Ethics, Equity and Sustainable Communities

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Moderator – Michael Lauer, AICP

Our Panel

➤ Michael Lauer, AICP – Principal for Michael Lauer Planning

➤ Nicole Bennett, AICP – Planning Group Manager at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

➤ Nora Liu – Strategic Advisor, Office of Planning and Community Development – City of Seattle

➤ Sergio Palleroni, SEED – Professor, Director – Center for Public Interest Design, Portland State University

Genesis of Session

➢ EPA Office of Environmental Justice

    ➢ What are the ethical dilemmas facing those who work for social equity and environmental justice?

    ➢ How do you develop a common code of ethics for this multi-disciplinary sector of sustainable communities?

    ➢ What values/principles would this code include?

Our Session

➢ **Introductions and opening comments**

➢ **Ethical scenarios – mandatory audience participation**

➢ **Closing thoughts and next steps**

We are Communicators

➢ Every process involves communicating with diverse stakeholders

➢ We play varied roles as communicators

  ➢ Educators

  ➢ Listeners/Conveyors

  ➢ Mediators

  ➢ Advocates

  ➢ Community Group Therapists

Elements of Communication

➢ The ends

➢ The means

➢ The consequences

Pontifical Council for Social Communications

➢ "Depending on how they use media, people can grow in sympathy and compassion or become isolated in a narcissistic, self-referential world of stimuli with near-narcotic effects."

➢ "… media can be used to
  ➢ build and sustain human community
  ➢ Block community and injure … by alienating or marginalizing and isolating people … fostering hostility and conflict, demonizing others and creating … "us" against "them" …"

National Communications Association

➢ Truthfulness, accuracy, honesty and reason are essential

➢ Endorse freedom of expression

➢ Strive to understand and respect

➢ Provide access to communication

➢ Promote mutual understanding

➢ Condemn communication that degrades individuals

➢ Commit to courageous expression

➢ Accept responsibility for short- and long-term consequences

Avoiding Ethical Quicksand

Ethical Quicksand

➤ Client v Community

➤ Technology

➤ Framing Issues (honesty, clarity, completeness)

➤ Confidentiality v Openness

➤ Facilitation v Advocacy
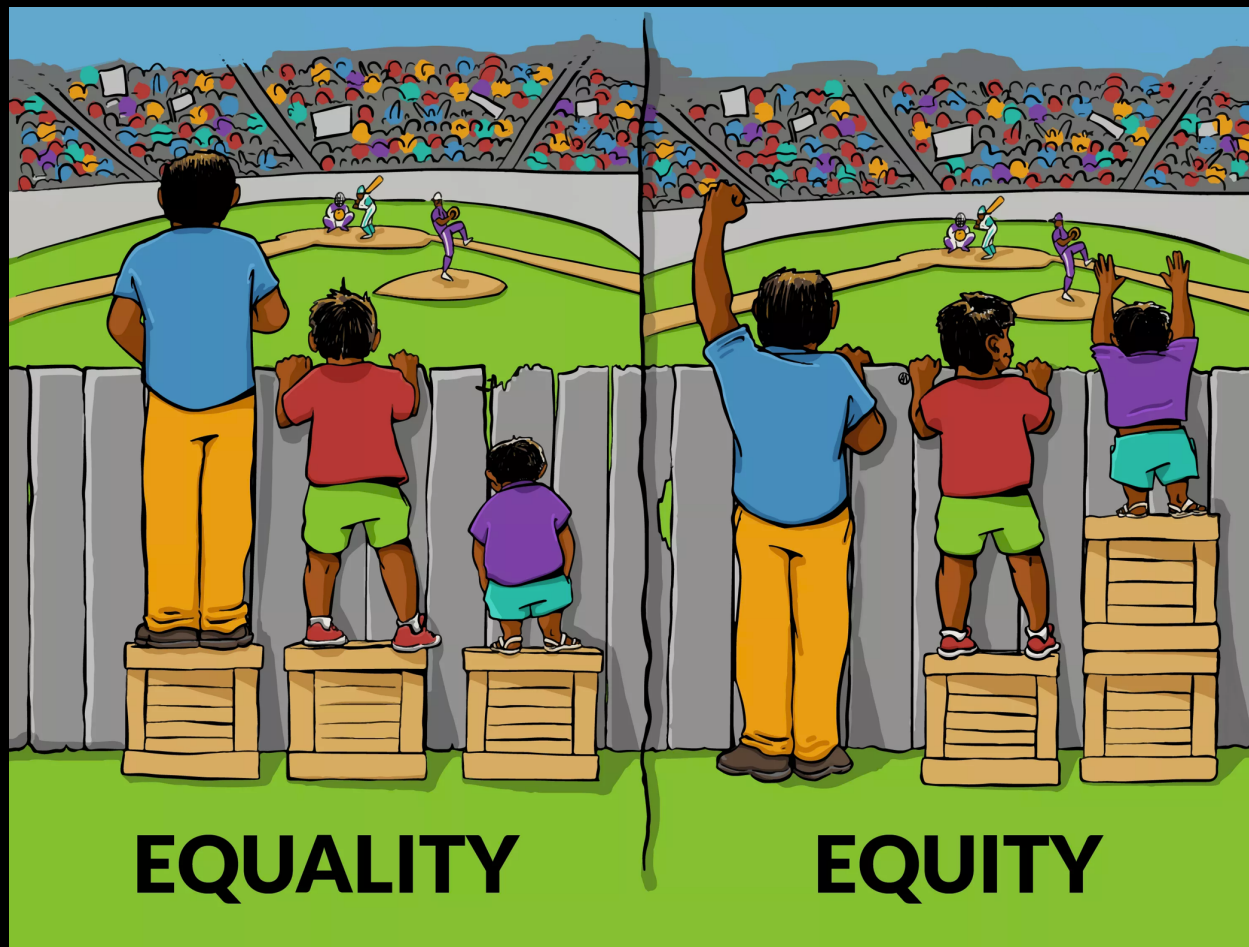
What Are Your Greatest Ethical Challenges and How Do You Resolve Them?

A Few Terms

➢ Social Equity/Equitable Development

➢ Environmental Justice

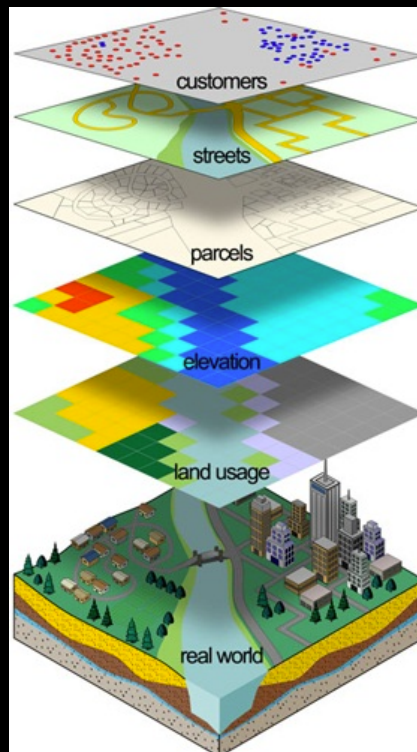EQUALITY   EQUITY

Credit Angus Maguire for IISC

Ethical Scenario 1

➤ City launches web/social media-based planning process that includes race and social equity goals and policies

➤ Community engagement includes web surveys and meetings

➤ Meeting notices rely on email blasts and social media, even a quadrant with high population of people of color

➤ Staff recognizes that this approach will select for the most tech-savvy residents

Scenario 1 Questions

➢ What are staff's responsibilities to address this deficiency?

Ethical Scenario 2

➢ You are preparing an environmental justice assessment for a transportation project

➢ Original design had minor impacts to EJ neighborhood but affected nearby wealthy neighborhood. Wealthy neighborhood vehemently opposed project and had support of local government and some elected officials.

➢ Design modification eliminates impacts to affluent neighborhood and adds impacts to EJ neighborhood.

➢ Client instructs you to expand study area, which dilutes impact to EJ community, and does not allow additional, targeted outreach to EJ community to make them aware of the impact.

Scenario 2 Questions

➢ Who is your client?

➢ What is your duty to your client?

➢ What are your professional responsibilities?

➢ What is your duty to the community?

Ethical Scenario 3

➢ City has incorporated equity and equitable development in their value statements and elected officials have highlighted that this work improves community engagement and racial equity.

➢ Systems change lags behind and traditional communications favor privileged, wealthy, business and home owners.

➢ Budgeting processes favor these same groups that have greater access to the political process.

➢ This creates a gap between budget realities and stated aspirations..

Scenario 3 Questions

- ➤ As the City's planner
  - ➤ What is your role when there is a gap between aspirations and practices?
    - ➤ Are aspirations mandates to empower?
    - ➤ How do you balance serving the electeds and the people they aspire to serve?
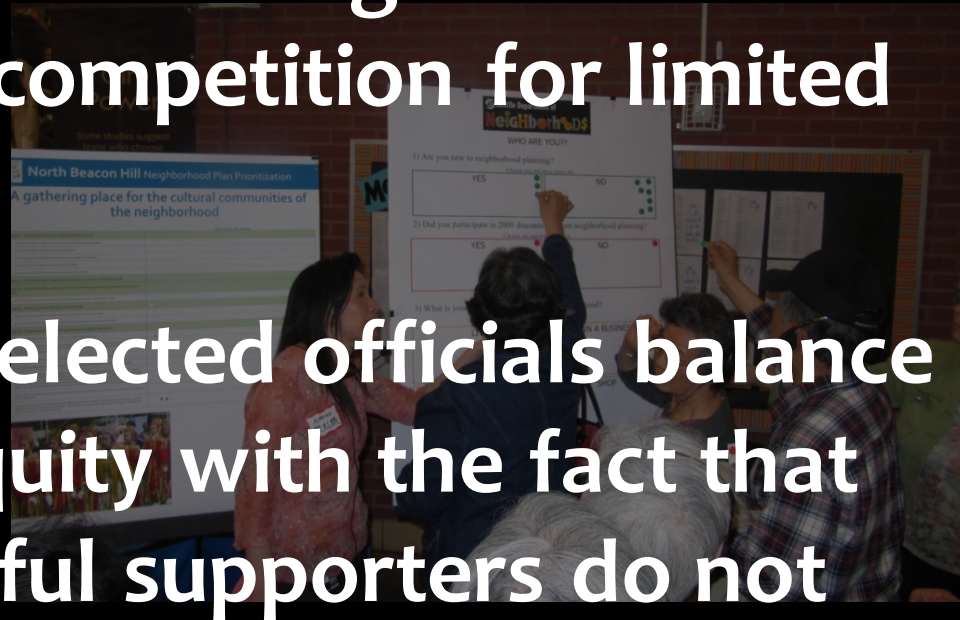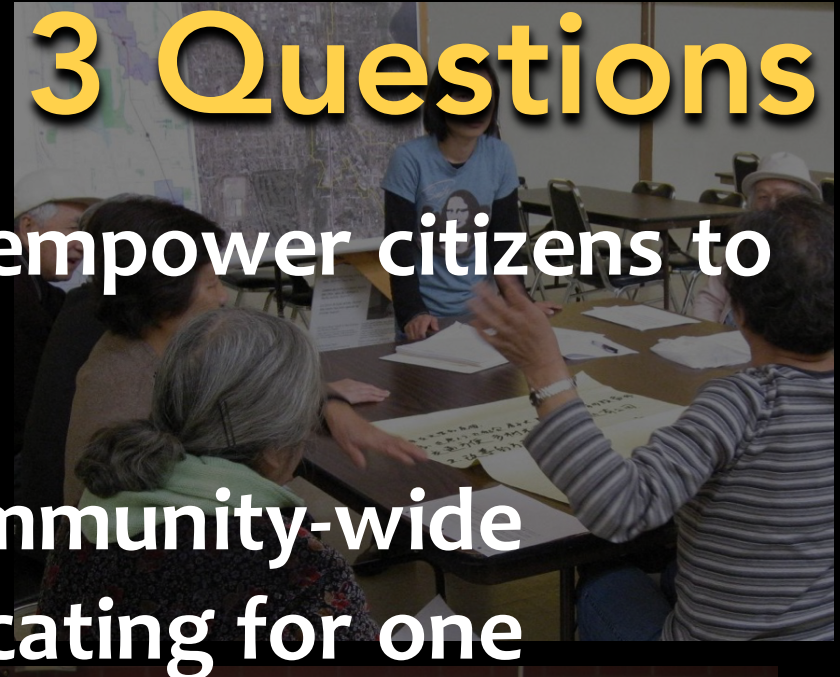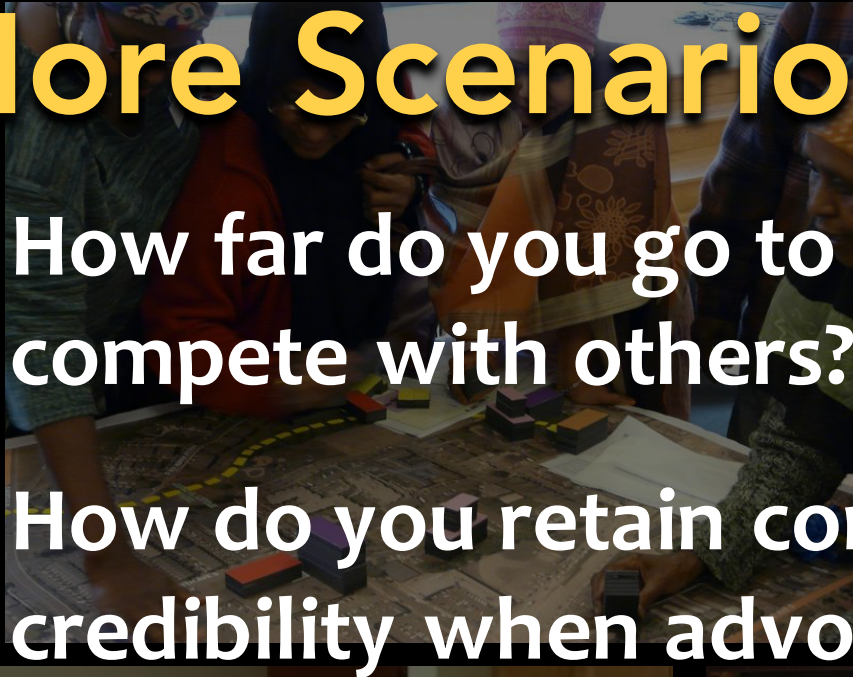   - ➤ Should you seek clearer direction from divided/ambivalent elected officials?

← Goal

Reality →

More Scenario 3 Questions

➢ How far do you go to empower citizens to compete with others?

➢ How do you retain community-wide credibility when advocating for one neighborhood in competition for limited funds?

➢ How do you help elected officials balance their vision for equity with the fact that their most powerful supporters do not share this vision?

Ethical Scenario 4

➤ A recent immigrant group's commercial interests conflict with historically established interests in a minority neighborhood. Improving mobility and addressing other needs for historic residents conflict with the auto-oriented development patterns favored by the recent immigrants.

Scenario 4 Questions

➢ As a planner, how does one maintain credibility while advocating for one neighborhood interest over another?

➢ At what point do planners/designers act in the interest of the "greater good?"

➢ How do we define the greater good when both have strong support from elected officials? Whose role is it to define the greater good?

Ethical Scenario 5

➢ A minority community displaced by economic and planning forces decides they should have a seat at the table in a public charrette to determine the future of the neighborhood from which they were recently displaced.

➢ Should they be included? And if so, what should be their role in this process and in relation to the new immigrants and dominant cultural group which now populate a neighborhood?

Scenario 5 Questions

➢ Should individuals be considered stakeholders by their historic legacy?

➢ What roles should they play in shaping the future of an area where they no longer reside?

➢ Do they have a right to demand a "right to return" a stake in the housing and other developments contemplated by the public process?

➢ How do we assess the relative value of cultural conservation?

Ethical Scenario 6

➤ A community hires you to convene a public process.

➤ During that public process, you realize the outcomes will not match the desires or expectations of the community.

Scenario 6 Questions

➢ When do you inform your client community of the possibly adverse outcomes?

➢ Do you continue the process out of respect for the public?

➢ Do you adjust the process to get "better" outcomes?

➢ How do you get your client to maintain an open process when the client fears adverse outcomes?

Closing Comments

Questions?

Next Steps

➢ Please complete your evaluations!

➢ Are you interested in developing ethical guidelines for professionals and others involved in decisions shaping our communities?

➢ This discussion and your evaluations will help determine how we continue this conversation.