



Engaging Marginalized Communities in Land Use Planning: Executive Summary

Project Background

In 2020, Hillsboro Planning was awarded a \$100,000 Metro 2040 Planning and Development Grant to meaningfully involve Hillsboro Historically Marginalized Communities (HMCs) and center their voices in the City's land use planning engagement processes. Working over the past year with local community-based organizations and consultants, City staff undertook meaningful, targeted engagement through a series of focus group and advisory panel meetings with communities of color. Participants included Latinx residents and small business owners, Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, and immigrants and refugees of color.

The thoughtful contributions of community member upstream advisors led to meaningful goals, strategies, and action items to move this work forward in the Planning Division. After a year of collaborating online, the project was presented to City Council at the Hillsboro Civic Center with a celebratory dinner. Throughout the project, stipends were provided to contributing community members to compensate for their insight and time, and interpretation was made available in both Mandarin and Spanish, as needed. Implementation of the action items will happen over the next two years, with ongoing collaboration with the community.

Engagement Summary

The engagement in this project primarily fell into three stages – internal background research and collaboration, community advisory panel, and five focus groups.

Internal Collaboration

In preparation for this project, Hillsboro Planning staff met with a variety of City departments in spring 2021 to learn about their community engagement processes and their perspectives on addressing barriers for HMCs, including Parks & Recreation, Planning Division's Development Services section, Library team members, the Community Enhancement Team, Economic Development's Business Development Liaison, and the Communications team.

The project team also discussed this project with the City Equity Team in May 2021 and June 2021 to receive input on draft project guiding principles and engagement options. The project team collaborated with stakeholders to develop project goals designed to improve land use public engagement processes for HMCs, and thus all Hillsboro stakeholders, to enhance public trust in the City's stewardship of the land use system and the decision process. Additionally, Planning Division staff met with the Public Engagement Committee in June 2021 to provide a project overview and receive input on the draft project goals and again in September 2021 to approve the Public Communications and Engagement Plan.

Community Advisory Panel

A community advisory panel was convened to work with the Hillsboro's Planning Division to build relationships and support future engagement and collaboration opportunities. The panel consisted of a core group of historically marginalized community members who reviewed materials and provided insight on project goals and objectives, the engagement approach, preliminary findings and recommendations, and the final draft strategies and action items.

Panel members were selected based on their backgrounds, interest in maintaining an ongoing relationship with Hillsboro's Planning Division, and their availability to attend all three panel meetings. Panelists were compensated for their work, which included reviewing materials ahead of meetings, their time spent at the meetings, and responding to follow-up meeting surveys.

Focus Groups

This project's engagement approach involved five virtual focus groups designed to help Hillsboro's Planning Division staff learn from and build relationships with the following communities:

- Latinx residents (in Spanish with simultaneous translation services available in English)
- Latinx small business owners (in Spanish with simultaneous translation services available in English)
- African American, Black, and Indigenous community members (in English)
- Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants (in a combination of English and Mandarin)
- Immigrants and refugees from Somalia, Iraq, and India (in English)

Focus groups met three times between October 2021 through March 2022 to discuss existing land use planning engagement processes, consider barriers to HMC involvement, provide input on improving engagement with HMCs, and share comments and questions about the project's preliminary findings and recommendations. This collective feedback directly influenced the development of the project goals, strategies, and action items.

Key Findings

After holding multiple rounds of focus group and advisory panel meetings, the following were identified as the key findings of engagement needs and areas for improvement.

- **More information = More engagement** - Most participants indicated that while information is not always readily and accessibly available, they would like to increase their level of engagement. Additionally, some participants encouraged Hillsboro's Planning Division to create more learning opportunities by offering workshops or other methods to help community members stay engaged, to empower them, and to encourage them to think of how to make their communities thrive.
- **Translation/Interpretation** - Most participants value the use of interpretation services, if not for themselves then for family, friends, and others they know.
- **Early Notification** - Most participants mentioned that receiving printed materials and notices in the mail is helpful and accessible to a larger population, though some mentioned receiving the information when it is too late to engage, or materials may not have been properly translated or use language that is too difficult to understand.
- **Accountability** - Many participants shared that recognizing past harm and acknowledging persistent barriers are part of accountability from local government. Some participants noted that past experiences between local government and HMC's may have decreased trust, and that it is important for the government to build relationships with those communities.
- **Acknowledging Cultural Preferences** - Most participants want the opportunity to socialize in spaces celebrating or recognizing their cultures in addition to becoming involved and learning about issues. Some participants emphasized the significance in having safe, culturally specific spaces for people to gather, acknowledging that institutional spaces have been historically harmful to HMCs.
- **Inclusivity and Belonging** - Most participants shared that cultivating a sense of belonging is an opportunity for the Hillsboro's Planning Division to be more welcoming and inclusive. Many

participants suggested cultural spaces can also provide a location for government staff to meet with community members in a place where HMCs feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

- **Variety of Engagement Strategies** - Most participants encouraged a mix of engagement approaches and strategies to reach audiences with varying needs and preferences. Additionally, participants were evenly split on preference of in-person and online engagement opportunities with most supporting hybrid meetings to further remove access barriers. Some participants shared ideas to make information about planning work more accessible, including: translated materials, materials with widely understood vocabulary, simultaneous interpretation, various forms of communication (such as visual, auditory, written, etc.), identifying where people can find resources on their own time, and sharing information in community gathering places or through direct interaction.
- **Transparent Feedback Loop** - Some participants encouraged following up on concerns in their community and sharing how they are being addressed. Participants also encouraged transparency about the process of engagement and how their communities' input is being utilized.

Goals, Strategies, and Action Items

To address key findings identified above, project staff present the following strategies and action items to be implemented in future engagement efforts by the City of Hillsboro Planning Division. These strategies are organized by implementation timeline and by goal.

1-Year Implementation

This section describes action items that have already begun or that are planned to begin over the next year into 2023.

Goal: Cultivating Safe and Accessible Meeting Spaces

- Strategy: Respect and honor the original and current caretakers of this land, acknowledge the structural marginalization of communities of color, and promote inclusion.
 - Action: At the beginning of all Planning public meetings, read a land acknowledgement, acknowledgment of barriers, and create space to share personal pronouns.
- Strategy: Respect and recognize culturally specific holidays and events to ensure that key engagement milestones are not in conflict with other important dates.
 - Action: Create a Planning Division shared calendar that includes culturally specific holidays and events with input from Community Based Organizations and faith-based organizations.

Goal: Expanding Language Supportive Services

- Strategy: Simplify complex land use information into easier-to-understand concepts.
 - Action: Work towards all printed and online content meeting plain language review standards.
- Strategy: Improve language access services to expand availability of information for individuals with limited English proficiency.
 - Action: Work with Historically Marginalized Communities to prioritize specific Planning written materials for translation into a variety of languages and ensure accuracy of translations.

Goal: Improving Information Sharing

- Strategy: Increase access to policy initiatives and project information.

- Action: Utilize internal and external outlets such as publications, signage with QR codes in community gathering spaces, radio ads, multicultural media, and informational videos in a variety of languages.
- Action: Develop and maintain relationships with Community Based Organizations and community leaders and work with them to share information more widely and effectively to their communities. Ensure compensation is available and provided to Community Based Organizations.
- Action: Research more inclusive land development notification postings.
- Strategy: Create transparent feedback loops to clearly demonstrate the engagement process and how community input influences final outcomes.
 - Action: Utilize the newly launched Engage Hillsboro online tool to engage with the public, receive input, and report findings and project outcomes.

Goal: Planning Division Institutional Changes

- Strategy: Center the voices of Historically Marginalized Communities in land use planning.
 - Action: Convene a Planning Division advisory panel comprised of Historically Marginalized Community members and build long-term relationships by involving individuals who participated in focus group and advisory panel meetings. Compensate Community Based Organizations to assist with recruitment and offer compensation and simultaneous interpretation to participants.
- Strategy: Increase engagement coordination across City Departments to center the voices of Historically Marginalized Communities.
 - Action: Share Planning Division Engagement Project lessons learned with other City Divisions and Departments.
- Strategy: Ensure the Planning Division budget includes ongoing funding for meaningful engagement with Historically Marginalized Communities.
 - Action: Request an annual line-item budget of \$50,000.

2-Year Implementation

This section describes strategies that will take time to fully develop and implement considering greater levels of coordination and time. The project team may begin some of these action items now, but they will take longer to be fully established.

Goal: Cultivating Safe and Accessible Meeting Spaces

- Strategy: Increase public access to the Planning Division's meetings and events.
 - Action: Hold Planning public meetings at informal locations across Hillsboro on a variety of days and times with an option to join virtually with closed captioning.
 - Action: Provide early notification well in advance of engagement opportunities and share meeting recordings for review by those who did not attend.

Goal: Expanding Language Supportive Services

- Strategy: Improve language assistance services for individuals with limited English proficiency.
 - Action: Include options to request language interpretation and a hearing headset in all public notices.

Goal: Improving Information Sharing

- Strategy: Offer a variety of information formats and provide ample time for communities to review and process information.

- Action: Work with City's Community Engagement Manager to better understand how Historically Marginalized Communities prefer to engage.

Goal: Planning Division Institutional Changes

- Strategy: Keep Historically Marginalized Communities informed of updates on land use planning growth and development.
 - Action: Host two to three simultaneous in-person/virtual listening sessions for Historically Marginalized Communities with interpretation each year
 - Action: Coordinate across departments to facilitate City staff tours of neighborhoods and small businesses with Historically Marginalized Community leaders.
- Strategy: Support Historically Marginalized Communities' leaders of all ages and build long-term relationships by providing tools and resources about land use planning decision-making processes.
 - Action: Promote the Civic Leadership Academy Program among Historically Marginalized Communities.
- Strategy: Respond to financial barriers to engagement by providing stipends and compensation.
 - Action: Follow the forthcoming citywide Stipend and Compensation policy
- Strategy: Apply an equity lens when developing policies, programs, and projects.
 - Action: Work with City's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager to identify and utilize an equity toolkit.
- Strategy: Diversify the Planning Division's workforce to better represent Hillsboro's diverse community.
 - Action: Reach out to Historically Marginalized Communities to promote Planning Division's job postings and internships, to attract a diverse pool of candidates.