

THE TOOLS OF ENGAGEMENT: A UNIVERSITY-LED COMMUNITY CONVERSATION STRATEGY TO BUILD PUBLIC TRUST

DURUSSEL, LISA

University of Michigan, lduruss@umich.edu

MEEHAN, DANIEL

The Pennsylvania State University, dtm124@psu.edu

1 **ABSTRACT**

Planning for land use change can quickly become contentious when the protection of water resources is at risk and when previous planning projects have already led to concerns over public trust. This paper highlights how Penn State University developed a hybrid 'community conversation' engagement strategy for future plans for a sensitive, 356-acre University-owned property. Through a tightly structured design and community input process, an interdisciplinary team of faculty and students worked with a non-profit organization, community-group leaders, and municipal officials, the public, and university leaders to provide a range of viable management strategies for the property in question. Using Geodesign's transparent planning process to give community members a strong voice, this paper highlights a unique community engagement process where traditional community engagement tools (presentation, interview, charette) are augmented by digital tools – including ArcGIS Pro as a source of data and systems mapping, Geodesignhub to allow stakeholders to create their own design scenarios and StoryMap as a presentation tool to convey outcomes. The process worked through three iterative loops within the project timeline to determine design strategies for the site, all of which were continually rooted in the research of the site and checked against community input and shared with the public. This process allowed stakeholders and landowners to reach a consensus regarding complex land use and development issues in an engaging, trusting, and collaborative way.

1.1 **Keywords:**

Landscape architecture, community engagement, GeoDesign, ArcGIS, digital tools