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# TOOLKIT FOR ENGAGING



*with immigrants*

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# Toolkit for Engagement with Immigrants

## Overview

It is essential that regional planning decisions are informed by real-life challenges faced by communities, in this case immigrants, who are directly affected by planning policies and decisions. Given the trends of suburbanization of immigrant communities, increased movements of peoples, and the lack of previous planning engagement efforts focused on immigrant populations (especially in suburban areas and small regional municipalities), planners can use targeted discussion and questions to better engage immigrant communities in the development of regional-focused plans.

This toolkit is designed to identify themes, challenges, and ways of thinking that may inform formal initiatives to better effect change.

It was developed as a part of design process recommendations for Regional Planning under the Design for Arrival - Forefront Fellowship for Urban Design Forum (Cohort 2017-2018). Through the methodology explained in this toolkit, we hope to achieve the following objectives:

- To reveal the unknown boundaries and 'zones of influence' for immigrant and underrepresented communities.
- To bring to light regional-scale needs of immigrant and underrepresented communities.
- To identify spatial and non-spatial issues faced by immigrant and underrepresented communities.

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## Scope

This toolkit includes key questions that may be used to engage immigrant communities and delve deeper into understanding challenges faced by immigrants, however it does not provide detailed information about how to conduct or document the community engagement. The methodology for engaging a given community may vary with time constraints, funding availability, background and number of participants, and other factors. However the engagement exercises are universally applicable to unveil the concerns and needs of immigrant communities. Engagement teams are encouraged to document and analyze the findings from the engagement as comprehensively as possible.

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# Principles for Community Engagement



- **Know your Audience.**
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- **Notify in Time.** At least 3-4 weeks in advance date and time of the engagement. Use multiple mediums - email, flyers, phone calls etc.
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- **Provide Information.** Make sure that the participants understand what the engagement is about, and how the information they share will affect planning decisions.
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- **Build Trust & Ask Permission.** Always ask for permission to share their stories, opinions or concerns.
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- **Compensate.** Its good practice to compensate participants for their time and effort
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- **Listen and Take Notes**
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# Workshop Structure

## Part I

### Workshop Arrival

#### Introduction/ Ice-breaker

**Maximum Time: 30 minutes**

To initiate the workshop and make the community feel comfortable with sharing their stories, this first part of the workshop must serve as a ice-breaker.

Encourage participants to engage with the interactive boards at their own time, while they interact and mingle informally with engagement teams and other community members.

Invite participants to use the interactive boards in order to provide information about their region, travel patterns and origin about the neighborhood and region.

Each board will have at least one staff/ team member standing nearby to explain the question being asked.

## 'Help us get to know you'

### Board: World Map

**Ask:** Locate your or your family's origins

**Use:** Small stickers to locate

### Board: Neighborhood, City and Regional Scale

**Ask:** Tell us where you live, work and frequently visit.

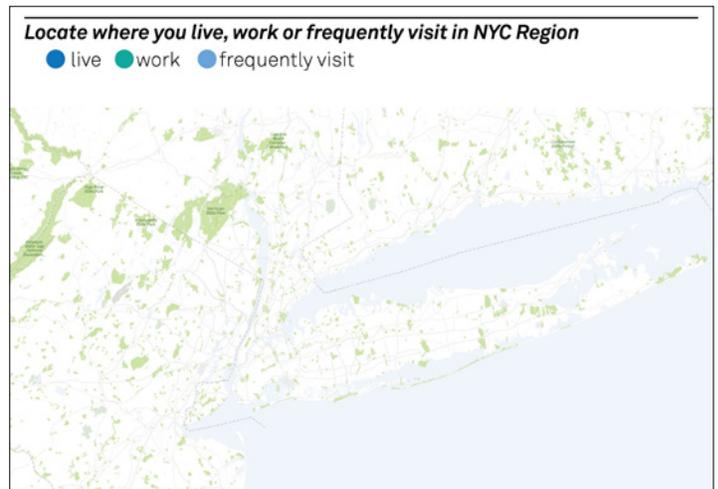
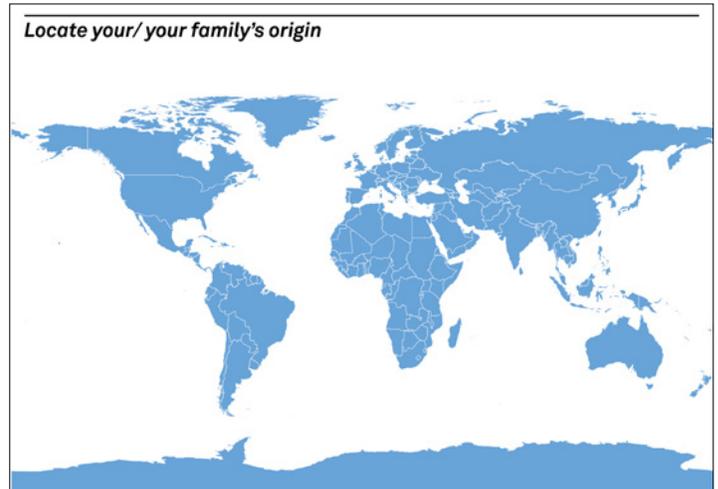
**Use:** Small stickers to locate

### Board: Transportation Options

**Ask:** How did you get here today?

How do you normally commute?

**Use:** Small stickers to locate



● How did you get here today?						
● How do you normally commute?						
						

## Part II

### Workshop

#### Perception and Cognitive Mapping

**Maximum Time: 5-10 minutes / participant**

This part of the workshop allows the engagement team to understand spatial connections made by immigrants in their environment.

Cognitive maps serve as mental representations of physical locations. A cognitive map can show what is important, and by omission, reveal what is less important. This procedure could be used to inform planning by allowing planners to know more about how spaces are seen or used by immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

Emphasize to the participant that the map is not about geographic precision, but rather a reflection of their experiences and perceptions of their community.

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## 'Cognition' Sheet for Mental Mapping

Provide participants with a 11X17 sheet with a reference point marked in the center of the sheet. This reference point may refer to their residence or place of work.

Request participants to draw a mental map on the sheet with following steps:

1. List Areas/Buildings they frequent - work, daily/ weekly groceries or supermarket trip, homes of family and friends, restaurants, bars etc
2. List the mode/modes of transportation they take to reach to these areas
3. Trace the paths from their homes to these listed areas that they visit and create a image/sketch of what it looks like
4. On the path drawn, specify the mode and detail their journeys, ie. if they make any stops on the way, or need to change mode of transportation etc.

<sup>1</sup>Tolman E. C. (1948). Cognitive maps in rats and men. *Psychological Review*, 55, 189-208.



## Part III

### Workshop

#### Regional Mapping

**Maximum Time: 30 minutes**

Participants may be divided in groups of 6–8 people per table.

Each table must have one facilitator, and one note taker.

Distribute regional plans at legible scale and neighborhood maps for each part of the workshop.

For the work session, on each table provide a page to explain each section of the workshop with legends and codes.

Facilitators should be trained on this prior to the workshop event

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## Perception of Region

**Board: Neighborhood, City and Regional Scale**

**Ask:** Participants are asked to note boundaries of what they consider their region, their neighborhood, area they would consider a part of their daily activities and area that would never be included as their day-to-day activity area.

**Use:**

 **Black Boundary** = Area that depicts their region

 **Blue Boundary** = Their neighborhood boundaries

 **Green Boundary** = Area of their day to day activities

 **Red Boundary** = Area that will never be a part of their day-to-day activities

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## Perception of Safety

**Board: Neighborhood, City and Regional Scale**

**Ask:** Participants are asked to note areas in their neighborhood and region where they feel least safe and most safe, and explain why.

**Use:**

Colored stickers and Post-its

 **Red** = areas I feel least safe

 **Green** = favorite areas in NH

 **+ Post-its** = Other notable features/locations/ points of interest

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## Desirability

**Board: Neighborhood, City and Regional Scale**

**Ask:** Participants are asked to note areas in their region that they would consider least and most desirable to live and work in.

**Use:** Colored stickers and Post-its

 **Red** = Least desirable

 **Green** = Most desirable

 **+ Post-its** = Explanations

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## Memory

**Board: Regional Scale**

**Ask:** Participants are asked to mark areas of their regions and neighborhoods which they best associate with nostalgia for their place of migration.

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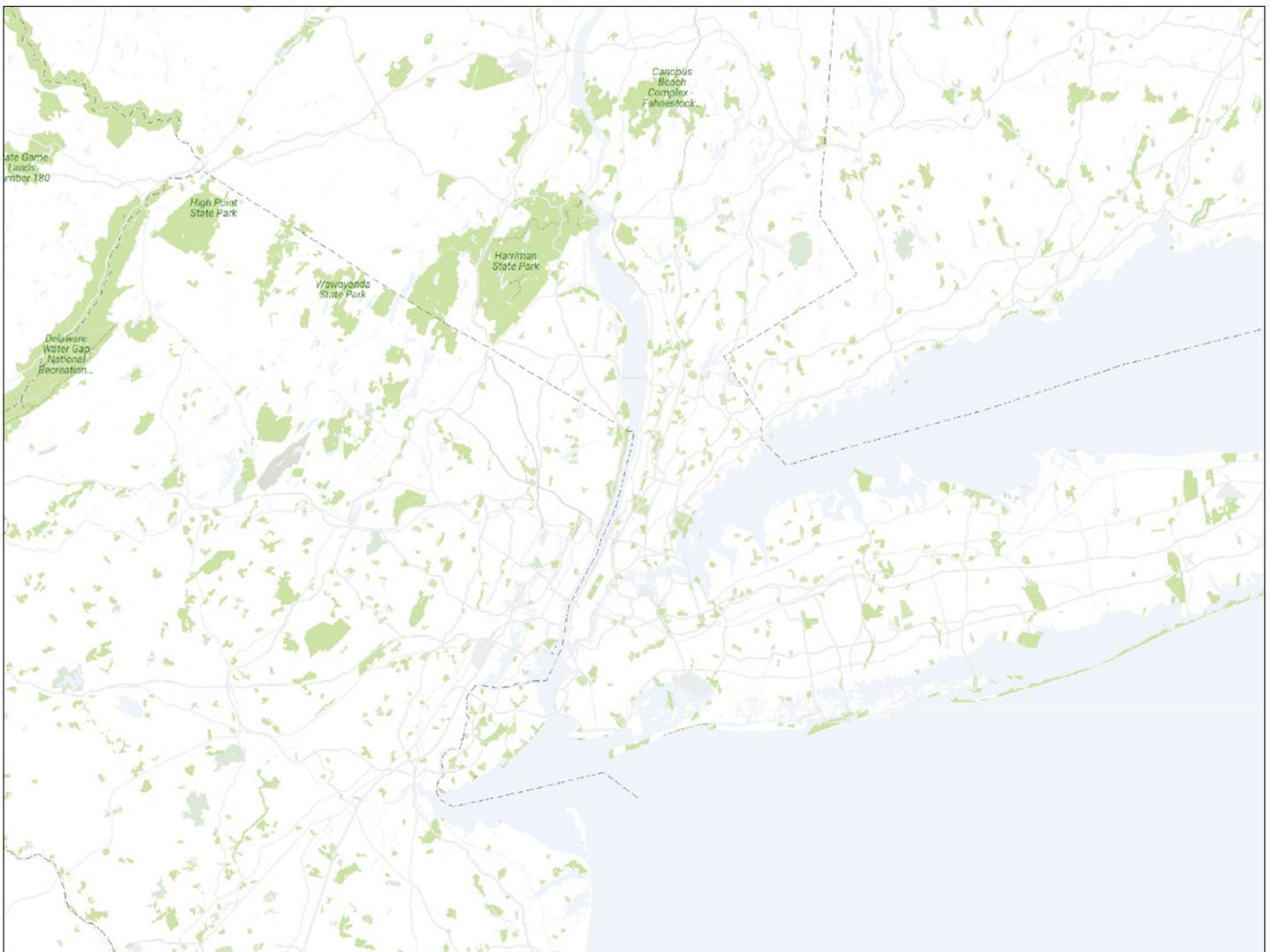
## Missing Links in Access

### Board: Regional Scale

**Ask:** Participants are asked to make note or spatially draw aspects that can be improved or provided to improve their quality of life.

These missing items may include services, amenities, transportation connections, types of housing, social infrastructure, public space, schools, jobs training centers etc.

The objective here is to help the participants identify what can be improved and what is lacking, within their area of influence.



## Part VI

### Workshop

#### Individual and Group Interviews

**Maximum Time: 10 -15 minutes / participant**

Immigrant stories can speak volumes!

Interviews and discussions with participants allows planners to understand issues that are very important to immigrant communities but are not traditionally considered planning issues.

Documenting these conversation may shed light on the communities urgent needs, challenges faced, concerns and success stories.

This documentation can also serve as an advocacy tool to local community groups to organize as demand for change.

Interviews may be done individually or in small groups.

Ensure that the participants are comfortable and willing to share their stories.

Make sure to clarify, that no material will be used without their permission and that anonymity will be maintained unless requested otherwise.

If recording the interview, take permission from the participants to use their stories.

Set up a video or audio device beforehand.

Use the sample questions to engage with the group.

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## Questions

- **Where do you live and work? What other places do you frequently visit?**
- **When did you move to the US? Tell us a little about your journey.**
- **Why did you choose to live in New York City region?**
- **What were some of the biggest challenges you faced when you moved to the US or to the NYC region?**
- **Would you consider this region welcoming?**
- **Are there areas in this region you avoid visiting because you feel they are unwelcoming?**
- **Where do you think you would be most successful or happy? Why are you not living there? What do you need to live there?**
- **What improvements to your neighborhood and region would make your day-to-day life substantially better?**

