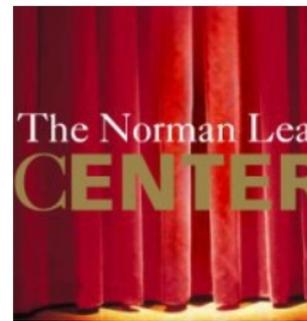


A nonpartisan research and public policy center that studies the social, political, economic and cultural impact of entertainment on the world, The Lear Center translates its findings into action through testimony, journalism, research and innovative public outreach campaigns. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Lear Center builds bridges between Schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it helps bridge the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its conferences, public events and publications; through its role in the formulation of the academic field of entertainment studies; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Norman Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field. www.learcenter.org



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Grand Intervention www.grandintervention.org

**Encouraging Transparency & Public Engagement
in Civic Projects**

The goal of the Lear Center's Grand Intervention project was to maximize public input into the design of Grand Park, the new 12-acre park in the heart of downtown Los Angeles.

The land for the park was public (city- and county-owned); the developer would build the park as part of a deal to construct an adjacent private retail/hotel/housing high-rise. The developer's initial public outreach did not seem particularly robust or transparent. (They turned out to be exemplary partners.)

In your city or neighborhood, is there a planned new public building, space or civic program? Or a cherished old building or program about to be dismantled? How can you make your voice heard? **READ ON**

This Grand Intervention strategy proved to be a successful tool for citizen engagement in civic projects. Key elements of the plan:

1. *Build your team.* Gather local experts and informed citizens to form an advisory board to help define the scope of your effort. You cannot dictate design specs to developers or program parameters to city officials, but you can increase and influence the choices they have to consider.

2. *Seek information,* advice and advisors from local schools and universities. In particular, higher education schools of communication, public policy, sociology, political science and art/design/architecture offer the possibility of academic expertise and student interns for your effort.

3. *Name your effort.* Brand your initiative. A good logo never hurts. Do you know someone who's an experienced graphic artist? Tap their skill set. Find someone who can set up and run a blog.

4. *Reach out* respectfully to someone with power over the project; your effort should provide an additional resource of ideas and solutions for them, not an adversary. Keep them informed of your plans, activities and goals. A brief, face-to-face meeting early on with them can set the tone for a positive relationship down the line.



5. *Find a public, media voice* to partner with your effort: a local newspaper or blog, public TV or radio station. Connect with local reporters, editors and bloggers. Stay in touch and contribute new content – op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, brief interviews – to these outlets on a regular basis.

6. *Use the power of the Web.* The Lear Center provided live webcasts of all three Grand Park community workshops sponsored by the developer, where online workshop attendees could post questions and comments on a discussion board; videos of all public meetings are available online, as are searchable transcripts of the meetings; all materials distributed and displayed at the meetings, including renderings and model photos, are posted on our Grand Intervention site; and we surveyed community workshop participants, both online and off, to see whether they felt their voices were heard. Social media was designed for just this sort of engagement. Use Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and whatever's next.

7. *Campaign.* Does the civic project you're working on still seem opaque? Team up with your media partner and turn up the heat: Launch an unofficial public campaign or design competition to spark public interest and input. The Lear Center teamed up with the *LA Times*, and the resulting design competition pulled in nearly 300 design submissions from around the world and surfaced a number of ideas that made their way into the final, finished park.

Make your city *your* city...and please let us know your story! Email us at enter@usc.edu.