



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

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CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: Equiticity

Date: November 18, 2024

Steering Committee Co-Facilitator:

Jose Manuel Almanza, Equiticity

Chicago United for Equity /Office of Equity and Racial Justice Co-Facilitators:

Rachel Pate, Chicago United for Equity
Lyric Griffin, Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice
Taylor Griffin, Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice
Cynthia Avila, Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice

Documentarians:

Rachel Pate
Jen Brown

Language:

English



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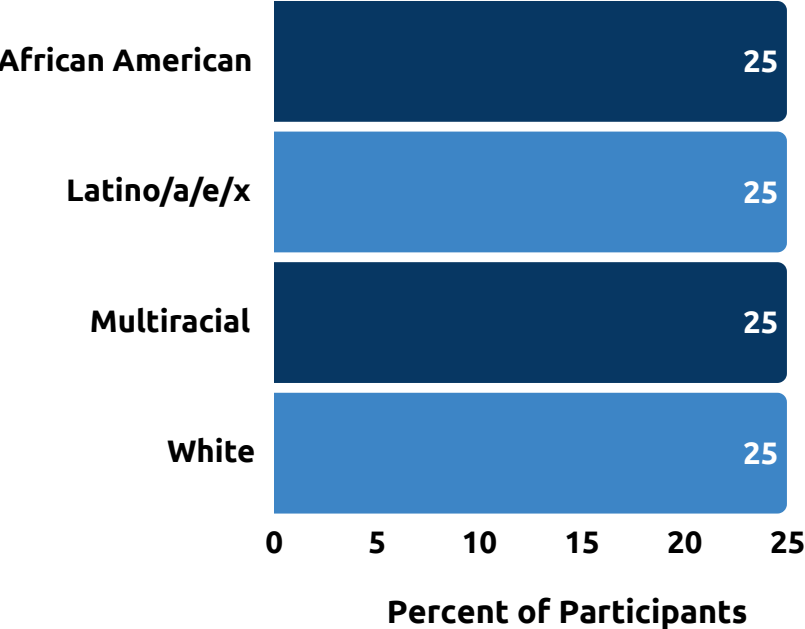
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Demographics

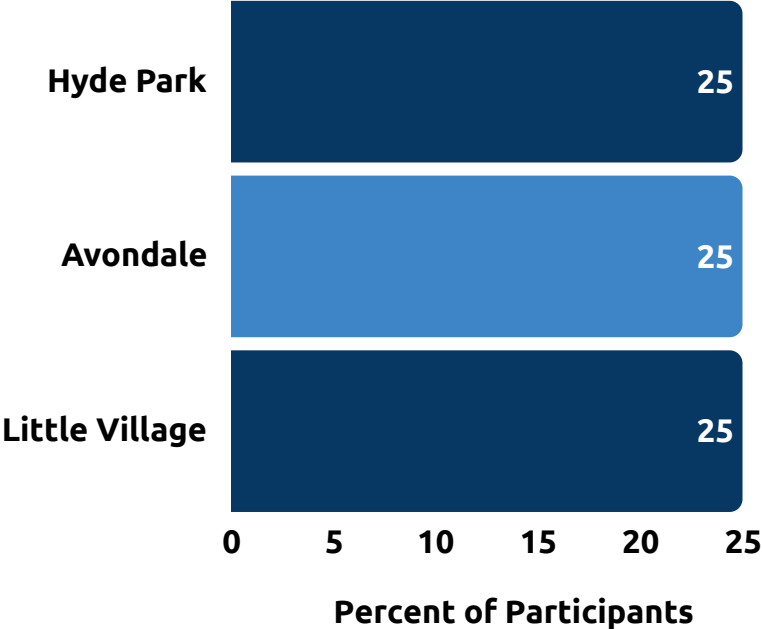
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

Race/Ethnicity



Neighborhoods

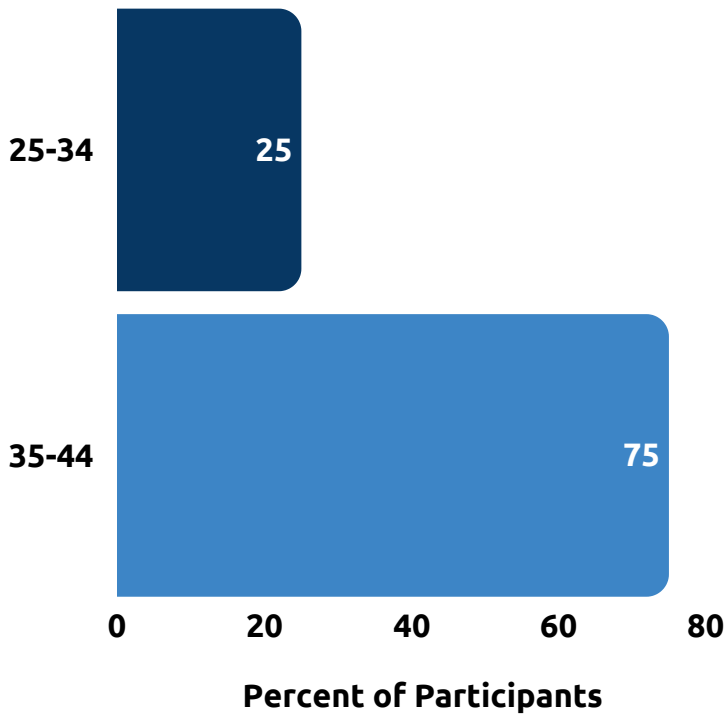


Demographics

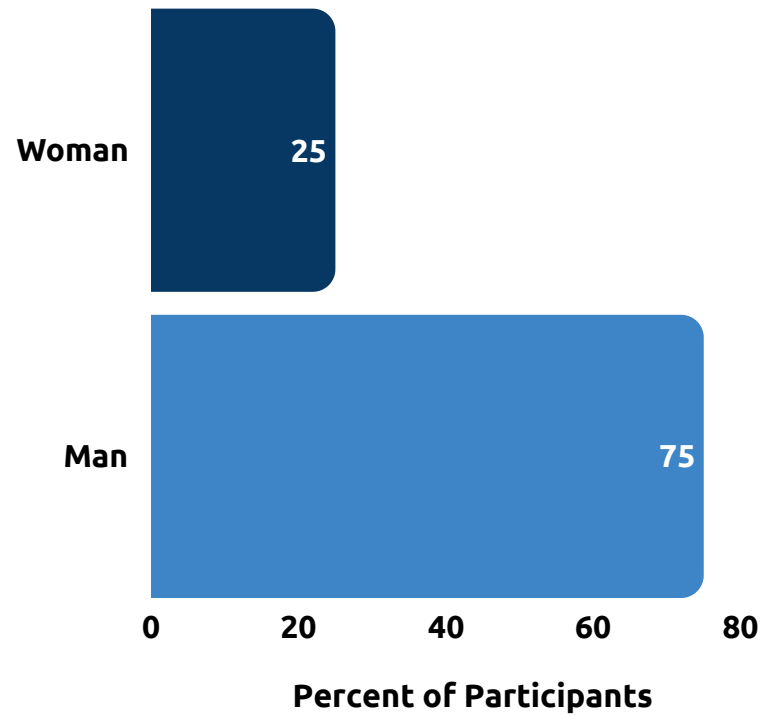
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

Age



Gender Identity

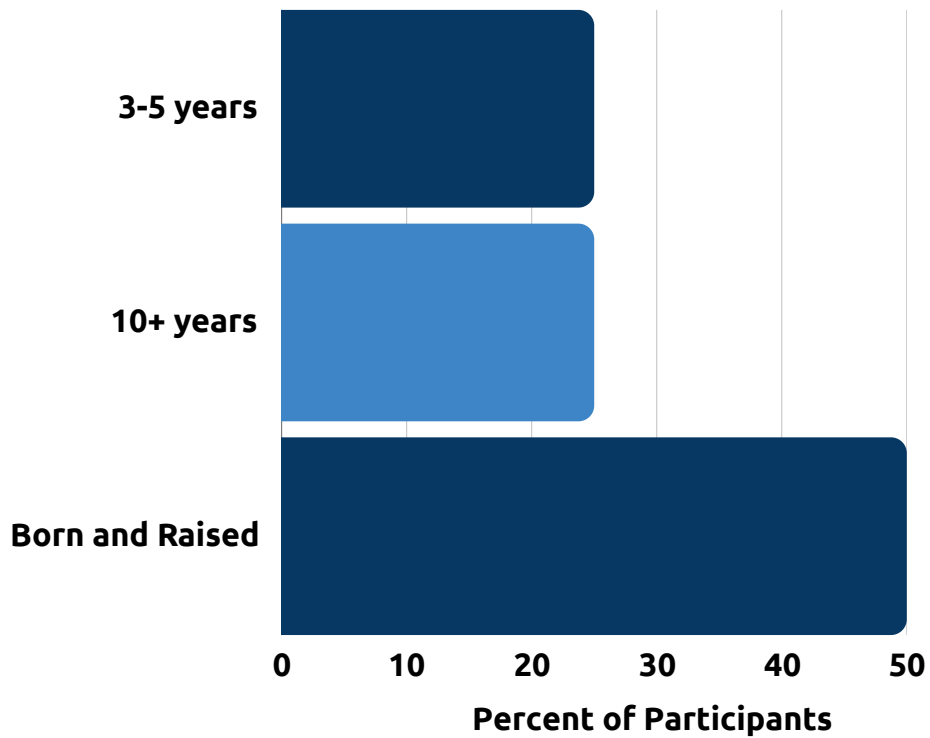


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 16

How long have you lived in Chicago?



Overview

The Office of Equity & Racial Justice (OERJ), Chicago United for Equity (CUE), and Chicago's Co-governance Steering Committee guided community members through a conversation to create a shared definition of co-governance that prioritizes equitable partnerships and decision-making between government and community.

Objectives

- Provide insights on current experiences with city government—highlighting both successes and challenges.
- Imagine what co-governance could look like in practice, focusing on equity, transparency, and inclusivity.

Key Takeaways

- Community engagement can be improved with fully funded and compensated outreach efforts, including investments in neighborhood block clubs and advisory councils.
- Education on decision-making processes is needed, including what decisions need to be made and how communities can effectively participate.
- Policies need better enforcement to ensure they serve the communities they are designed for, and decisions must reflect equitable outcomes.

Conversation Highlights



- "Shared decision-making should be inclusive and sustainable, constantly evolving as a process."
- "The City must fully fund outreach and invest in block clubs or systems to ensure departments engage with communities effectively."
- "Policies need enforcement to reflect the communities they're meant to serve; town halls aren't always effective for decision-making."
- "I don't think community meetings are the most effective way to achieve co-governance or shared decision-making. Decisions often aren't made there. A lot happens based on who's doing outreach, who's facilitating, and who can even attend the meeting."

Understanding Your Experience



Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences engaging with the City of Chicago, rating experiences as "Difficult," "Neutral," "Excellent," or "No Government Engagement."

Engagement Activity Results

3

"Difficult" ratings: Reported delays in resolving infrastructure issues and lack of accountability when ordinances failed to center equity.

0

"Neutral" ratings: No participant responses.

2

"Excellent" ratings: Cited positive outcomes when aldermanic offices and systems like 311 worked efficiently.

0

"No Engagement" ratings: No participant response.

Reflections

- Departments are siloed, creating inefficiencies and making it difficult to anticipate and address community needs across different parts of the city.
- Adopting a grid system for better service delivery, such as tree trimming, to ensure needs are consistently met across the city.
- Advocating for equitable implementation of ordinances requires inclusive collaboration among organizers, aldermen, and community members.
- Navigating complex city systems like ADUs are a "nightmare," due to insufficient homeowner assistance funds and accessibility barriers.
- A parent requested a tree to be trimmed for a neighbor's house because it was damaging their property. The request was fulfilled faster than expected, possibly because multiple family members submitted requests, including one who visited the alder's office directly.
- The 311 system surprisingly works in getting things done.
- After an ordinance was passed, the City did not implement it as intended. Equity was not centered, and those with resources benefited more than those without, highlighting systemic inequities.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



Facilitators shared three definitions of co-governance and asked participants to underline or verbally share phrases they would like to see reflected in Chicago's definition of co-governance.

Engagement Activity Results

- Sharing economic and political power
- Economic power
- Equity in outcomes, not just processes
- In service of equitable outcomes
- "Sharing economic and political power"
- Be explicit about power and privilege.
- Equity in outcomes, not just processes

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



Facilitators asked participants what they thought would be an effective pathway to co-governance:

- “The culture of decision-making in Chicago requires a shift to prioritize inclusivity, explicit acknowledgment of inequities, and education on governance processes.”
- “Fully fund outreach efforts to ensure new developments are effectively communicated to residents. Outreach cannot rely solely on alder notifications, social posts, or email blasts. The City must compensate outreach efforts, whether through nonprofits or by expanding departments to create robust outreach teams.”
- “Invest in block clubs and establish a system where departments know who to contact within communities for effective communication and collaboration.”
- “Ensure policies, especially in ETOD zones, are properly enforced and reflect the priorities and needs expressed by the community.”
- “I don’t think community meetings are the most effective way to achieve co-governance or shared decision-making. Decisions often aren’t made there. A lot happens based on who’s doing outreach, who’s facilitating, and who can even attend the meeting.”
- “This is a very hard question. I don’t even know the right questions to ask. I would like to be part of designing solutions, but there’s information I don’t have. I need education and support to understand what questions to ask and how to prioritize decisions.”

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



Facilitators asked participants what they thought would be an effective pathway to co-governance:

- “If city government actually listened to staff instead of focusing on higher-level decisions, we would be doing better.”
- “Even if you put options in front of me, I don’t always know what decisions to make. Where I’m from, due dates are never met. I feel powerless—what should I do? Write a letter? We conducted surveys, but even then, people don’t align because they don’t know enough. There are too many differences.”
- “Inject shared and diverse perspectives into existing decision-making bodies, explicitly addressing power. How many people can do this on a volunteer basis? The city doesn’t allocate resources for community members to be involved. Developers pay people in the community—it’s complicated.”
- “Address the issue of decisions that can only move forward with aldermanic approval, as this limits participation to a select group and excludes broader community input.
- “It’s a cultural shift—wiping away how things have been done.
- I want to switch it to a grid system so that tree trimming will continue to improve. But for other departments, how can we anticipate the needs or services to move around the different parts of the city?”

How Do You Define Co-Governance?

- “If we’re centering equity, how do we ensure people who aren’t typically in the room are included? One-off or even series-based meetings don’t always lead to the best long-term decisions. We need to change the culture of how decisions are made in government. It doesn’t always make sense.”
- “Involve community members in the design of proposals and ideas before decisions are made. Provide education on what questions to ask and what needs the community may present.”
- “Increase education around decision-making processes, including what decisions need to be made and how they are formulated.”
- “I have an issue with oversight—engagement cannot just happen at the final decision point. There should be committees for alders. Who’s at the table, and why were they invited? There must be ways to get input more broadly.”
- “In this case, certain organizations or groups have power and privilege. For example, a group in the 25th ward has influence through a committee. It’s essential to be explicit about the power, privilege, and access that certain community members and organizations have. Decisions are still being influenced by the same people with power, reinforcing the same systems.”
- “Planning bodies must be diverse, transparent, and accountable.”
- The overuse of "equity" and "equitable," calls into question what these terms mean in practice. They need to translate into tangible results.

