

Preparing for a Community Plan Update

Chapter 2: Public Participation

Introduction

Public outreach and participation is an important aspect of the community plan update process. Balanced and representative participation provides credibility to the planning effort and ensures that the resulting consensus is broadly shared. Each community is unique and the approach to public participation may vary from update to update. Therefore, it is necessary to devise a public outreach strategy at the beginning of a community plan update process that will discuss the various approaches which will be used to achieve broad community participation; identify stakeholders and committees; and identify the roles of staff, planning consultants, the recognized community planning group, and the Advisory Stakeholders Committee.

Creating a Public Outreach Strategy

Planning staff and planning consultants shall work together to develop a preliminary public outreach strategy during the initiation phase of the update process and it will be the planning staff's responsibility to oversee the planning consultants work, and ensure the outreach strategy's effectiveness. To attract broad representation from the community the public outreach strategy should first consider the make up of the area and determine outreach approaches, meeting locations and times that best fit the community. For example, to accommodate those that work or own businesses, meetings and workshops after normal business hours should be standard. To accommodate community members with children or with limited availability to attend outreach events, consider coordinating informational open houses with visual displays before regularly scheduled meetings so residents are able to remain informed as the process progresses. In essence, the outreach strategy shall offer a variety of participation options such as surveys, workshops, open houses, visual displays, charrettes, and regular monthly meetings to achieve a balanced public involvement approach.

The strategy shall also address solutions to reduce language barriers and encourage those who are underrepresented to participate. San Diego has a diverse population and there are many non-English speaking residents within our communities. In preparing for meetings, allow time for materials to be translated and for translators at meetings to have time to familiarize themselves with the material being presented. The outreach strategy should identify a facilitator/s who has experience in working with citizen and professional organizations within the established communities and the strategy should allow input from all those affected by the update, reach out to those often under-represented in the decision-making process, and provide feedback representative of the community at large.

Meeting locations need to be easily accessible and should be at neutral locations within the community. It might also be necessary to evaluate the outreach strategy at various

points in the update process to make sure it is achieving broad participation from the community.

The strategy should identify a primary facilitator and include a detailed list of the approaches that will be used based on the make up of the community and the scope of the plan update. Event and meeting locations can be included if known. A preliminary public outreach calendar should be a part of the strategy and coordinated with the overall plan update timeline. This timeline should be shared with the public to inform them of upcoming events and participation opportunities.

The outreach strategy may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Monthly Advisory Stakeholders Committee meetings and Focus Group meetings
- Regular updates to the community planning group
- Public workshops
- Intense charrette process (up to six days in the length)
- Focus group meetings
- Walk audits
- Community surveys
- Presentations/updates to public officials
- Project website
- Project information brochure
- Regular project newsletters
- Visual displays
- Media participation through interviews, public service announcements, etc.

There is no single approach to public participation that fits all events or communities. All updates will have an Advisory Stakeholders Committee that will be tasked with meeting regularly and reviewing all aspects of the plan update. The Advisory Stakeholders Committee is responsible for convening the public discussion on the update and may be a newly formed group, a subcommittee of the community planning group, or other advisory body depending on the needs of the community. In addition to regularly scheduled Advisory Stakeholders Committee meetings, visioning workshops, walking audits, and charrettes may be organized by planning staff and planning consultants at various stages during the plan update process. Focus groups may also be formed as a subcommittee of the Advisory Stakeholders Committee to tackle specific issues such as urban design, street calming, historic preservation, and park and recreation equivalencies. The need for focus groups and the topic areas discussed will vary depending on the community. In addition, for clustering updates, a separate combined stakeholders committee may be established with representatives from each of the Advisory Stakeholders Committees to discuss issues that are of mutual interest to the communities in the geographic cluster.

Community Planning Groups

Community planning groups are governed by Council Policy 600-24 which provides the operating framework for "officially-recognized" planning groups. The City Council recognizes one official planning group in each community. The primary purpose of the

officially-recognized community planning groups, as outlined in Article II Section 1 and 2 of Council Policy 600-24, is to provide City decision-makers with input and recommendations on land use matters, specifically, concerning the preparation of, adoption of, implementation of, or amendment to, the General Plan or a land use plan when a plan relates to each planning group's planning area boundaries.

When a community plan update commences, planning staff will attend the community planning group meeting and discuss the update process in detail and go over the role and responsibilities of the group for the pending update. In addition to participating in the plan update, reviewing development projects and other activities that implement their community plan will remain a crucial part of the planning group's function. Since a plan update will require a significant time commitment beyond these regular duties the community planning group should work with planning staff to determine how they would like to participate. An Advisory Stakeholders Committee may be established as a subcommittee of the planning group or the planning group may have representatives on a separately established committee. However it is anticipated that for updates that are clustered, a separate joint stakeholders committee may be established in addition to the Advisory Stakeholders Committees to address issues of joint concern. Although the Advisory Stakeholders Committee's primary task is to provide a public forum for an update, Planning staff will continue to attend the full community planning group meetings and regularly report on the progress of the plan update.

Advisory Stakeholders Committee

The primary task of the Advisory Stakeholders Committee is to provide a public forum for the plan update. The Advisory Stakeholders Committee will need to have balanced representation and include both members of the community planning group as well as non-members who wish to participate in the plan update. This advisory committee will follow Robert's Rule of Order and be required to comply with California's Open Meeting Law, the Ralph M. Brown Act, to ensure the actions and deliberations of public bodies occur openly with public access and input. These rules will apply for all community group members and non members who make up the Advisory Stakeholders Committee.

The Advisory Stakeholders Committee's main charge is to follow the update process, provide a regular public forum to convene the public discussion on the update and provide recommendations on the various aspects of the plan update. A final recommendation on the update should be presented to the full community planning group for a formal recommendation to the decision makers.

In cases where the plan update is clustered, overlaps multiple planning areas, is located in a redevelopment area, or does not have a recognized community planning group, greater coordination between groups will be needed to establish an Advisory Stakeholders Committee. Planning staff will assist with facilitating and coordinating efforts between planning groups, redevelopment project area committees and other city-recognized entities. After the initiation phase begins and planning staff has identified all the stakeholders involved, an Advisory Stakeholders Committee will be formed.

Forming a Advisory Stakeholders Committee

As part of this update process, it will be necessary through each plan update's public outreach strategy to identify the local stakeholders and make sure they have an opportunity to participate. The composition of the Advisory Stakeholders Committee should contain a balance of the community interests to achieve broad representation and should include members of the community planning group, redevelopment PAC, and other local advocate groups. The Advisory Stakeholders Committee will meet regularly once a month for the duration of the plan update and provide a public forum to make advisory recommendations regarding the update process.

[details pending]

Focus Groups

A focus group or a working group of the Advisory Stakeholders Committee will look at specific issues related to the plan update. Depending on the complexity of the plan update there could be any number of focus groups created. Ideally, a focus group would meet separately from the Advisory Stakeholders Committee and discuss particular aspect of the plan update in greater detail. Topics for a focus group may include assisting in the development of a context statement for a historic surveys or developing street tree themes. Focus groups could be formed by element or by topic issue. The decisions or discussions that take place during the focus group should be presented back to the full update advisory board.

Establishing a Committee Schedule

The Advisory Stakeholders Committee and Planning staff should work together to outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the committee. The committee should create a detailed schedule using the public outreach strategy and identify ways the committee can enhance public participation. Consider including the following information when creating a schedule:

- Meeting times and location
- Posting and noticing of meeting agendas
- Review turnaround times for draft sections
- Community outreach effort
- Calendar of meetings with a schedule of topics

Public Hearings

Workshops and informational presentations to Planning Commission, Historic Resources Board, the City Council's Land Use & Housing Committee and full City Council offer an opportunity for decision makers to become familiar with plan updates, community issues and opinions earlier in the process. These workshops help define issues and provide staff

with direction on planning issues. Workshops and presentations with public officials should be included in the public outreach strategy and should occur at various points in the update process. A plan update will be required to go before the Planning Commission and City Council for final approval. The adoption hearings offer a final opportunity to provide public input.

Sample of Public Outreach Strategy Schedule

Outreach Strategy Schedule	
Establish an advisory stakeholders committee	3 months
Monthly subcommittee meetings	1 meeting/month min.
Kick off meeting	1 meeting
Review and analyze existing CP Policies/Goals (2)	2 meetings
Focus group meetings	varies
Community surveys	1-5 months
Public workshops	5 workshops minimum
Visioning (2)	2 workshops
Goal setting (2)	2 workshops
Alternatives (2)	2 workshops
Special Issues	varies
Intense charrette process (up to six days in the length)	2-6 days
Walk audits	1 day
Presentations to appointed and elected boards - updates/workshops	6 meetings minimum
Planning Commission	2 workshops average
City Council	2 workshops average
Land Use and Housing Council Committee	2 workshops average
Historical Resources Board	2 meetings
Airport Authority*	2 meetings
Code Monitoring Team	2-4 meetings
Tribal Noticing and Consultation	90 day notice
Public Hearing Process	3 - 4 months
Planning Commission	<i>1 month</i>
Docketed date	tbd
Noticing	10 business days
Report	1 week from docket date
City Council	<i>2 months</i>
1472 Process	2-4 weeks
Docketed date	tbd
Noticing	10 business days
Report	2 weeks from docket date
Coastal Commission*	Following CC adoption hearing

* if needed