



Community Planners Committee (CPC) Meeting

Inclusive Public Engagement Guide (IPEG) Worksheet

1. Overview of IPEG

The creation of an Inclusive Public Engagement Guide was identified as an implementation action within the <u>Parks Master Plan</u> and <u>Climate Resilient SD</u> Plans adopted by City Council in 2021. The City will create an inclusive public engagement strategy to promote inclusive public engagement and community participation in plans, programs, and policies, particularly for people who have historically experienced barriers to public participation. The Inclusive Public Engagement Guide will serve as the foundation for City employees to implement a meaningful public engagement program that provides guidelines for how City decisions consider input from community members representative of the population's demographics so that these decisions ultimately improve San Diegans' quality of life.

The Inclusive Public Engagement Guide is part of <u>Equity Forward</u> which is a comprehensive approach to creating more equitable opportunities and investments in San Diego.

2. Recap of Topics of Input for the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide

During the CPC meeting, City staff shared an overview of the Guide as well as four key topics that will be included in the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide. These topics are summarized below. Based on Planning Groups' valuable experience engaging with the City, the City would like to know from you how we can better engage community members in our projects, policies, and programs. Your perspectives on these topics are important and will help inform the guide. Please share this worksheet with your Planning Group members and provide your group's feedback, as we will be returning to CPC in early 2024 to hear your thoughts. We will collect the feedback then. Please e-mail us with any questions about the worksheet to engagement@sandiego.gov.

- **Public Engagement Principles:** The City has drafted high-level values that we would seek to implement through our future public engagement. The draft principles of inclusive public engagement are:
 - Inclusion: Engagement strategies should account for language differences, income level, digital divide, and other barriers to participation to achieve an accurate representation of the demographics in San Diego.
 - Respect for community knowledge: Show respect by asking about people's lived experiences. Reduce engagement fatigue by consolidating feedback and collaborating internally. Appreciate the uniqueness of each community.
 - **Transparency:** Identify and communicate the level of engagement and goals we are trying to accomplish. Develop a summary of how input was used and follow up with participants about project status and updates.
 - Clear communication: Make sure information is accessible and understandable to nontechnical experts. This will allow community members to participate effectively and build their capacity to engage.
 - Build True Relationships: Establish a process to develop trust through communication.
 Cultivate respectful and long-term relationships and partnerships with community groups and stakeholders.
 - **Commitment to good process:** Develop a process that provides people enough time to weigh in. Prioritize involving community members who are directly impacted by decisions. Commit to continuous improvements for our engagement practices.

The questions for Planning Group members specific to this topic are:

- What are your thoughts about these principles?
- What other principles of inclusive public engagement are important to consider?

Responses to questions:

Community members do not always believe that their input is duly considered and amounts to a mere "check the box" procedure by the City in its internal operations. Therefore, the City should openly show an authentic interest in receiving community input by having skilled and experienced Planners regularly attend CPG meetings, and should demonstrate what community input it has taken into consideration and how such input has influenced the decision. The City's engagement should include:

- demonstrated sensitivity to community dynamics
- unedited raw reports from the CPG as part of the City's recommendation on a given project
- survey results from interested stakeholders,
- assigning dedicated planners to each CPG, and
- public comment and opinion as collected from community forums
- **Implementing Inclusive Engagement:** We shared three key components that can help us understand how to implement inclusive public engagement:
 - 1. "Where" We want to understand the best places to engage,
 - 2. "What" What are the best methods for us to use for engagement, and
 - **3.** "How" How can the City <u>communicate effectively</u> throughout an engagement process to ensure people stay informed?

Properly implemented, inclusive engagement can help the City capture a range of perspectives so that we can make the most informed and sustainable decisions while also building trust with community members and meeting them where they are.

The questions for Planning Group members specific to this topic are:

- Where: Where would you like to see outreach materials (physical and virtual locations)?
- What: What outreach and engagement methods resonate with you and your community?
- **How:** What are the best ways to communicate effectively with the public throughout an initiative to help encourage engagement?

Responses to questions:

Where should outreach material be:

- Utilize centralized community spaces with a sensitivity to cultural observances
- Outreach materials should appear in virtual community gathering spaces such as Nextdoor and X
- Distribute outreach materials at physical sites like libraries, community centers, public kiosks, and spaces where CPGs and town council groups regularly meet,

as well as strategically placed bulletins (when permitted) at private kiosks, supermarkets, coffee shops, farmer's markets, etc.

What outreach methods resonate:

- Neighborhood walkabouts: allowing for informal engagement by walking through different neighborhoods, providing insights into local issues and concerns.
- Visits from City staff at CPG, Town Council, or other community group meetings
- Community Events and festivals: Engaging at local festivals and community events where people gather for social or cultural purposes

How can we communicate effectively:

- Language accessibility (not just foreign language, but urban planning terms of art)
- Effective use of virtual engagement (meetings/social media) where appropriate
- City should consider engaging or partnering with Community-Based Organizations (CBO) to serve as a conduit for community notice, feedback, and discussion. CBOs, in some instances, can provide meeting space, language translation, child care, and are trusted in the community.
- Host "office hours" at a community center or commit to working "out station" for the public to access City staff.
- Follow up visits with reports that clearly demonstrate community feedback has been incorporated
- <u>Barriers to Public Participation:</u> The information shared about this topic was a summary of the most common barriers to public participation identified from previous conversations with members of the Focused Discussion Group, Climate Equity Working Group, and Mayoral Advisory Boards. The most commonly identified reasons for people not participating were:
 - City staff not understanding cultural and social community norms.
 - Discouraged from participating from feeling past input was ignored.
 - Lack of broad representation of the community (age, race, gender, subculture) in public meetings.
 - Lack of outreach via marketing, door-to-door campaigns, community-led education.
 - Lack of understanding of terminology and language use in meeting and meeting materials

The question for Planning Group members specific to this topic is:

 What are current barriers to community members being able to participate in the City's engagement processes?

Response to question:

Common barriers to public participation include

• Lack of Awareness: Many community members might not be aware of engagement opportunities due to insufficient or ineffective outreach. This is particularly true for those who are not actively seeking out such information.

- Technological Barriers: In an increasingly digital world, lack of access to, or familiarity with, technology can hinder participation. This includes not having reliable internet access or not being proficient in using digital tools and platforms.
- Physical Accessibility: Issues related to physical access, such as meetings held in locations not easily accessible by public transportation or not equipped for individuals with disabilities, can be significant barriers.
- Time Constraints: People with demanding jobs, family responsibilities, or other time-consuming commitments might find it difficult to participate in engagement processes, especially if these are held at inconvenient times.
- Language and Cultural Barriers: Non-native speakers or members of cultural minorities may face challenges in understanding and contributing to the engagement process if materials and discussions are not offered in multiple languages or sensitive to cultural differences.
- Economic Barriers: Economic factors, such as the need to work multiple jobs, can limit the ability and willingness of individuals to participate in unpaid community engagement activities.
- Childcare Needs: Lack of childcare support during meetings and events can be a significant barrier for parents and guardians.
- Distrust in Government: A history of unfulfilled promises or negative experiences with government entities can lead to skepticism and reluctance to engage in new initiatives.
- Perceived Ineffectiveness: If people feel that their participation won't make a difference, or past engagements have not led to visible changes, they may be less inclined to participate in future initiatives.
- Social Isolation: Individuals who are socially isolated, such as the elderly or those with certain disabilities, might find it challenging to participate due to a lack of social networks or support systems.
- Self-censorship if there is a perception that countervailing views or opinions are unwelcome
- Community Representativeness and Public Participation: We provided a summary of previous input about who has been missing from the City decision-making processes. City staff is currently analyzing this topic through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of understanding who is currently missing from our decision-making processes is to ensure that future engagement efforts can successfully involve these people to ensure our decisions are reflective of the needs of our City.

The guestion for Planning Group members specific to this topic is:

- Who do you see is currently missing from community meetings or other City-led public participation events?

Response to question:

Stakeholders and community members who are under-represented or not present at City-sponsored meetings, like CPG meetings, include:

- RENTERS!, Business Owners, Absentee Owners/Landlords, Language Interpreters
- Youth and Young Adults: Young people, especially those in the age group of 18-30, are often underrepresented in public participation events. They may feel their voices are not valued or may be less interested in traditional forms of civic engagement.
- Working-Class Citizens: Individuals with demanding jobs, especially those with non-standard working hours (like shift workers), may find it difficult to attend meetings or events scheduled during typical work hours.
- Non-English Speakers and Immigrants: People who are not proficient in English or who are recent immigrants might face language barriers or may not be aware of these events due to limited outreach in their communities.
- Elderly Population: Senior citizens may face mobility issues, health constraints, or may not feel that the issues being discussed are relevant to them.
- Parents, Especially Single Parents: Childcare responsibilities can be a significant barrier for parents, particularly single parents, in attending meetings.
- Ethnic and Racial Minorities: Depending on the area, certain ethnic or racial groups may be underrepresented due to various factors including cultural barriers, feelings of marginalization, or lack of targeted outreach.
- City staff namely, City planners and Planning Department management

3. Additional Topics We are Seeking Input from CPC Subcommittee

- Inclusive Public Engagement Checklist: Staff have created the following draft 10-step checklist for how to implement inclusive public engagement from start to finish. This checklist would be used by City staff to help them create and implement public engagement plans.
 - 1. Collect Baseline Data: Understand who we are engaging, background and context of the project, and decision that needs to be made/information that needs to be shared.
 - 2. Resource Planning: Plan for staff capacity, any contracted support, timeline and budget, and any other project operational considerations.
 - **3. Stakeholder Identification:** Understand who will be affected by the project and who should be included in the decision-making process.
 - **4. Goal and Expectation Setting:** Set expectations with stakeholders by clearly communicating the goals of the engagement process and the decision-making process (what level of engagement is appropriate).
 - **5. Effective Communication:** Clearly describe the project description, goals, and process, and use different ways to share information: websites, videos, fact sheets, etc.
 - **Metrics for Success:** Define what success looks like for this project and identify measurable and tangible objectives for each step of the engagement process.
 - **7. The Public Engagement Plan:** Outline the engagement process and schedule; identify engagement methods and techniques.

- **8. Execution and Continuous Improvement:** Implement outreach and engagement activities, collect and document input, and maintain open and responsive communication channels throughout the lifecycle of the initiative.
- 9. (Decision made) then Report Back: Publicly communicate the decision (if applicable to the engagement level), report the decision-making process and who participated in it, and follow up with participants to summarize input received and its role in the decision
- **10. Post-engagement Evaluation:** Evaluate engagement based on metrics for success with an eye toward continuous improvement.

The question for Planning Group members specific to this topic is:

o What additional steps or revisions would you make to this checklist?

Response to question:

- Recognize that flexibility based on community needs is an all-encompassing consideration when implementing the checklist
- In terms of "effective communication," include physical locations as sites for dissemination of information
- In terms of "metrics for success," ensure that community input has been duly noted and incorporated
- Metrics for Success: In the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide we will develop standards for
 engagement success to evaluate the performance of City-led public outreach and participation efforts.
 These metrics can assess the quality of our public engagement work, identify growth areas, and
 refocus project priorities and importance.

The question for Planning Group members specific to this topic is:

o What should the City evaluate to determine the success of public engagement?

Response to question:

- Count the number of people who show up
- In an effort to take the pulse and temperature of the community, take note of public comment, committee reports, letters to the editor, social media postings, and other community postings
- Ensure that diverse opinions and viewpoints are represented
- Digital Engagement Metrics: For online engagement, tracking metrics such as website visits, social media interactions, and online survey responses.
- Analyzing media coverage and public perception of the engagement process can provide insights into its effectiveness and public impact.
- Conducting participant satisfaction surveys or polls
- Evaluate complaints after projects

How to Best Work with Planning Groups and CPC: Planning group members play an important role in the City decision-making process, as you share perspectives and the issues that matter in your community, share input on development projects and public improvements that are planned in your neighborhood, and influence public policies.

The question for Planning Group members specific to this topic is:

 What should the City keep in mind when engaging Planning Groups on City plans, policies and projects?

Response to question:

- e Ensure that CPGs have a seat at the table before the City Council when discussions about a given project are on the agenda. Proponents of a project spend much more time with City staff in the advocacy of their projects than CPGs are afforded in the consideration of projects. This disparity results in what often looks like lop-sided presentations by the Planning Department to the City Council in favor of projects without fully vetting the merits of CPGs' concerns. With this blatant disparity in mind, the City should make every effort to fairly consider all points made by CPGs, and memorialize that effort by articulating the positions of the community that are within the law for purposes of demonstrating not only agreement but contrasting viewpoints on a project.
- Planning management should be meeting regularly with assigned planners to ensure that ALL CPGs are receiving equal - equitable - attention and service by the City.
- When engaging with planning groups like the Linda Vista Planning Group (LVPG) on city plans, policies, and projects, the City should keep in mind several key factors to ensure effective collaboration and meaningful outcomes:
 - Recognize Their Expertise and Role: Acknowledge the unique knowledge, experience, and role of planning groups in their communities. They have a deep understanding of local issues, concerns, and dynamics that can significantly inform city plans and policies.
 - Clear Communication: Maintain open, transparent, and regular communication with planning groups. Clearly articulate the goals, expectations, and limitations of engagement processes, and provide timely updates on developments and decisions.
 - Collaborative Approach: Approach planning groups as partners rather than merely as stakeholders or advisors. Involve them in the decisionmaking process from the beginning, allowing for a more collaborative and co-creative approach.
 - Respect Local Context: Each community has its own unique character and needs. Tailor engagement strategies to reflect the specific context and dynamics of the community represented by the planning group.

- Provide Necessary Resources and Support: Ensure that planning groups have access to the necessary resources, information, and support they need to effectively participate in the engagement process. This might include data, training, logistical support, or facilitation resources.
- Incorporate Feedback: Demonstrably incorporate feedback and suggestions from planning groups into city plans and policies. This not only improves the quality of the outcomes but also reinforces the value of their input.
- Acknowledge and Address Disagreements: Be prepared to identify and address disagreements that may arise. Facilitating open and respectful dialogue is key to resolving conflict and maintaining a productive relationship.
- Regular Evaluation and Adaptation: Regularly evaluate and adapt engagement strategies to ensure they are effective and meet the needs of both the City and the planning groups. Be open to feedback and willing to make changes as needed.
- Long-Term Relationship Building: Focus on building long-term relationships with planning groups, going beyond individual projects or plans. Consistent engagement and mutual trust over time yield more fruitful collaboration.

By keeping these factors in mind, the City can foster a more effective, respectful, and mutually beneficial working relationship with planning groups, leading to better-informed and more sustainable city plans, policies, and projects.

Comments:		

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