



# Public Engagement Plan

## Dakota County

### Comprehensive Plan Update

DC2040



# 1. Introduction

Public engagement is a critical aspect in ensuring that all Dakota County government services are performed efficiently, effectively and in a responsive manner. Dakota County strives to ensure that the proper level of public engagement is realized in all projects. To identify this proper level of engagement, the County utilizes a public engagement process tool that is standardized across the organization and results in consistent approaches and outcomes. If a project scores a 1-3 a public engagement plan must be created. The levels of engagement and what each entails in terms of description and specific examples can be seen in the table below.

Level	Description	Examples
<b>Level 1 – Inform and Listen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain, educate or gather information.</li> <li>• Use when priorities and decisions are still being shaped.</li> <li>• Can explain the issue, while gathering information to understand and perspectives and ideas of citizens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting with information presentation and collection of comments.</li> <li>• Open houses.</li> <li>• A webpage with information about a project but also provides an email address for people to submit questions or comments.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 – Discuss</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally involves two-way information exchange in which the public discusses a policy, issue, or research priority.</li> <li>• Discussion among and with different stakeholders is encouraged.</li> <li>• Can deepen knowledge by exploring and responding to ideas and concerns described by individual participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting with information presentation and collection of comments.</li> <li>• Open houses.</li> <li>• A webpage with information about a project but also provides an email address for people to submit questions or comments.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3 – Involve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different perspectives are shared and parties can influence each other and develop consensus.</li> <li>• Allows the organization and participants to explore and work through issues together, understand each other's perspectives and values, and consistently address concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting with information presentation and collection of comments.</li> <li>• Open houses.</li> <li>• A webpage with information about a project but also provides an email address for people to submit questions or comments.</li> </ul>

# 1. Introduction (cont.)

## Project Description:

Update Dakota County Comprehensive Plan - DC2040. Dakota County is required to update its Comprehensive Plan as required by the Metropolitan Land Use Planning Act. The Dakota County Comprehensive Plan needs to be consistent with THRIVE 2040, the regional vision and policy document adopted by the Metropolitan Council. The County's Comprehensive Plan is the overarching policy document for transportation, parks and open space, water resources, and land use.

## Engagement Level:

3 - Involve

Based on the above engagement level score, this plan will utilize certain methods and tools to reach stakeholders based on the table from the previous page.



## 2. Public Engagement Objectives and Approaches

The purpose of this Public Engagement Plan is to serve as a means of process planning and engagement designing in order to achieve a desired level of public engagement. An important aspect in achieving this is identifying the key objectives and potential outcomes and then deciding which approaches are best suited to achieving those outcomes. The following lists the key objectives and approaches for this Public Engagement Plan.

### **Key Public Engagement Objectives:**

Understand what is important to Dakota County residents to create long-range policies consistent with public needs

Gather input from traditionally hard to reach populations so that the planning process is inclusive

Coordinate planning with cities and other agencies, many of which will be developing their own plans

Engage a wide range of stakeholders to represent varied interests

### **Public Engagement Approaches:**

County-wide scientific survey

Focus groups

Stakeholder focus groups

Open house/Intercepts at events

Leadership forum - workshop

Project web page

### 3. Major Groups to Engage and Methods

A holistic public engagement process requires a diverse group represented by various populations that are involved from start to finish. A process that involves diverse stakeholders assists in achieving a project that is reflective of the County’s diverse interests and ever-changing population. However, in order to effectively reach and involve various stakeholders different types of specific engagement methods need to be used as their effectiveness can vary from one group to another. Major groups to engage and methods of engagement most likely to be successful are listed in the following table.

Groups to Engage	Scientific Survey	Workshops	Focus Group	Open House	Intercepts	Project Web page
General public	x			x	x	x
Cities and government agencies		x				
Metropolitan Council		x				
Non-profit agencies			x			
Service providers			x			
Townships		x				
Schools		x				
Watersheds		x				
User groups			x			
Difficult to reach populations			x			

## 4. Key Questions to Ask

Once the methods of engagement have been identified the questions that need to be asked then need to be created. Questions that are asked in the public engagement process must address the major concerns and issues of the proposed project. Questions that do not necessarily lead discussions towards the end goals of learning about the major issues can result in a more disjointed discussion that lacks effectiveness which is why it is important that questions are well thought out and refined. Questions need to be asked in such ways where they encourage participation and dialogue amongst those people asked to respond. They should also be asked in a way to solicit responses from a variety of groups rather than only a limited amount. Similar to the methods of engagement, certain types of questions can be more effective than others in garnering a response from certain groups of individuals.

### **Project Issues to Address with Questions:**

Respond to demand for transportation and transit and prioritize needs.

Respond to demands for parks and open space preservation, recreation, stewardship, and prioritize needs.

Respond to concerns for environmental protection, sustainability, energy use, waste management, conservation and prioritize needs.

Respond to concerns for environmental protection, sustainability, energy use, waste management, conservation and prioritize needs.

Dakota County's demographics will change dramatically over the next 20 years

### **Public Engagement Questions:**

Where and how should Dakota County improve transportation and transit services?

Where and how should Dakota County protect parks and open spaces and provide for recreation?

What role should Dakota County plan in environmental protection, sustainability, energy use, waste management, and conservation?

How should Dakota County respond to its growing and changing population?



## 6. Available Resources and Budget

Funding for the County-wide mail survey (\$28,500) is available as part of the project budget

The firm of HKGI has been hired to complete the County Comprehensive Plan, including public engagement. HKGI will be working with a sub-consultant (SEH) on the project. A large percentage of the consultant contract is dedicated toward public engagement.

**Briefly discuss any increased project costs, project delays and additional staff/consultant resources required by this public engagement plan, if any.**