

# Community Engagement Doesn't Stop When Construction Starts

August 5th, 2020

Thoughtful planners and developers understand the importance of inclusive **community** engagement. Yet, community engagement during the construction phase is often overlooked. Although this phase of engagement may look different, it's important to proactively update the community on project progress, impacts on traffic and access, and other disruptions in the community.



## Community Engagement during Entitlements vs. Construction

Capturing community feedback, questions, and concerns – and responding to them quickly – reduces the volume of calls and emails on-site staff must manage. In addition to ensuring that construction-related disruptions are minimized, continued engagement also will help your team build momentum and excitement for the new development.

Although equally important, community engagement during the construction phase does differ from engagement during the entitlement phase in terms of:

- **Purpose.** Community feedback has been considered and designs have been finalized. However, keeping community members informed is important for generating excitement and preventing costly delays from disgruntled neighbors. If you engage neighbors early in the planning process, this phase will be a lot easier.
- **Time commitment.** Taking the time to engage with community stakeholders is always valuable, but engaging during the construction phase is far less of a time commitment. Keep your project timeline on track and simultaneously keep community residents satisfied by posting regular updates – without the heavy lift.
- **Cadence.** Providing regular updates detailing aspects of the construction process that may impact the neighborhood will help to ensure that community members are up-to-date with what’s happening around them. Posting such updates will decrease the likelihood that your team will have to field phone calls or respond to individual emails with complaints or questions.

## What Community Engagement During Construction Enables

As important as it is to engage early and often, it’s also important to keep residents in the know as construction schedules move forward. Sharing the

construction schedule and anticipated disruptions will help your team avoid costly delays while maintaining strong neighborhood relationships.

Proactive, regular updates during the construction phase will help your team:

- **Turn skeptics into supportive neighbors.** The arrival of construction teams in a neighborhood often brings speculation and complaints from skeptical neighbors. Clear messaging about what the project will bring will help to quell some of these fears.
- **Build buzz and generate leasing interest.** Share leasing information to generate interest for residential and commercial spaces.
- **Avoid delays.** When residents know to expect road and sidewalk closures, noise, and other disruptions, they're less likely to file a complaint that could lead to delays and work stoppages. Including this information in updates will also decrease the likelihood that your team will have to field phone calls or respond to individual emails with complaints or questions.
- **Capitalize on local knowledge.** Many plans have been finalized, but there is still a tremendous opportunity to gather community input for opening – everything from which retail tenants to choose to how to activate community spaces. Their vital, local knowledge can help your team decide how to best bring value to the area.

## Construction Projects Doing this Right

Here is a sampling of projects successfully engaging community members during the construction phase:

- [Kendall Square at MIT](#) provides the community with detailed weekly construction updates, including street and sidewalk impacts as well as construction milestones achieved as they work to build a crossroads for Kendall Square, MIT and the Cambridge community.

- [Beckert's Park](#) uses coUrbanize updates to keep DC residents informed about everything from facade and utility work to expected power outages and interruption of bike lanes.
- [The Overlook at Saint Gabriel's](#) demonstrates how regular updates can generate interest for both affordable and market-rate units.
- [50 Rogers Street, Cambridge](#) keeps residents happy with weekly construction updates detailing typical working hours, information about police detail, announcements of road closures, and which construction-related activities are taking place.

## How coUrbanize Can Help

coUrbanize has helped teams on hundreds of projects all over the country to manage engagements, collect representative input, activate a larger audience of stakeholders, and leverage tangible data to best inform project decisions.

Regardless of the size and scope of your project, coUrbanize can help you:

- **Project your vision online:** coUrbanize can help amplify your vision with our new project landing pages that put your branding vision front and center. You can see these pages in action for [JBG SMITH](#) and [Boston Properties](#).
- **Gather private feedback:** In addition to gathering public feedback from stakeholders, the coUrbanize platform now allows community members to share their comments, questions, and concerns privately with your team. This tool gives residents and local stakeholders a less intimidating vehicle in which to share feedback that is contrary to or different from popular opinion.
- **Share wide-reaching project updates:** Disseminate important information using our updates to help the community stay informed about statuses and prospects. For additional simplicity, use our template library to more quickly post a project update designed for delivering information on the COVID-19 outbreak or changes to project road maps, timelines, or delays in construction.

Learn more about how coUrbanize can help your team build a better project with better community engagement and without costly delays. Send us an email at [sales@courbanize.com](mailto:sales@courbanize.com) or [request a demo here](#).