



SALT LAKE
CITY
ARTS
COUNCIL

West Side Public Art Piece

Community Engagement Sessions Recap Report

Prepared by: Union Creative Agency | June 2025

PROJECT BRIEF

Union Creative was engaged to work alongside Matthew Mazzotta and the Salt Lake City Arts Council to support and co-facilitate four community engagement sessions. These sessions were a combination of roundtable discussions and Matthew Mazzotta's Outdoor Living Room engagement technique. Union Creative supported the design, planning, implementation, facilitation, and documentation of each session.



PROJECT GOALS

Through this project, our team aimed to accomplish the following:

- To design and implement an impactful, thoughtful, and engaging process in close collaboration with Matthew Mazzotta and the SLC Arts Council that can inform the design of Matthew's public art piece to be installed at Glendale Park.
- To generate insightful conversations that help to elevate stories, histories, and ideas that can connect Matthew to the community by co-facilitating the engagement sessions.
- To ensure the public art piece authentically reflects the communities in and around Salt Lake City's West Side by helping to collect, analyze, synthesize, and report qualitative data and stories.
- To identify a blend of broad and deep insights that can provide Matthew Mazzotta with a holistic understanding of the dynamics within and beyond Salt Lake City's West Side communities.
- To maximize the number and diversity of voices heard by providing capacity support to aid in engagement logistics and expand the team's ability to engage in and capture conversations with participants at the sessions.
- To ensure Spanish-speaking community members had comfortable opportunities to participate by providing a Spanish-speaking co-facilitator in each meeting and offering translation between Matthew Mazzotta and Spanish-speaking participants.
- To ensure West Side residents feel connected to and represented by the future public art by providing genuine opportunities to discuss and shape its design.
- To Provide Matthew Mazzotta and the SLC Arts Council team with easy access to the key themes, ideas, and insights that emerged from the engagement sessions.
- To help ensure the engagement process and future public art piece build on previous outreach and design efforts by reviewing engagement reports, Glendale Park plans, and other key documents.

Note: This process DID NOT aim to identify specific design details (color, form, material, scale, imagery, symbolism, etc.) or artwork siting. While some ideas emerged related to these items and are found throughout this report, they are intended as higher-level ideas or opportunities rather than specific recommendations.

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Artist

Matthew Mazzotta

Union Creative Agency

Jake McIntire

Kristen Clifford

Isaac Vialpando

Leon Araujo

Salt Lake City Arts Council

Renato Olmedo-Gonzalez

Amy Childress

Laurel Cannon-Alder

ENGAGEMENT TYPES

Outdoor Living Room

Two of the engagement sessions followed Matthew Mazzotta's standard methodology, Outdoor Living Room. This method of engagement includes creating temporary living room spaces in public spaces with the artist hosting a conversation that follows nine questions. These questions are repeated in sequence over multiple rounds, with participants free to come and go as they like. This method provides a welcoming, comfortable, engaging, and flexible input opportunity for community members who might otherwise not participate. Outdoor Living Room sessions primarily aimed to uncover community stories and themes from a general public perspective.

- What are some unknown histories of this community? | ¿Cuáles son algunas historias desconocidas de esta comunidad?
- What is something that you have seen in another city or neighborhood that you would like to see here? What's missing? | Que es algo que has visto en otra ciudad o vecindario que te gustaria ver aqui? ¿Qué hace falta?
- What do you think about your community's / neighborhood's identity? | ¿Qué piensas acerca de la identidad de tu comunidad o identidad de tu vecindario?
- What are the challenges that face the community? | ¿Cuáles son los desafíos que enfrenta tu comunidad?
- What brings people together in this part of the city? | ¿Qué junta a la gente en esta parte de la ciudad?
- Can you think of any underutilized resources in this neighborhood? (physical materials, skills people have, etc.) | ¿Puedes pensar en algunos recursos no utilizados en este vecindario?
- What is the biggest resource? | ¿Cuál es el recurso más grande?
- What is something special or something secret about this community? | ¿Qué es algo especial o algún secreto acerca de esta comunidad?
- How do you see this community in 10 years? | ¿Cómo ves a esta comunidad en 10 años?



ENGAGEMENT TYPES

Group Discussion

One session followed a group discussion format that mirrored the Outdoor Living Room structure but took place in a more typical meeting space without the living room setup and with a consistent stakeholder group rather than general members of the public. This session also had a set start/stop time with all participants being present for the entire time as opposed to participants coming-and-going. This structure allowed the team to engage with a set group of stakeholders at the time and location of their standing meeting. The Group Discussion session primarily aimed to understand the specific experiences of a singular stakeholder group.

Stakeholder Roundtable

One session was facilitated as a Stakeholder Roundtable with participants representing key stakeholders from a variety of community organizations. These stakeholders were selected for their deep, long-standing, and ongoing work within the community. Given the experience and expertise of the participants, the Stakeholder Roundtable was organized around themes identified in other sessions/research and was designed with the goal of going deeper into these themes.

SESSION DATES / TIMES

Session 1

Date: Thursday April 24, 2025

Time: 5:30pm – 8:30pm

Location: Rose Park Smith's Grocery Store / El Jaripeo Taco Truck

Format: Outdoor Living Room

Audience: General Community

Session 2

Date: Friday April 25, 2025

Time: 8:30am – 9:30am

Location: Community Learning Center

Format: Group Discussion

Audience: Students

Session 3

Date: Friday April 25, 2025

Time: 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Location: Glendale Library

Format: Stakeholder Roundtable

Audience: Community leaders

Session 4

Date: Saturday April 26, 2025

Time: 1pm – 3pm

Location: International Peace Gardens

Format: Outdoor Living Room

Audience: General Community





AUDIENCE COMPOSITION

Across all four sessions, participants included:

- Longtime West Side residents (particularly from Glendale and Rose Park), bringing deep neighborhood history and cultural knowledge.
- Youth (grades 6–12), reflecting the voices of the West Side’s younger generation—many of whom attend local schools such as Glendale Middle School, and older youth who commute to East High School.
- Community leaders and stakeholders (e.g., local nonprofit directors, neighborhood council members, faith-based organizers) who hold influence in civic and cultural affairs.
- Artists, art enthusiasts, and design professionals from across Salt Lake City.
- Newer West Side residents and individuals representing fresh perspectives.
- West Side visitors from other regions in the Salt Lake Valley.
- Members of the Diné Community ensuring that Indigenous voices and culturally significant viewpoints were present.

Session 1 – General Community

Participants:

- Predominantly West Side residents from Rose Park and adjacent neighborhoods.
- A significant number of local artists and art enthusiasts from Salt Lake City's broader creative community.
- Multi-generational mix: parents and older adults shared historical context about the old water park site, while younger adults and families provided insight on current day-to-day use of public spaces.

Demographic Highlights:

- Representation from both Spanish- and English-speaking households.
- A roughly even split of male/female attendees, with ages ranging from mid-20s through retirement age; many participants had deep roots in the neighborhood.

Perspective:

- Session 1 served as an opening to the conversations, tapping the local social fabric, from longstanding families to grassroots arts advocates, to ground the project in the West Side's collective memory.





Session 2 – Youth

Participants:

- Approximately 20-25 students (ages 12–18), recruited via Glendale Middle School and East High School.

Demographic Highlights:

- A mix of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Latino/Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and white youth were especially prominent—reflecting Glendale’s demographic makeup).
- Nearly equal gender representation; several participants were first-generation Salt Lake City native adolescents.

Perspective:

- Youth perspectives illuminated where young residents currently spend their free time, how they perceive neighborhood safety, their day-to-day activities, their obstacles and opportunities, and what kinds of spaces or features would make a lasting cultural impact for their generation.



Session 3 – Community Leaders

Participants:

- Neighborhood council members, members from University Neighborhood Partners (UNP), heads of local nonprofits (e.g., community learning center, youth mentorship organizations), and representatives from community committees.
- Attendees representing Salt Lake City as well as a member from the Glendale Park design team.

Demographic Highlights:

- Attendees skewed slightly older (late 30s to 60s), with a balance of long-time residents and emerging leaders.

Perspective:

- Bringing together civic leaders allowed us to understand how the new park's public art piece could complement existing social programs, strengthen neighborhood networks, and address local challenges—like perceptions of gentrification, economic barriers, and the need for local investment.

Session 4 – General Community

Participants:

- Predominantly newer West Side residents (those who moved into Glendale within the past 5 years) with a smaller contingent of longer standing residents.
- Multi-generational mix: adults (younger to older) and several kids.
- Art enthusiasts and visitors from greater Salt Lake City.

Demographic Highlights:

- A notable portion of participants had relocated to the West Side due to more affordable housing and appreciation for diversity, thus combining fresh outlooks with a respect for the West Side's heritage.
- Longtime residents shared historical context about the old water park site, while younger adults and families provided insight on their current day-to-day use of public spaces.
- One participant from the Diné (Navajo) community shared her perspective on the lack of representation for Indigenous voices throughout Salt Lake City.

Perspective:

- Bringing together a blend of new and old West Side residents provided an important perspective and counterpoint to several of the conversations held in the other sessions. This balance highlighted the array of experiences residents have and how their experiences differ depending on how long they have lived in the neighborhood.



Summary of Audience Composition:

By structuring the sessions around distinct audience segments and utilizing different engagement methodologies, we captured a holistic view of Glendale's evolving identity. Each session's makeup ensured that feedback would reflect both long-standing neighborhood traditions and fresh ideas from newer residents. Gathering in accessible, familiar community venues (Smith's Grocery, Glendale Library, Peace Gardens, and the Community Learning Center) further encouraged candid dialogue across cultural, age, and socioeconomic lines. This layered approach to audience engagement has provided a deep and broad view of Salt Lake City's West Side communities and how the public art piece can represent them.



KEY THEMES

**Disconnectedness/
Isolation**

Gentrification

Reputation

**Nature /
Wildlife**

Infrastructure

Color / Vibrancy

Neighborliness

Recreation

Social Gathering

**Diversity /
Cultural Richness**

Food

Theme: Disconnectedness/Isolation

Youth want stronger ties to the East Side but also demand meaningful investment within their own community

The absence of a local high school and limited recreational / infrastructural investments keep the community fractured

Youth expressed feeling like they have to work harder and have fear of being overlooked

Glendale has many assets but they are fragmented, hidden, and underutilized

Physical and social disconnection contributes to isolations among youth and erodes trust within the community

Diversity is a strength, but it can also perpetuate isolation, as many residents face challenges connecting across cultural and language differences.

Theme: Gentrification

Many residents fear that improvements and development in the neighborhood will not reflect or represent them

There are differing perspectives within the community about gentrification—some benefit from investment, while others fear being priced out and excluded from shaping change

Improvements like walkability and new businesses are appreciated but are also seen as accelerating displacement and loss of culture

For some residents, the Raging Waters site symbolizes inequity, economic stratification, and gentrification

Some residents feel the East Side is invading the West Side

Theme: Reputation

Residents (particularly youth) want Glendale to be seen as a place worth visiting and living in—not othered or “ghetto”

Despite the external stigma, many residents express deep pride in Glendale and are actively reclaiming its identity

Persistent stereotypes about Glendale and its residents create added barriers for youth who already feel they must prove themselves.

Outsiders may see the neighborhood negatively, but locals describe it as welcoming, close-knit, generous, and culturally rich.

There’s a growing gap in how longtime residents and new arrivals perceive and relate to the community’s identity

Theme: Nature/Wildlife

Glendale is home to unique urban wildlife such as peacocks, bunnies, turtles, goats, and ducks. One resident described them as “community pets”

The Jordan River is a central asset to Glendale’s ecology and geography but suffers from pollution, neglect, and safety concerns

Residents want to see natural resources (such as the river, parks, and trails) cleaned up and better maintained to demonstrate the City’s investment in caring for the environment and neighborhood

Natural elements like lilacs, birds, and scenic views tie the community together and offer shared sources of pride and well-being

Theme: Infrastructure

A lack of quality grocery stores and other shops leaves residents with few options and encourage many to leave the neighborhood to shop elsewhere

Young residents expressed concern about the impact of poor infrastructure and lack of investment on their social, physical, and mental health.

The abandoned Raging Waters site is seen as a symbol of poor investment and negatively affects perceptions of the neighborhood

Road infrastructure is car-centric. Recent investments in active transportation and traffic calming is welcomed by some and hated by others

Residents (especially youth) want better connection to the East Side but also want investment in their community

Lack of a High School on the West Side creates major challenges. Some students report commuting more than an hour a day to and from East High School

Concern that the changes ("improvements") happening on the West Side are not for, because of, or representative of the existing community

Theme: Color/Vibrancy

Residents desire more vibrancy through community gathering opportunities

More color is needed in the built environment to brighten the grey winters and boring infrastructure but also to reflect the neighborhood's multicultural fabric

The roofs in Rose Park were originally green and red to look like a rose from the aerial view

Theme: Neighborliness

Glendale is a close-knit community with countless examples of neighbors helping each other which often get missed in the story-telling of the neighborhood

Residents want more spaces for connection and creativity

Front yards are one of the primary spaces where neighborliness is found. They serve as venues for parties, gardens, sharing, and connection

Many residents desire more neighborhood events

Residents used words like kindness, talent, and creativity to describe their efforts to build community

Young residents feel comfortable talking and connecting with strangers

Theme: Recreation

The Sunday soccer league is very popular and brings people together outdoors

The Sandlot stands as a point of identity and pride for the West Side

The Jordan River Trail is seen as a recreational asset; it leads to the new park and is fairly accessible

West Side youth expressed admiration for Matthew Mazzotta's art piece in Boise ("Gentle Breeze") because they could imagine themselves hanging out on the swings with their friends

Many international sports are played on the West Side that are not found elsewhere in Salt Lake City

Young community members expressed a desire for more futsal courts and accessible gyms to exercise and play sports year-round.

Theme: Social Gathering

The community reports a lack of gathering spaces with adequate infrastructure. There are two parks, but they aren't well-equipped, and other formal spaces cost money.

Sometimes the outside perceptions of the neighborhood affect residents' perceptions of their neighbors– “We don't trust each other because of rumors”

The perceived lack of gathering points has made community members opt for using their personal homes for cultural celebrations, gatherings around food, and other social activities

The new Glendale Park has the potential to meet the need for informal, low-cost gathering spaces where social interaction can take place.

Theme: Diversity & Cultural Richness

Glendale/West Side culture happens everywhere, especially in front yards

Culture is also represented through physical activities at parks where international sports are played and culture-specific groups (such as the Tongan Tennis Association) meet

More than 20 languages are spoken by families at the local elementary school. The majority of the West Side consists of new Americans, many with low or no English proficiency

The Salt Lake Valley was historically sacred, neutral Indigenous territory where people didn't fight — a tradition disrupted for generations

There is a strong desire for “more color” in the built environment — both for aesthetics and as a reflection of cultural vibrancy

There is a fear of development changing the cultural dynamics of the area and losing the “West Side Flavor”

Theme: Food

Food in the community is a deep representation of the cultural mix of the area

Food offers an opportunity for unity across cultures in the neighborhood — exemplified by the Savor cookbook, which highlights how ingredients are used in different cultures

Options to buy cultural ingredients are limited, especially after the Supermercado was replaced with a condominium development

The neighborhood's food culture is not widely represented in formal businesses. Few local restaurants are family-owned or reflective of the area's culinary diversity

There is a unique agricultural aspect to the West Side where people grow food in gardens to give away, sell to restaurants, or raise livestock like goats and chickens

City and county regulations could hinder opportunities for people to grow and share food in the community

IDENTIFIED TENSIONS

Tensions are diametric concepts or dynamics that emerge in a project or conversation. Tensions are not about good vs. bad or right vs. wrong and do not inherently generate or relate to conflict. Tensions are more about differing perspectives, divergent ideas, or a range of possible solutions. Some tensions may be more significant in perception than in reality.

The intent of calling out tensions is not to encourage a decision on one side or the other, but to draw attention to them and to showcase the potential for nuanced ideas, solutions, or discussions that intentionally navigate the space(s) in-between.

Preserving Culture		New Businesses & Assets
Excitement		Fear
Investment		Resilience
Affordability		Opportunity
External Reputation		Local Pride
WDiversity		Shared Perspectives

TENSIONS CONTINUED

Regional		Local
River as Asset		River as Challenge
Sharing Food as Culture		Food Regulations & Policies
Long-time Residents		New Residents
Waterpark as Beloved		Waterpark as Negative

STORIES

The “stories” in this section are are not exact quotes of the comments said and are not attributed to specific community members. The stories are paraphrased and are intended to reflect the sentiment and experiences of participants.

We have to work twice as hard to achieve the same things that East Side youth do.

We want to be seen as desired people who live in a desired place– a place that can be loved.

I want the West Side to be a place where people from the East Side come to shop and visit and experience our cultures.

I saw a jogger one day and I knew gentrification had started. We only run with purpose here.

President Kennedy visited the west side of SLC a few months before he was killed.

Portions of the Sandlot movie were filmed in Glendale and the baseball field is still located behind a local shop

We moved here from California, bought a house, and love it. When I told my coworkers where I live they were concerned.

When I was broke I stole a pear and I promised that when I got to a better place I’d pay it forward. So I planted fruit trees and a garden and I give away most of the food to neighbors.

My friends on the East Side aren't allowed to come to my house because of where I live.

I love the mountain view. That's why I moved here. But even my family told me not to buy a house in Glendale

Our neighborhood kids couldn't afford to go to the water park. So they stood on the outside looking in. The original owners would let them pick up trash for entry but that went away when ownership changed.

Why are the improvements and investments happening now? Is it because of who is starting to move here?

We can't rely on institutions. We need to rely on each other.

If I had a magic wand I'd create more houses and shelters for the homeless.

East High isn't connected to Glendale in any way.

Living here, I get it - I see what nicer neighborhoods think of us. It doesn't feel as nice as other areas some times.

Food is part of our story — we see diversity in food.

We have two parks but they're not good ones.

MUSINGS

Bridges

Healing

Diversity

Weaving

Wind

Reflection

Gathering

Food

Transformation

**Tension /
Balance**

**Many
Perspectives**

Color

