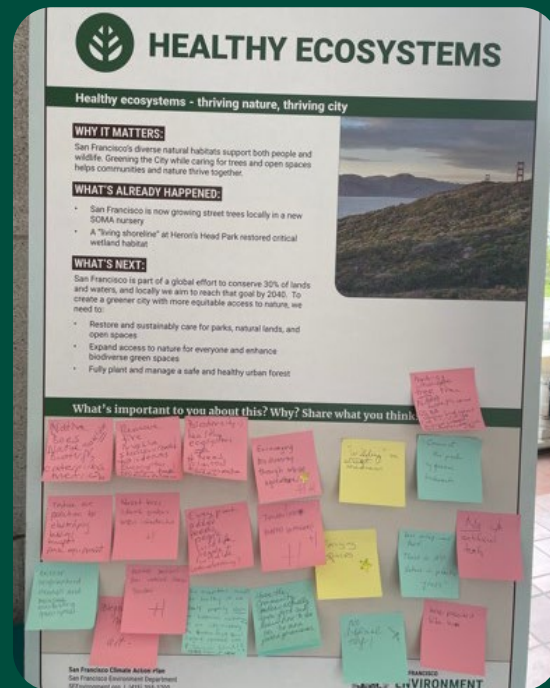
Credit: SFE



Credit: SFE



Credit: SFE



Credit: SFE

Learning continued through interactive stations on each Climate Action Plan topic.

SFE

Intentional Engagement



CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

“Imagining 2040” Workbook

Spark Curiosity

As soon as participants entered the room, we wanted them to be curious and engaged.

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Credit: The Plenary Company

San Francisco has changed for the better. Focus on your table's Climate Action Plan area – what is it like? What systems and policies have changed? How has your community and your own behavior changed? **What is the role of the city government in supporting this world?**

[illegible]

Reflect

We invited everyone to spend ten minutes imagining San Francisco in 2040.



Credit: The Plenary Company

Using the paper on your table, write down your group's 1-3 best *big* ideas for how the city could achieve the worlds you imagine. **Be as specific as you can.**

1 **Share your worlds.**

Take turns sharing highlights from your personal vision. Build on each other's ideas as you go, leaning into any sparks or emergent possibilities.

Be brief to allow time for everyone to share.

2 **Look for bold ideas or recurring themes.**

Choose or combine your table's best ideas for what's possible by 2040. Focus on developing 1-3 ideas, themes, or solutions. Prioritize bold ideas that resonate with your group, are connected to city actions, and related to your table's area.

3 **Write them down.**

Using the markers and paper on your table, write out your table's best ideas. Be as detailed as possible so that others visiting your table can easily understand your vision.

Connect & Create

Participants built upon individual ideas to create a shared vision.

During networking time, you're invited to browse the ideas and solutions imagined by other tables and areas, **and to add your thoughts.**

Visit whichever tables you'd like! All of them, one of them, none of them – this is an opportunity for you to build on other group's ideas, so that the emergent vision from this group becomes even richer, bolder, and more informed.

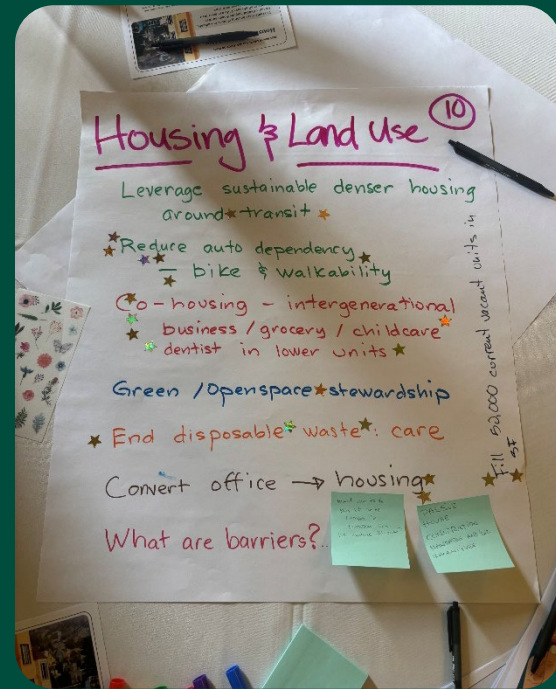
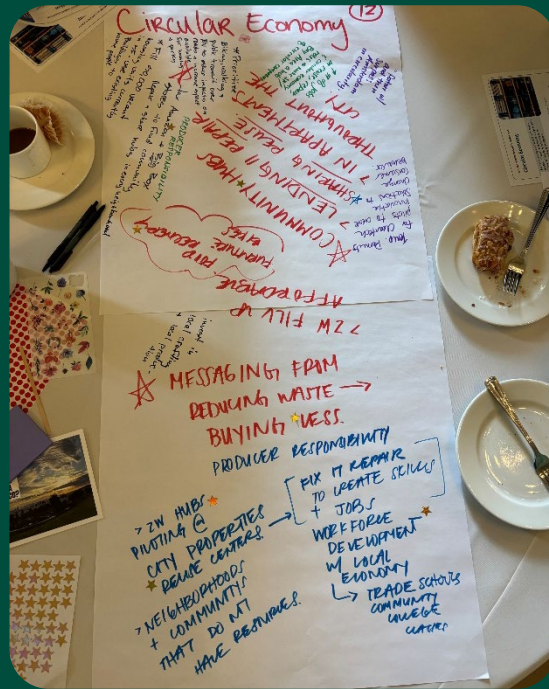
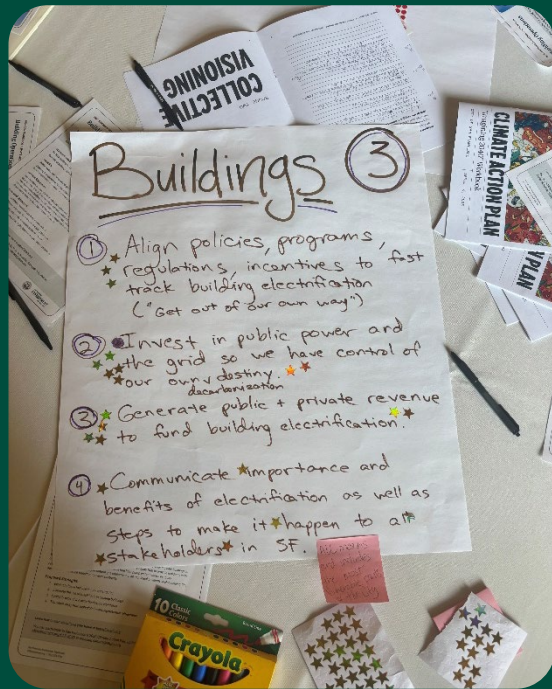
USE THE FOLLOWING KEY TO ADD YOUR REACTIONS:

	Gold Stars Use these to mark ideas you love.
	Red Dots Use these to mark concerns or reservations.
	Botanicals Use these to mark general support.
	Post-Its Use post-its to add more detailed ideas, suggestions, notes, or feedback.

Explore

Participants were invited to circle the room to contribute to other visions.

Contributions from the individual reflections, shared visions, and poster session were compiled and considered by City staff.



Community Impact

We published a public matrix showing how community ideas influenced the plan and included quotes throughout the final version of the plan.

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English



News Events Commission Policy About Resources

Appendix A: Public Comments on Draft Plan and Responses

2 of 188		Automatic Zoom	
Engagement Kickoff Event	Overall	Amend city charter to have 4 at-large supervisors to offer [citywide?] perspective.	This comment does not fall within the scope of the Climate Action Plan.
Engagement Kickoff Event	Overall	Reduce air pollution by electrifying buildings, transport, pack equipment.	These are important issues. Please refer to the Building Operations, Transportation, and Healthy Ecosystems sectors, respectively.
Engagement Kickoff Event	Overall	Budget equals values. Fund emissions reductions across all departments.	Funding and finance are critical for climate action in San Francisco and without sustainable models even well-designed climate policies cannot realize their potential. Please refer to the "Funding and Financing" chapter of the Climate Action Plan for more information on this topic.
Engagement Kickoff Event	Overall	What about climate justice? Public health in BVHP.	All sectors, strategies, and actions presented in the Climate Action Plan were subject to the San Francisco Environment's Racial and Social Equity Tool (RSEAT) assessment. This assessment prioritizes equity for BIPOC, low-income, and other vulnerable populations through the lens of climate justice and intersectionality. The assessment identified important equity impacts and then proposed recommendations and revisions to improve equitable outcomes.

“Budget equals values. Fund emissions reductions across all departments.”
— Kickoff event participant

Our Participant Journey



Informal connection → Created a sense of belonging

Presentation → Built understanding

Interactive exhibit → Deepened learning and invited low-pressure participation

Creative workbook → Encouraged imagination and individual reflection

Facilitated dialogue → Transformed individual ideas into shared understanding

Gallery walk & stickers → Expanded thinking across topics and fostered connection

Public matrix → Showed participants that their input was valued and considered

Thank you!

Kristen Law, MA
Sr Community Engagement Coordinator
San Francisco Environment Department
SFEnvironment.org



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AUDIENCE Q&A



**What questions do
you have for us?**



Meeting Design Matters

How Meeting Design Can Support — or Hinder — Community Engagement Success



City of Elk Grove Permanent Homeless Shelter Siting Process Webinar

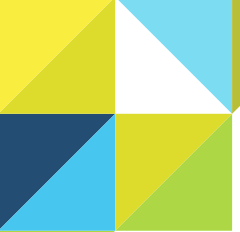
July 23, 2026





What You'll Take Away Today

- 1. See design as strategy:** Recognize meeting design as a strategic tool that shapes outcomes – not just logistics.
- 2. Spot what helps and what hurts:** Identify specific design elements that support productive dialogue and the anti-patterns that hinder it.
- 3. Learn from a real case:** Apply five design principles drawn from the City of Elk Grove's shelter siting engagement process (Summer 2025 – Spring 2026).



Design Supports — or Design Hinders

Design that SUPPORTS

- Clear purpose participants can repeat back
- Formats matched to the goal (input vs. information)
- Multiple ways to participate
- Trained staff in defined roles
- Visible capture of input + stated next steps

Design that HINDERS

- Vague purpose (“come share your thoughts”)
- Open-mic-only formats that reward grandstanding
- One meeting, one time, one language
- Unprepared staff improvising under pressure
- Input that disappears into a void

The Case: Siting a Permanent Shelter

A high-stakes decision on a deadline: the current shelter's lease ends in 2028 — and emotions run high when the topic is homelessness near homes.

Summer 2025

Phase 1: Conceptual Design

Workshops, virtual meeting, survey (303 responses), provider + shelter-guest interviews

Fall 2025

Phase 2: Site Criteria

~130 sites screened; 655 residents rank siting criteria; list narrowed to 3 finalists

Jan 2026

Community Meetings

Four identical meetings at District56 + online comment options

Feb 11, 2026

Council Decision

Staff report community input; Council selected the Survey Road site



Let Purpose Drive the Format

*Ask first: Is this meeting to inform, to gather input, or to build consensus?
The answer dictates the design.*

Phase 1 goal: shape the concept

- Design-focused workshops (“Imagine the Space”)
- Open-ended input on amenities and services
- Interviews with other shelter providers and former shelter guests

Phase 2 goal: hear site feedback

- Fact-grounding presentation before discussion
- Action-oriented framing: “Tonight's goal is to hear feedback on the proposed shelter locations”
- Criteria-based breakout groups tied to the decision



Lower the Barriers to Participation

Four identical meetings

Two dates, afternoon + evening sessions — attend whichever fits your life

Many channels

Online surveys and comment options, city podcast, drone site videos, robust project webpage

Broad + targeted notice

Newsletter to 63,000+ homes; flyers mailed to residents near each finalist site

Language access

Partner meetings translated between English and Mandarin with a local nonprofit



Choreograph the Room and the Flow

- Breakouts by decision criteria — cost, sensitive uses, services/transit, safety, operations, design — invite personal stories and reduce grandstanding.
- Rows of chairs for presentations; stations around the room for small-group dialogue.
- Plan B ready: if attendance tops 200, switch to a gallery walk + moderated Q&A with questions via live polling.

Welcome & tone

- *City Manager*
- *5 min*

Ground in facts

- *Tech Leads / NJA*
- *20 min*

Criteria & 3 sites

- *All*
- *60 min*

Next Steps & survey

- *City Manager*
- *10 min*

- A 75-minute reset between meeting sessions lets staff eat, regroup, and restage the room.



Staff Every Role – and Train for It

Discussion Lead

Facilitates dialogue, sets tone, manages dominant voices

Flip Chart Recorder

Neutrally captures input where speakers can see it

Support Staff

Backs up the lead; steps in when someone needs a break

Floater

Roam the room to de-escalate and troubleshoot

Welcome Table

Registration, wayfinding, first impressions

Media Team

Documents the event; handles press questions



Design for Emotions – Don't Just React

*Participants
are unlikely to
remember
what you say,
but they will
remember how
you made
them feel*

Expect emotion

Housing, safety, and trust in government are personal. Anger often masks fear or powerlessness — plan for it

Set the tone early

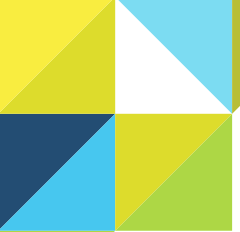
Scripted welcome, visible ground rules, inclusive “we” language, and acknowledged stakes.

Make listening visible

Scripted welcome, visible ground rules, inclusive “we” language, and acknowledged stakes.

Close the loop

Summarize what was heard, check for accuracy, and state exactly where the input goes next.



Did the Design Work?

Community input visibly shaped the decision: residents' top-ranked criterion — distance from sensitive uses (46%) — helped determine the selection of the final 3 sites.

On Feb 11, 2026, Council selected the Survey Road site with a full summary of community feedback in hand — engaging “with” the community, not “at” it.

655

- *Residents ranked site criteria in Phase 2 survey*

130 to 3 sites

- *Candidate sites narrowed through a criteria driven funnel*

4++

- Identical community meetings, plus online forums & plus focused conversations



Five Takeaways for Your Next Community Meeting

Let purpose drive the format — inform, gather input, or build consensus

Lower barriers: multiple times, channels, and languages

Choreograph the flow — and carry a Plan B for crowd size

Assign and train every staff role before the doors open

Design for emotions: set tone, listen visibly, close the loop

Meeting design is never neutral — it either supports your goals or hinders them. Design on purpose

Thank you for listening

Christal Love Lazard (*she/her*)

Community Engagement and Government Relations Manager

City Manager's Office

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Email: clazard@elkgrove.gov



AUDIENCE Q&A



**What questions do
you have for us?**

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The webinar recording and related resources will be **shared via email** with all registrants a few days after the webinar.

THANK YOU!



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