

# Gathering Meaningful Engagement

## AECOM's holistic approach to equitable engagement on the San Diego Parks Master Plan

### Engaging underrepresented groups

AECOM, the world's largest engineering and design firm, began their first phase of engagement with The City of San Diego on a master plan for the city's parks and recreation facilities in March 2018.

From the onset, the project team recognized the importance of reaching the south side of the city: home to a typically underrepresented community of low-income, Spanish speaking residents.

### The Question:

How can you ensure that you are getting meaningful and equitable feedback from underserved groups?

### Through a multi-faceted, thoughtful approach

AECOM was able to collect representative, meaningful public input by focusing on a holistic **community engagement strategy**:

- Bilingual Facebook targeting
- Identifying demographic gaps through census data comparison
- In-person events in underrepresented areas to educate residents on the issues
- AI-powered comment analysis to make sense of qualitative data and see the big picture

# Building a foundation for engagement through geo-targeted outreach

## Online designed to complement offline

In-person outreach provided a baseline for resident engagement and AECOM sought to enhance this with comparable online engagement opportunities.

To do so they leveraged PublicInput.com's [engagement hub](#).

## Targeted social media advertising

Through social media targeting, AECOM was able to put emphasis on reaching residents in southern San Diego. Both the Facebook posts and the project website itself were translated into Spanish.

1. Where do you live in the City of San Diego?

The map can use your browser's location or you can enter your address, street or zip code.

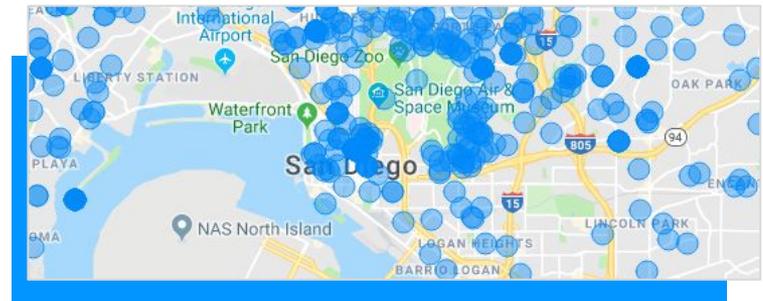
Search by address

Look up

BRANDYWOOD  
TEALBROOK

## Understanding the geography of participation

Through this strategy, the project saw increased input from typically underrepresented voices, yielding more representative input and a measurable understanding of where and which groups feedback was coming from.



## Embracing the anonymous

Recognizing the importance of lowering barriers to entry, the online engagement was setup to **allow anonymous participation**, and ask for contact information and demographics separately.

## Engagement by the numbers\*

*\*In phase one alone - with another 2 years to go.*

58,000

Responses



1,800

Participants



6,000

Comments



# Identifying participation gaps with data to inform on-the-ground efforts

## In-Person Events

Community engagement largely hinges on meeting people where they are - literally.

After initial project outreach, AECOM was able to identify gaps in participation and focus their efforts not just online, but also offline with pop-up style events at specific community centers.

At these informational sessions, The City of San Diego educated residents on the master plan and directed them to a website where they could provide feedback.

Open House format.

Come any time between 6:00PM to 8:00PM

**Wednesday, June 6, 2018**

**Linda Vista Recreation Center, Auditorium**  
7064 Levant St, San Diego, 92111

**Monday, June 11, 2018**

**Robb Field, Jim Howard Hall Meeting Room**  
2525 Bacon St, San Diego, 92107

**Tuesday, June 12, 2018**

**San Diego Central Library, Shiley Special Events Suite**  
330 Park Blvd, San Diego, 92101

**Thursday, June 14, 2018**

**Black Mountain Middle School,**

**Tuesday, June 19, 2018**

**Skyline Hills Recreation Center, Gym**  
8285 Skyline Dr, San Diego, 92114

**Wednesday, June 20, 2018**

**Canyonside Recreation Center, Multi-purpose Room**  
12350 Black Mountain Rd, San Diego, 92129

**Thursday, June 21, 2018**

**Standley Recreation Center, Gym**  
3585 Governor Dr, San Diego, 92122

**Monday, June 25, 2018**

**Golden Hill Recreation**

## Ways to integrate offline & online tactics

- Provide digital sign-in kiosks at meetings
- Use live voting to capture responses to identical questions posed online
- Embrace live commenting on mobile devices or comment cards, and upload them into your engagement database
- Upload participant addresses to your resident database
- Employ phone lines for call-in commenting
- Scannable QR codes for content downloads on the fly



# Deeper understanding at scale: how technology enables better qualitative analysis

## Take the pain out of comment analysis

Traditional qualitative analysis of comments can be painstaking. Often only the most extreme comments stick with us, which can be discouraging or steer a project in the wrong direction despite our best intentions.

### The ultimate question - How do you turn qualitative comments into meaningful data?

By using built-in comment sentiment analysis, AECOM was able to apply the comments they received as meaningful feedback to their outreach efforts.

The screenshot shows a user interface for comment analysis. It features two filter sections, each with a trash icon. The first filter section is for 'Morley' and includes a 'Get tagged with: Morley Field' button and a 'Specific to this project/survey' checkbox. The second filter section is for 'Sunset Cliffs' and includes a 'Get tagged with: Sunset Cliffs' button and a 'Specific to this project/survey' checkbox. Below the filters, a tooltip displays 'comments about parks and recreation programs in the City of' and 'Positive Sentiment: 36%' with a corresponding progress bar.



## Machine learning & comment tagging

- AI-powered smart tagging to group and analyze key themes and entities
- Tagging rules to automatically group and tag similar comments
- Sentiment analysis to understand which words and phrases were mentioned negatively, positively, or neutrally
- Visual analysis using smart word clouds and tag clouds

# The Takeaway

**AECOM's tech-enabled approach yielded more meaningful engagement, saved staff time, and simplified the public engagement process.**

## The Solution:

A holistic community engagement process combines online, offline, and in-person methods, allowing each tactic to complement the others.

This creates meaningful feedback, no matter how a resident chooses to engage.

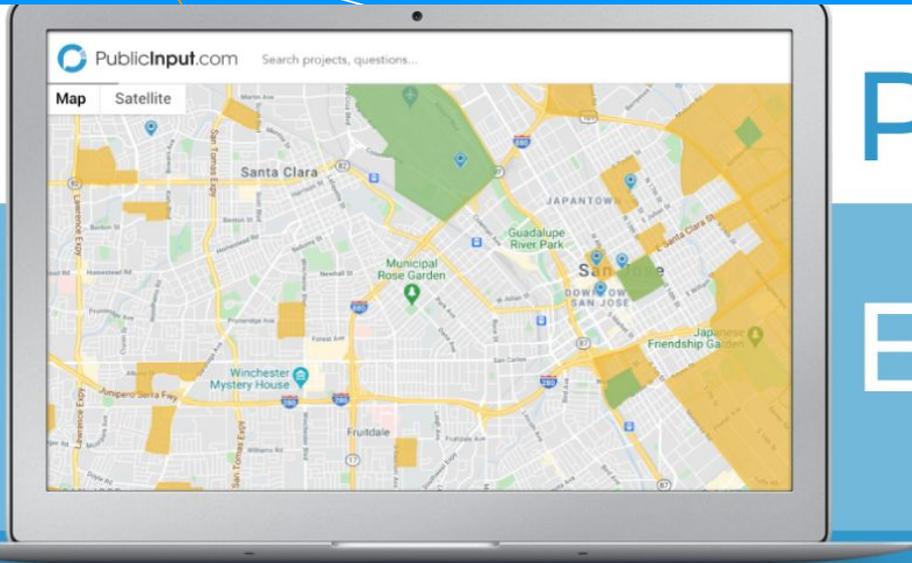


Firms like AECOM leverage [PublicInput](#) to apply best practices and achieve better outcomes - **without** the spreadsheets, guesswork, and manual tasks.

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[GET A DEMO](#)

Now you can use census block-level data from the EPA, directly inside  
of PublicInput



# Public | Equity Mapping

Measurable equity starts here.

Instantly identify **Environmental Justice communities** and measure  
the equity of your public involvement from day one of any project.

SEE HOW IT WORKS