

Georgia Department of Community Affairs
State Planning Recommendations

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

There are many ways to involve the public in the planning process. This list provides an assortment of methods to reach the largest audience and solicit meaningful input, while also taking into consideration your community's budget, schedule, and target audience. More details can be found by referring to [DCA's Guidebook: Planning for Community Involvement](#). For advice on meaningful and productive community participation, see the [Georgia Conservancy's Blueprints Principles](#).

Key: L = Low; M = Moderate; H = High

TYPE	TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION	Level of Involvement	Level of Expense & Complexity
<i>Informative</i>	Kiosk/Lobby Displays	Posting maps, photos, and alternative plans in a prominent location in city hall, county courthouse, or public library. These displays provide information to visitors to view at their leisure and outside of a formal public meeting.	L M H	M
<i>Informative</i>	Speakers Bureau	The planning team – staff, consultants and volunteers – offers to make an introductory presentation on the planning process to civic clubs, business groups and schools.	H	M
<i>Informative</i>	Kick Off-Public Information Meetings	An event to announce the planning process to the citizens and other stakeholders and to view a presentation covering the project purpose and general plan approach. Initial opinion surveys and volunteer sign up forms are available at this meeting.	M H	M
<i>Informative</i>	Printed Public Information	Flyers, newspaper inserts, brochures, or newsletters providing information on the progress of the plan, proposed maps, and announcement of future public meeting opportunities. This information may be mailed, made available at public locations, such as libraries or city hall, or both.	M H	M

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<i>Informative</i>	Website – Information Only	A page on the community's website used for periodic updates on the planning process. Information should include schedules, announcements, draft goals and objectives, preliminary recommendations, and maps.	L	L
<i>Informative</i>	Press Releases	A plan to develop a relationship with a local newspaper or other reporter and editor by providing newsworthy milestones and public meeting notices on a regular basis throughout the planning process.	M H	L
<i>Informative</i>	Media Strategies	Media strategies inform the public about projects and programs through newspapers, radio, television and videos, billboards, posters and variable message signs, mass mailings of brochures or newsletters, and distribution of fliers. Working with the media, an agency takes an active role in disseminating information.	M H	H
<i>Informative</i>	Cable TV Information	Work with the local cable television provider to provide public service announcements or a 30-minute cable show describing the planning process and opportunities for public involvement.	H	M

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<i>Public Input</i>	Public Hearings	A hearing is a formal meeting of the elected body where the public may comment or provide testimony on the matter presented for voting. This is used during approval of the completed draft Community Assessment and the Community Participation Program for transmittal to the RDC for review and again during approval of the completed draft Community Agenda for transmittal to the RDC for review. The chambers of the elected body are best for the public hearing.	L M H	L H
<i>Public Input</i>	Website – Response Capability (email)	A page on the community’s website with information and one or more “contact the planning team” buttons to send email to the planners working on the comprehensive plan.	L M H	M
<i>Public Input</i>	Direct Mail Surveys	A questionnaire soliciting comments, opinions, and community goals via a printed, mail survey sent to a certain number of residents in the community.	M H	H
<i>Interactive</i>	Vision Goals and Objectives Meetings	Facilitated meetings to determine answers to the three key planning questions – “What do you have?” “What do you want?” and “How will you get it?”	M H	M
<i>Interactive</i>	Student Programs	Direct involvement of students from local schools, through such efforts as poster contests, essay contests, appointing high school student representatives to committees, or sponsoring a “city planning” study unit.	M H	M

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<i>Interactive</i>	Email blasts	Periodic mass mailings by email to provide important notices and other information. At public meetings, offer the option of attendees providing their e-mail addresses on the sign in sheet. Create a database and send periodic progress e-mails and future meeting announcements to the distribution list.	H	M
<i>Interactive</i>	Workshops	The workshops are often small informal meetings that may include exhibits and presentations designed to be interactive among participants. They foster one to one and small group communication and are excellent for the discussion and critique of problem solving. They may require several facilitators depending on the size of the group.	L M H	L - H
<i>Interactive</i>	Charrettes	Highly interactive meetings where attendees work in groups to draw maps, develop goals and policies, and design their community.	M H	H
<i>Interactive</i>	Community Preference Meetings	An evaluation of a series of visual images categorized by housing types and styles, streetscape appearance, open space, commercial areas, and other design or use types. Participants are asked to state a preference as images showing alternative designs are displayed side by side. Results are tabulated by the planning team for presentation in later meetings.	L M H	M
<i>Interactive</i>	Website – Interactive with Surveys	In addition to providing information on the community's website, provide interactive feedback opportunities with online surveys, questionnaires, and e-mail.	M H	H

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<i>Partnerships</i>	Technical Advisory Committee	A working committee of city or county planners and other key employees from public safety, the board of education, utility authorities, and constitutional officers. As primary “users” of the plan, they have a stake in the outcome of the comprehensive plan.	L M H	L
<i>Partnerships</i>	Steering Committees	Established to provide feedback, advise the planning team, and shape the overall planning process. The Steering Committee is typically comprised of representatives from local authorities, the business community, key non-profit agencies, and citizen groups.	M H	L
<i>Partnerships</i>	Stakeholder Meetings	The stakeholder group should be representative of the demographic diversity (race, income, etc.) of the area. Stakeholders should include local elected and appointed officials, key property owners, neighborhood leaders, chamber and other economic development professionals, community service providers, area residents, and others with strong opinions and some stake in the future development of the area. The community should shoot for a maximum number of attendees, which may mean inviting more than 100 people.	L M H	L H
<i>Partnerships</i>	Stakeholder Interviews	Interviews: One-on-one interviews with key community leaders using a standardized series of questions, designed to gather more detailed information about stakeholders’ area of expertise.	L M H	L H

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<i>Partnerships</i>	Intergovernmental Partnership Meetings	Planning "summit" meetings held by the elected officials with groups interested in the comprehensive plan, such as the board of education, appointed boards and authorities, other city and county government representatives, utility providers, state agencies and departments, and regional planning entities.	L M H	L