

The Edgecombe Group, Inc.

Public Outreach, Stakeholder Engagement, Charrette and Workshop Facilitation

Public Outreach Clients:

- City of East Orange, N.J.
- City of Asbury Park, N.J.
- City of Baltimore Dept. of Housing and Community Development
- City of Mt. Rainier, MD.
- City of Landover, MD.
- City of Bladensburg, MD.
- Cottage City, MD.
- Colmar Manor, MD.
- Coppin State University
- Coppin Heights Community
- The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission
- Arundel Community Development Services (ACDS),
- D.C. Office of Public Education Facilities Management
- D.C. Dept. of Parks and Recreation
- Whitman Renquardt Engineers
- Housing Authority
- Sustainable Long Island, New York
- The New Jersey Institute of Technology
- The Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission
- A&R Developers, Baltimore, MD.
- University of the District of Columbia, Architectural Program
- The Nishuane Group, Montclair, N.J.

Key Personnel:

Leland Edgecombe, ASLA
Principal-in-Charge, Master Planner / Landscape Architect

Ralph Belton, RA, *Senior Architect*

Richard Knopf, AICP/PP,
Senior Planner

The Edgecombe Group's planning tool of choice for involving the local community, the City Government and key stakeholders in the planning process is the design charrette and/or workshop. In its purest form, a charrette is community-based planning – tapping into the stakeholders' knowledge to develop a plan that carefully integrates the proposed conceptual design and programming of the project location(s) with local community and stakeholder aspirations to be part of the planning process.

During charrettes and workshops we seek to have everyone engaged in common conversation and problem solving about multiple inter-related issues, such as land use, transportation, economic development, open space as well as other potential plan elements. This is in contrast to the non-charrette-based process, during which these problems are compartmentalized and only one is tackled by a particular group. We found that the design charrettes and public outreach workshops result in more progress made in less time. Just as important, the broad base of support that is a prerequisite to a good outcome is established.

One of the unique characteristics of our public participation and meeting facilitation process is that the plan evolves continuously during the time the design charrette or workshop is held, reflecting the input of citizens and key stakeholders. At each step along the way, members of the community as well as key stakeholders will see the plan refined and changed to reflect their input and views. As the plan evolves, so too does the community. It is not uncommon for potential adversaries to become project advocates.

Preparing and implementing a plan for public involvement can be particularly challenging if an atmosphere of concern or distrust prevails within a community. At the beginning of a project, our team will normally develop an overall project management plan. Our plan will be aimed at the following:

- Helping the municipal government as well as the local community to ensure that context sensitive design issues are addressed properly during the earliest stages of project planning, specifically the alternatives development and analysis phases.
- Reaching and engaging members of the study area community with its unique land use profile which may include residents, merchants, local industry, faith-based organizations, etc.

Our strategies normally include:

- Ensuring broad-base distribution of information about the project's development;
 - Providing multiple opportunities for input and dialogue through a variety of forums;
 - Bridging language and/or literacy barriers by providing information in English and Spanish, using extensive graphics and illustrations to communicate alternatives and their impacts clearly, and offering a variety of mechanisms people could use to provide their feedback and input in English and Spanish;
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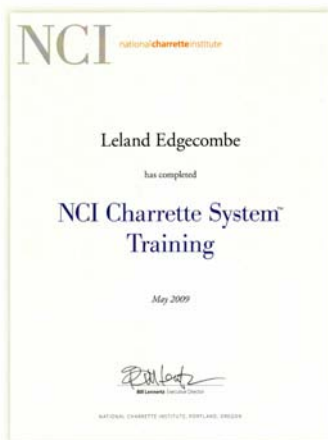
*3-Day Design Charrettes
(Wiley H. Bates Heritage
Center, Annapolis, Maryland)*



*7-Day Design Charrette (New
Jersey Institute of Technology
Housing Scholars Program)*



*Multi-Day Design Charrettes
(Asbury Park, New Jersey)*



*Certification of Design
Charrette and Workshop
Training
(The National Charrette
Institute)*

- Maintaining credibility by committing to “close the loop” and get back to individual respondents and the general public with answers to their questions; and
- Illustrating the links between project development activities and the input received from the general public as the project moves forward.

Public Involvement Activities can include:

Our public involvement plan can combine traditional activities, such as public meetings and notification via print media, with some newer methods such as informational and opinion survey web sites, all of which will be tailored to the local community. These public involvement activities can include the following:

- **Bi-lingual Public Meetings** – Informal as well as formal meetings can be presented in a bi-lingual format tailored to the lay public.
- **Special Issue Workshops** – At key junctures throughout the process, our team will coordinate special issue workshops to give the public additional opportunities to understand and discuss the overall project development process. These are designed to augment the larger public meetings and to focus on specific elements related to environmental, economic, community and social impacts.
- **Neighborhood meetings** – Our approach is normally to meet with people where they work, live, pray and play. We found that meeting stakeholders in their “backyard” allowed them to express their concerns more freely.
- **Public Involvement Office or Web Site** – In the past our clients have created a public involvement office or web-site where interested members of the community could obtain information about the project and talk directly to the members of the project team.
- **Working Committees** – Our project team can establish a diverse group of working committees and solicit their input and recommendations.
- **Bi-Lingual Newsletter** – The project team can distribute various editions of a newsletter in Spanish and English to the local residents. The newsletter can feature timely updates about the study’s progress over the course of the project.
- **Printed Information** – Written materials, drawings and sketches can be appropriately developed depending upon the target audience and if necessary can be produced in a bi-lingual format. This can include informational handouts, fact sheets and displays.

Community engagement process. One early step in launching the strategy can be a large town hall style planning session intended to launch the initiative. This can be followed by smaller focus groups and other “special event” gatherings to build interest in the initiative and share information and ideas that will inform other project components.

Community organizing services and facilitation can be provided by the Planning team to ensure that client staff, stakeholders and local residents are given ample opportunity to be engaged, educated about the process and trained in practical ways they can voice their ideas and concerns.