Community Engagement Process for Brooklyn Park 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Prepared by
Robin Broosbank, Kevin Karner, Eric King, Alex Kleppin, and Shengnan Lou

Students in PA 5145: Civic Participation in Public Affairs
Instructor: Dr. Kathy Quick

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City of Brooklyn Park Community Development Department

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to help the City of Brooklyn Park design an engagement process for the BP 2040 Comprehensive Plan that incorporates themes from current engagement underway for BP 2025 and other city plans. The City would like to understand the different types of planning processes within the city, and how these various plans relate to each other and support each other. In addition, the City continues to work to improve their overall planning process, and has requested a recommended process to address three issues of specific concern with the comprehensive planning process:

- how to further engage business owners in the community
- how to encourage creativity and long-term visioning among participants
- how to help the City prevent burnout among participants given the large number of recent planning and engagement processes

The engagement process we are recommending uses an overview of the existing City plans as the starting point. To help the City focus on the three specific issues, the City needs to better understand the interests and needs of stakeholders throughout their community. The City will build on the stakeholder analysis already completed, but with a focus on the three issues identified by city staff as being particular important components for the BP 2040 Comprehensive Plan that include long-term visioning exercises, business owner engagement and address participation burnout. While the City wants to ensure that all processes used continue to encourage the participation of groups who have traditionally been underrepresented, such an approach in a diverse community of this nature may not be suitable for each specific group, and methods should be adjusted accordingly. The City will need to continue ‘reaching people where they are at’ to understand why certain populations have not participated and to ask for help in designing future engagement activities that encourage an increase in participation, increase creative visioning thinking, and avoid future ‘burnout’ by participants. We have included aspects of Inform, Involve, and Incorporate into our process. The engagement process is designed to be iterative and completed at minimum twice through the Involve and Incorporate themes, in that it is a linear through the first round and more cyclical upon completion of round one. The goals and evaluation measures put into place at the onset of the process should dictate when it is appropriate to move on to the next stage.

Public Advisory Committees will be used to show that the local knowledge of citizens is valued and can impact city staff in making decisions and in the final outcomes. The goal of the PAC is for them to look more deeply at the issues preventing members of that group from participating, and have them inform BP how to be more successful at getting participants, not just in providing input to staff on the comprehensive plan. Public advisory group meetings will be structured to invite participants to gain from educational activities focused on their interests, as well as provide feedback on issues related to the comprehensive plan or other City issues.
Opportunities to demonstrate that feedback and ideas are valued by the City will help encourage further involvement by participants, leading to increased trust between participants and the City. Quick and Feldman\(^2\) have noted that while the development of community and increased trust can only truly occur over time, the investment by a city in engagement processes will lead to increased capacity by citizens to provide informed feedback and take on leadership roles, perhaps in encouraging others to participate over time. We anticipate that if evaluations show that the City is not increasing participation by those groups currently underrepresented, the City should put additional focus on PACs. It may be that those groups continue to lack trust in the City, or there may be less understanding of the value the groups can provide to the City planning processes and of their potential impact on City decisions.

The City has applied various uses of technology and traditional forms of engagement in the past. Traditional methods include advertising in newsletters, on social media, and hosting events that include community cafe style events and mini-interviews among others. Brooklyn Park already has a tradition of using videos to inform their citizens, and our process recommends a video campaign on YouTube be used to help citizens understand the comprehensive plan process and to encourage participation of underrepresented groups. Methods to increase the awareness of these promotional videos could be achieved through cross-promotion on social media websites and techniques such as ‘boosting’ Facebook posts while targeting key demographics.

Using visually interesting, short messaging that can be re-posted and designed to appeal to certain groups based on interests may increase participation and engagement from individuals in which more traditional forms of outreach and messaging do not appeal. Visioning sessions and stakeholder workgroups for specific groups such as business owners will be used to encourage additional participation. These will again be opportunities for the City to communicate the authentic message that value from participants is valued and will influence decision making within the City. In addition to more traditional meetings, the City will work to incorporate these sessions into community organization meetings or traditional interest group meetings such as the Chamber of Commerce, where they can get the short but hopefully more intense focus of potential participants.

Evaluation measures in place for the BP 2025 Community Engagement efforts suggest that efforts were more effective when ‘reaching out’ to the community, as 69% of input was received from methods in which city staff went to locations in community, with 31% coming from events the City hosted. We have recommended that the city continues these methods of outreach, while incorporating other approaches that take advantage of new applications of technology. The Pop Up Meeting model used by the City of Saint Paul\(^3\) is an example of outreach of this nature.
Finally, the City will incorporate evaluation measures for the entire process, using surveys and facilitator-guided questioning of participants in order to evaluate success and then build improvement into the overall process. We recommend that staff also consider the Design Guidelines for Public Participation outlined by Bryson et al. in Designing Public Participation Processes\(^1\) in ensuring that they have developed and are administering a successful community engagement plan. These guidelines include methods for developing and using evaluation measures and to be continuously designing and redesigning the process accordingly. Bryson et al. suggest a combination of process criteria may be used to determine the effectiveness of engagement processes and in measuring consequences of participation for decision outcomes\(^1\). An assortment of outcomes (Individual, group, and social-level outcomes, process-level outcomes, user-oriented outcomes, first, second and third-order outcomes) have been identified and should be thoroughly examined and considered when evaluating the success of community engagement processes\(^1\). An example of an evaluation survey that could be applied for evaluating engagement with participants who are business owners has been attached to this report in Appendix D.

The Racial-Equity Scorecard\(^4\) is an example of an internal method for evaluating how staff is doing in addressing issues of racial equity, and applies a framework in which the City could operate for future engagement. Interest was expressed by city staff as to how an instrument of this nature could be applied during future engagement processes. The scorecard was developed by a steering committee consisting of local organizations in order to most effectively address these challenges, and somewhat models how we believe PACs should be used by the City of Brooklyn Park. The scorecard allows for staff to evaluate their performance and monitor engagement for ensuring equitable practices in a variety of planning sectors:

1) Equitable Housing Practices
2) Equitable Transportation Practices
3) Equitable Economic Development Practices
4) Equitable Land Use Practices
5) **Equitable Community Engagement Practices**
   - Project was initiated by the community
   - Planning requires community engagement to establish priorities and criteria for land use and economic development to guide future development and growth.
   - Community Engagement involves local community members within the first 6 months of the planning process.
   - Community has authority in the decision-making process, such as community representation on project advisory team/task force/committee.
   - The plan and project include the community’s goals, priorities, and criteria for growth and reinvestment.
   - Significant changes to the scope of the plan and/or project trigger more community engagement
Background on Brooklyn Park

Brooklyn Township grew slowly as vacation homes and country style neighborhoods began appearing along the west bank of the Mississippi River. The Village of Brooklyn Park was formed in 1954 and the original country estate style of living set a pattern of secluded low density residential development which continues today. Brooklyn Park is presently a fast growing suburb and currently the sixth most populous municipality in the state. The city is highly diverse – nearly 48% minority and 20% foreign-born and one fourth of the city speaks a language other than English as their primary language. This is a remarkable jump from just 15 years prior when nearly 90% of the city was white and primarily english speaking. In addition to the rapid demographic change, Brooklyn Park has seen its share of challenges over the years, ranging from poverty to foreclosures. In part to address these challenges and the dividing lines of income, race and language, the city set after a document that articulated shared values and goals.

**Brooklyn Park 2025**

In addition to its legally required master plan, BP 2025 sought to get community feedback from high-level questions like “By the year 2025, what do you want to see in Brooklyn Park?” The plan, which was recently adopted by the Brooklyn Park city council, was developed over a period of fairly robust and visible engagement efforts over the summer of 2016. Staff planners held six community cafes, held information tables, conducted youth interviews, maintained an online forum and surveyed city staff. Several general goals, four to five subsequent priorities, came out of these feedback efforts.

**Met Council System Plan: Brooklyn Park**

Metropolitan system plans are long-range comprehensive plans for certain regional systems – transit, highways, wastewater services and parks and open space. The overarching goals defined in a given system plan are those in MSP 2040, these are just technical details.

**Brooklyn Park 2040**

Brooklyn Park is required to issue a comprehensive plan every ten years according to the Metropolitan Planning Land Planning Act. The plan is meant to guide community issues with topic-level goals tied to some feature of land use or design. Many of the chapters are issue specific, such as land use, housing, utilities and transportation.

**Recreation and Parks Master Plan**

Broken into six chapters that address a specific aspect of the park system, the master plan establishes goals, objectives, actions and tools to help the city, residents, and partner organizations work together to guide the system over the next 25 years.

**Department Specific Strategic Plans**

Brooklyn Park’s various departments are required to internally adopt strategic staff plans that incorporate recommendations from *Brooklyn Park 2025* into their department-level initiatives. These will be finished within a year after the formal recommendations from *Brooklyn Park 2025*. 
Figure 1: Relationship Between Planning Documents

Figure 2: Engagement Methods used for BP 2025
With an understanding how plans both feed into and influence one another in the City of Brooklyn Park, an engagement process was developed that could be used to incorporate these past efforts into the larger Brooklyn Park 2040 Comprehensive Plan. One useful method might involve expanding on the Top 25 Issues/Challenges (8 Themes) that were identified as part of the BP 2025 plans, transferring input from themes addressing longer-term issues in the community such as LRT-station planning in which feedback is being gathered as part of separate engagement processes, or long long-term land use changes unlikely to change (Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park).

Perhaps one of the most important component of the process involves including diverse representatives at the onset of engagement through developing a Public Advisory Committee. This committee is intended to guide the City through the engagement process including developing a purpose, conduct a stakeholder analysis, and help develop strategies and processes that encourage participation for the Brooklyn Park 2040 Comprehensive Plan. An example of this could be geographical in nature, such as a 610 Business Corridor Committee or a Brooklyn Boulevard Business Committee, or simply open to all business owners in the community on an equal playing field.

We have recommended that engagement be carried out using collaborative and inclusive processes that help to build long-term trust and relationships between the City and members of the community. The diversity of Brooklyn Park is one of the greatest assets of the City, but will need to be tapped into by using engagement processes and methods that consider each group of stakeholders and their specific place in society. For groups of stakeholders that follow different cultural norms and practices regarding democratic participation and representation, it is important to fully understand these practices and develop processes that fit accordingly. Understanding of the city that should be sought out and fully considered by city staff. No one engagement process or technique can be universally applied across all groups. While certain methods – such as activities that encourage long term thinking or requiring ‘active’ participation – can be applied, there is no one simple solution to a difficult and historically challenging part of the planning process.

While it is appropriate to have developed themes which may help to guide conversations and input the City is seeking, all stakeholders and their input should be valued to the same extent and included throughout the process. Limiting input from the community may result in participants viewing their role as ‘tokenism’ during the process and skeptical as to how their input may influence outcomes. Residents in the community want to know their input is not only valued, but that their participation can help to also shift the power balance between themselves and the larger interests of the City.

For this report, we have developed a process specific to increasing engagement with business owners in the city, but the same cognitive exercises can be applied for developing engagement processes to gather feedback from other underrepresented groups in city planning efforts by following similar steps. Any methods or processes used for conducting outreach will need to be adjusted appropriately based on city staff and public advisory committee knowledge to understand what engagement for these groups entails specifically. Again, there is no one strategy that can be applied in a community as diverse as Brooklyn Park, where the combination of urban, suburban and rural may result in challenges if the concept of intersectionality is not fully embraced by city staff.
Business Engagement

Problem Statement:
In response to a request from the Brooklyn Park planning department, we have developed a process approach for increasing the participation of business owners in Brooklyn Park. These suggestions are based on conversations with local planners and the Metropolitan Council⁶, as well as incorporating themes and ideas from our class on civic participation at the Humphrey School.

Methodology:
We recommend the City use advisory groups to first build community and trust, and then use the connections within the advisory groups to develop additional participants for the comprehensive plan process. The use of advisory groups has been successful in helping citizens find shared interests and then work through common issues². Most critically, there is a recognition that building community takes time, as citizens and governments work together to develop trust. In addition, citizens, through participation, increase their capacity for working within the institutional system and become more effective at navigating the power and other systems of a community, increasing the chances of success of their initiatives and improving the feedback they can provide to local governments². Furthermore, Bryson¹ identified the potential to identify and develop leadership skills for the roles of sponsor, champion and facilitator, for citizens engaged in participation processes, which will benefit the comprehensive plan and other planning processes within Brooklyn Park.

Best Practice Examples:
A local city⁷ created a plan to study blighted commercial areas, requesting input from real estate agents, developers and local businesses. Money was identified by the City to implement some of the findings, providing feedback to participants that their help and recommendations were heard by local government and had impact.

Another city⁸ created advisory committees to look at land use issues such as zoning of business areas. City staff approached the business owners directly (rather than advertising the committee) and committed to following agendas, keeping the number of meetings limited and combining a presentation on a topic of interest to business owners together with small group discussion that created networking opportunities as well as provided feedback to the City on important issues. Business owners expressed appreciation for the structure of the meetings, as well as the opportunity to provide feedback that was valued by the City and in some cases led to changes in City policy.

In another example, staff⁹ reached out to existing grass roots business groups for informal feedback on city issues. The City recognized the input did not represent all businesses but was valuable for its insight. Furthermore, the goodwill created by encouraging these conversations helped create connections between the business community and the City.
**Recommendations:**

1.1 Improve City’s understanding of business owners attitudes toward ‘Business Forward’ advisory group and City planning process. Use results to improve outreach to businesses.

1.2 Consider creating additional business advisory groups or revamping ‘Business Forward’. Offer a series of get-together events that combine opportunities to learn and share business wisdom together with a city issue-focused portion of the engagement event. The City can communicate the value of business input, build trust and expand relationships within the business community.

1.3 Use existing staff and Council member networks to ask for business owner participation on advisory committees, but also look to community organizations and grassroots groups, to increase diversity.
People are often willing to participate if they are specifically asked, if they feel they will learn things that are beneficial to their business and if they feel their input will be valued.

1.4 Structure meetings to demonstrate participants time and input is valued. Schedule when most convenient for business owners, combine educational portion of meeting with small group discussion. Consider asking for meeting time at traditional business organizations such as Rotary and at community organization meetings, thereby bringing the meeting to business owners. Use facilitators to encourage input from all participants and to ensure minority and immigrant business owners feel welcome and comfortable.

1.5 Promote the advisory committee and require applications for membership. City can then meet various goals (e.g. diversity of membership) when determining committee membership.

1.6 Ask attendees to complete evaluations. Gather information on how worthwhile participants felt the meetings were, if they felt valued, what motivated them to attend, etc. Also monitor if participants continue on to other committees and the comprehensive plan process.

1.7 Comprehensive Plan Input. Design committees so information gathered will feed into the comprehensive plan process. Participants will increase their capacity for leading other citizens and will improve the quality of their input to the City, and show increased willingness to participate in future planning processes.

Business owners have a wealth of life and business experience, and can be a resource to Brooklyn Park. A process of seeking participation using advisory groups will help develop a sense of community and a feeling of ‘ownership’ by the business owner toward the City. These outreach opportunities will feed directly into the comprehensive plan process, but equally importantly, will generate goodwill and trust, leading to the willingness of the business owner to participate in future planning processes and other city activities.
Visioning Exercises in Future Engagement

Problem Statement:
Since the Comprehensive Plan is a forward-thinking vision that will guide the development of a city over the next 20 or 30 years, the City will need all of the participants, including planners and community members, to develop a long-term vision for their city instead of focusing on the short-term changes. In the previous community engagement efforts for their Comprehensive Plan, the City of Brooklyn Park found it challenging to encourage its residents to think creatively about the future because of the long range of time. However, to build a resilient community, it is essential to customize the long-range vision to fit the community’s needs and desire. Our group recommends the City consider several strategies to encourage the community to develop a long-term vision for their own city.

Procedure/Methodology for Finding Recommendations
As the city endeavors to engage people on Comprehensive Plan for the next couple decades, the city found that the long time range and the uncertainty about the future could barricade the participants from creatively imagining how their desired community would be. Through a set of efforts, however, the City could encourage the long-range thinking among the community. Firstly, the City should generate publicity for the visioning process [2.1], which will not only generate public interests, but also provide time for participants to develop initial ideas for their desired future. At the meantime, the City should collect information about the current state of the City [2.2]. As suggested by Innes and Booher⁹, incorporating local knowledge into planning and public processes is not only crucial to social justice but also to the resilience of a community. Therefore, apart from the official statistics from Census and Metropolitan Council Forecasts, the City should also seek out for community’s feedbacks on their opinions about the existing features of the City. A project kickoff [2.3] is essential for the communication of objectives and for the purpose of creating connections among participants. After that, the City should develop various formats of visioning process [2.4] in order to include as many as voices as possible. As noted by Bryson et al.¹, different stakeholders might be involved in different ways as their interests and capacities differ from each other. During the visioning processes, the facilitator could use specific categories to help participants identify their desired changes in these areas [2.5]. Doing so will mitigate the impacts from the broadness and uncertainty of what will happen in 20 or 30 years. Another recommendation is to create a non-intervention scenario [2.6], which will help participants identify key areas that need to be improved or sustained in the future. Last but not the least, facilitators should be chosen carefully to maintain neutrality toward outcomes, to help participants works together productively¹, and to effectively utilize different techniques to foster creative visioning among the participants [2.7].
Recommendations:

2.1 Generating publicity for the visioning process. Prior to the kickoff of the visioning process, the City should generate the public awareness and initial understanding of the visioning process, either through the social media or a public event/ press conference, or both. The basic information about the visioning process, such as the overall objectives and the kickoff of the visioning, can be spread out through:

   2.1.1 The city website
   2.1.2 The city Facebook account
   2.1.3 Newsletters
   2.1.4 Posters at key activity centers of the city

2.2 Collecting information about the current state of the City. A successful visioning for the future should be built upon an understanding of the existing features of the city. There are two types of information about the current status of the city: the official statistics and the local knowledge. The official statistics include, but are not limited to, population, race, income, education, property values, etc. The statistics can be obtained from:

   2.2.1 Census and ACS data
   2.2.2 Metropolitan Council Local Forecasts

The local knowledge is more about the community’s experience on what they like and dislike about the city. Such information can be collected through:

   2.2.3 Online forum
   2.2.4 Community surveys
   2.2.5 One-on-one communication with the residents
   2.2.6 Images taken by the residents.

Instead of presenting pictures taken by the city staff and asking them to choose what they like or dislike, the city can ask its residents to take pictures of the characteristics they like and don’t like. Visualized information about the community’s opinions is more likely to stimulate conversations about existing problems and assets in the city.

2.3 Holding a project kickoff for the visioning process. The kickoff event will focus on the following tasks:

   2.3.1 Displaying the current state of the City through the official statistics and the community feedbacks
   2.3.2 Introducing the objectives of the visioning, and creating connections between the participants

The kickoff brings the community members together and provides a shared experience among them, which will help create a comfortable environment for visioning.
2.4 Developing various formats of the visioning process to engage as many residents as possible. When holding the visioning process in a public meeting fashion, the city should make sure that the participants can represent the wide range of interest existing in the community. Even though people are more likely to think creatively for the long-term objectives when they are in a group with other individuals that they are familiar with, the city should proactively reach out to people who cannot attend the group visioning practice in person. The events could be:

2.4.1 Big group meeting and workshop
2.4.2 online forum with the information presented at the kickoff
2.4.3 pop-up events at local activities
2.4.4 on-street conversations with residents, etc.

2.5 Using categories to help the participants to describe the desired changes in the community. The categories might be people, housing, schools, jobs, businesses, health care, crime, transportation, infrastructure, environment, and public involvement. Breaking down the visioning into several categories can avoid the vagueness and barriers resulted from the broad topic and the long time interval between now and the target year.

2.6 Creating a non-intervention scenario. The city could ask the participants to imagine the future the city might face if no significant interventions occur. Comparing the non-intervention scenario with the desired future could help the community define the key areas that need improvements.

2.7 Selecting experienced facilitator and group leaders and developing questionnaires that encourage people to think creatively. The facilitator and group leaders should create a comfortable and encouraging environment for the community to develop a long-term vision, and they should not focus on the content of the group discussion, but on the logistics and processes. The facilitators could use different visioning techniques to foster long-term thinking.

2.7.1 Design charrettes
2.7.2 Graphic visualization
2.7.3 Interactive zoning maps
Addressing Burnout for Ongoing Engagement

Problem Statement:
As the City of Brooklyn Park considers the most effective techniques for engaging community members for the long-range BP 2040 Plan, the potential for ‘participation-burnout’ by stakeholders is a considerable challenge. Community engagement occurred from April 2016 to June 2016 regarding planning for BP 2025, a ‘shorter-range’ planning effort in which nearly 1,000 stakeholders were engaged throughout the City including residents, City Council members, staff, and commissioners. Ongoing communication, clarity, and transparency as to how information is being, and will be used, from these different engagement efforts to help guide the decision-making progress is imperative in retaining individuals who consistently provide feedback and their time and effort. With two longer-range planning efforts being conducted simultaneously, the topic of participation burnout is particularly salient. The city’s efforts must to take into account the diverse perspectives which shape the communities of Brooklyn Park.

Procedure/Methodology for Finding Recommendations:
Public participation ‘burnout’ was noted by the city as being a major concern and challenge for their planning practitioners. Long range planning requires continued engagement from stakeholders, many of whom are unpaid participants and must often overcome various constraints to attend or participate in these exercises. Scholars note the relationship between staff and these stakeholders should be collaborative and inclusive [3.1], oriented to connecting people across issues and over time². Collaboration and participatory processes may be useful in helping to build social capital and develop champions that will engage with others in the community. One of the greatest attributes of the City of Brooklyn Park is the diverse community and cultures represented throughout the city. With this diverse landscape [marginalized voices need to be heard] comes challenges in developing processes that take into these diverse perspectives. As engagement proceeds, one way to avoid participation burnout is attracting new stakeholders [3.2] through various methods while considering each person’s individual circumstances to effectively allow those with different expectations and experiences of the public process and participation. Deliberate methods, such as ‘reaching out’ to the community to include those who are confronted with constraints in attending events, can be used strategically and for gaining local knowledge that may otherwise have been overlooked. Innes and Booher suggest that local knowledge when held by disadvantaged or ethnic minorities is even more likely to be ignored by planner and public administrators⁹ and suggests the importance of applying deliberative methods to engage these participants. Creative and interactive techniques [3.3] should be applied as frequently as possible when appropriate and as a mechanism to move participants up the ‘ladder of civic participation’⁵ to avoid tokenism and information sharing as the main models of engagement. Compensation [3.4] and hospitality for those who participate can be used as method for helping to retain existing participants along with attracting new individuals who may have other personal, social, and financial responsibilities more pertinent.
Recommendations:

3.1 Promoting inclusive and collaborative processes across boundaries and over time\(^2\) to help build social capital and as a mechanism for gathering the diverse perspectives and experiences individuals and groups have to offer. [more collaborative participatory processes] Collaborative and inclusive processes usually consist of a greater degree of face-to-face interactions and processes. 3.1.1-3.1.4 suggest strategies that can be applied that are effective relationship-building mechanisms\(^{10}\) and applicable for applying at the onset of engagement efforts.

3.1.1. Public Advisory Committee
- Should include members of the business community and other stakeholders at beginning of process to identify new stakeholders and participants for comprehensive planning engagement

3.1.2. Workshops
- Engage business community to understand how to gain more participation in comprehensive planning effort from these stakeholders

3.1.3. Design Charrettes and Other Creative Processes
- Consider methods in 3.3.

3.1.4. Develop ongoing projects for participants
- Taking photographs of locations in community (Flickr- geotagging of locations)
- Small-scale ‘qualitative’ research within their own networks

3.2 Identifying new and/or ‘unreached’ stakeholders that did not participate in BP 2025 planning efforts and whose input is essential, including business owners, marginalized populations, and newer residents & businesses in the community. New stakeholder can help to address participation burnout by developing new champions for future engagement, along with bring new energy and life to environment of the current community of regular participants.

3.2.1. Provide clarity as to how former feedback has guided the decision-making process

3.2.2. Deliberate outreach to new stakeholders to minimize burnout from existing participants

3.2.3. Research locations where previous outreach has occurred, and include new locations during outreach
- Outreach during large soccer games and tournaments at fields throughout City
- Outreach during softball games off of Highway 610
- Surveying at Park-&-Rides with complimentary coffee
- Host an annual Art Festival or event similar in nature to Open Streets in Minneapolis
- Host multi-generational family events at Central Park or Eiden Farm
- Host movie night in the park

3.2.4. Use existing networks such as the business community that have not been “tapped” for participation in the past
3.3 Creative Engagement Techniques should be applied to avoid having stakeholders participating in same/similar events in a short time period. Extend and enhance communication before, during, and after events to show people how their feedback and participation matters and may enact actual change whether it be in plans, developments, or projects currently being pursued. The following examples contain many techniques that can be used to creatively and actively engage with community members, which may be useful techniques in addressing participation burnout that results from passive engagement activities:

3.3.1. Visual thinking and graphic facilitation during informational sessions and presentations
3.3.2. Ensure techniques are implemented that are non-repetitive
3.3.3. Play-doh and other ‘hands-on’ activities that allow children to participate
3.3.3. Fishing survey questions from a barrel
  • Interactive frisbee golf game at Central Park
3.3.3. Demonstration projects throughout Brooklyn Park displaying new projects (Friendly Streets Initiative does great demonstration and community engagement work)
3.3.3. Pop Up Meeting<sup>3</sup> - The City of Saint Paul uses a method in which they bring engagement to the community through the use of a retrofitted truck intended to serve as the City’s “front porch to engage communities and customize civic meetings based on place and stakeholder needs.” Participants are also rewarded with a popsicle for their participation, a small token of appreciation on hot summer days
3.3.3. Kayak on Mississippi River (Canoe-Share/Nice-Ride model)
3.3.3. Bike tours to inform and gather feedback
3.3.3. Bus tours to gather feedback
3.3.3. Dots/stickers for spatial analysis and gathering survey responses
3.3.3. Give those engaged an ongoing project- stakeholders work together on ‘separate’ project
3.3.3. Design Charrettes
3.3.3. Internet deliberative polling
3.3.3. Create platform for allowing stories
3.3.3. Apply techniques that engage participants through social media (idea sharing on different platforms; information gathering through informal polling)
3.3.3. Applying appropriate interactive techniques based on culture and social variables such as considering multi-generational families, families with no children, or other groups that have historically been marginalized from civic engagement.

3.3.4. Emerging Techniques<sup>10</sup>

3.3.4. “Remote” community mapping
3.3.4. Real-Time Integrated Display Models
3.3.4. Photo-Assisted Methods
3.3.4. 3D Visualization
3.4 Compensation and hospitality provided to stakeholders for participating in various events as incentive for their participation. Compensation can be an effective method for addressing by participation burnout by providing useful and attractive rewards for ongoing and one-time participation. Food and child-care can be offered as part of hosted events while cash and gift drawings, acknowledgements of participation, and free tickets of admission may be appropriate while out in the community.

3.4.1. Food provided during events (advertise and promote)
3.4.2. Provide child-care during events
3.4.3. Tickets/Vouchers for free admission to community events
   ○ free tickets to local carnival for children rides during Tater Daze
   ○ free admission to historic farm
   ○ free/reduced admission to facilities such as community center, golf course
3.4.4. Cash gifts or drawings for prizes
3.4.5. Acknowledgment of participation (button, stickers, etc…)

White Boards and ‘reaching out’ to the community have been successful in the past, and should be used throughout the process as to gather more feedback from those unwilling or unable to attend hosted events or participate at the minimal level. An online forum could also be applied during the social media and video campaign conducted during Visioning Sessions to gather feedback and in developing a list of potential stakeholders.

These recommended strategies are intended to help minimize public participation burnout, while also helping city staff gather new information that was not gathered during the previous BP 2025 engagement efforts by interacting with new stakeholders and past participants that minimizes repetitive processes and questioning.
Conclusion:
The purpose of the engagement process outlined by this report is to access meaningful feedback from Brooklyn Park residents who have traditionally been left out of past long range planning efforts. Groups such as Millennials, renters, ethnic minorities, and local business owners have much to offer in shaping the future of Brooklyn Park, but are more difficult to engage with in public participation strategies. Disenfranchisement and distrust contribute to the difficulty in reaching these groups, as their interests have historically been underrepresented across the country. Lack of awareness about the Twin Cities region comprehensive plan requirement, what it entails, and what it can result in also contributes to these difficulties. Overcoming these challenges of engagement are essential to the development of a truly holistic comprehensive plan. To accomplish that end goal, several approaches must be considered.

Expanding upon the stakeholder analysis completed for Brooklyn Park 2025, the City must develop a baseline understanding of what demographics and groups they are currently reaching and identifying which stakeholder groups they have not reached. Clearly specifying which interests to focus engagement efforts towards will help inform what steps must be taken\(^1\). Recent work has been completed and published by the City in this space. It is recommended that practices of documentation of participant demographic information for the purposes of planning future outreach continues.

Participant satisfaction is key to preventing burnout and retaining community input. Surveying participants on how engagement processes felt, what worked, what didn’t, and how satisfied they were with the outcomes will complement other data collection and indicate what changes, if any, the City should consider. In addition, literature suggests that adopting practices of participants telling personal stories to illustrate values and lived experiences fosters deliberation, solidarity, and trust even if differences in those values and experiences exist \(^{12}\). Encouraging storytelling, then, will lend itself well to better outcomes and higher satisfaction.

As there is no formulaic solution to engaging with every desired stakeholder group or cultural community across the board, leveraging personal networks will be the most useful tool Brooklyn Park will have in reaching new participants and obtaining meaningful input. Personal connections include a level of trust which will be more effective at soliciting participation via a blog post or flyer. Tapping into community networks will also tap into local knowledge, yielding insightful and reasonable solutions \(^9\). Creating a Public Advisory Committee with representatives from stakeholder groups identified as not being reached by previous engagement will make tapping into these networks more accessible.

Organizing engagement efforts by stakeholder groups in Focused Working Group sessions will continue the work of leveraging networks and forge new connections in the process. A Focused Working Group comprised of all local business owners, for example, allows that group to find common ground, share information vital to that specific community, and allows creates an avenue for potential future collaboration between those group members. This focus on creating sustainable connections results in true inclusion, rather than simple participation\(^2\). The continued communication and trust building also results in a more resilient community \(^{11}\).
Citations


6. Barajas, Lisa, Sector Representative, Planning, Metropolitan Council, 11/18 telephone interview

7. Farnham, J., Planner, City of Bloomington, 11/18 telephone interview

8. Elverum, K, Planning Director, City of Hopkins, 11/18 telephone interview


Appendix A: Process Map

Brooklyn Park Comprehensive Plan Engagement Process Map

**Begin**

**INTEGRATE**
Use local knowledge to continue designing future efforts and create lasting connections

**Outreach**
- Use local knowledge to continue designing future efforts
- Identify people where they already are
- Involve local communities in the planning for the future of Brooklyn Park

**Pop Up & Tactical Urbanist Meetings**
- Taking the meetings to the people
- Interactive and participatory sessions

**Focused Working Groups**
- Non-stationary members or participants
- Engage different interest groups
- How will the comprehensive plan affect you?
- How can I influence the future of Brooklyn Park for more generations?

**Evaluation & Refinement**
- Are we reaching the stakeholders we need?
- Is feedback coming in with enough time to be incorporated into the plan?
- What does the process seem like? What doesn’t?

**Video Social Media Campaign**
- Positive approach to social media
- Involve the what, who, when and how of Comprehensive Planning
- Short, penetrative, visually interesting

**Public Advisory Committee**
- Includes businesses, residents, immigrant groups, youth, or any other community not reached through previous efforts
- Inform, feedback making and reform planning process throughout cycle
- Standing committee members

INFORM
Shape what’s to come by informing the processes and informing the public

Diversity & Inclusivity

Robin Brooksbank, Kevin Kirner, Eric King, Alex Kleppin and Shengnan Lou
## Appendix B: Recommendation Summary Tables

### Problem: Business Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Outcome/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1.1 Analyze Stakeholders** | • Identify current attitudes of business owners toward 'Business Forward' advisory group  
• Identify current attitudes toward City outreach efforts  
• Confirm purpose of engagement process | • Improve outreach to business owners  
• Help structure business advisory groups |
| **1.2 Business Advisory Group** | • Combine education opportunities, networking and city engagement  
• Expanded longer term purpose  
• Participant’s time and input valued  
• Consider bringing meetings to existing groups (Rotary, community organizations, etc) | • City communicates values participants, understands their interests and needs  
• Increased trust between City and business owners  
• Honest and helpful discussions  
• Increased overall participation by business owners in City planning |
| **1.3 Outreach process** | • Staff and Council members seek out participants  
• Existing issue groups such as Rotary and Chamber of Commerce  
• Work to increase participation from groups previously underrepresented in City planning processes | • More voices providing input  
• Improved process and final decisions |
| **1.4 Meeting structure** | • Agendas and times followed  
• Facilitated discussions  
• Networking opportunities | • Encourage input from all participants  
• Minority and immigrant business owners more likely to participate  
• Increased trust between business owners and City |
| **1.5 Participation Goals** | • Use of application process increases desirability of opportunity, not all accepted  
• Ensure under-represented groups are included  
• Facilitated discussions ensure all voices heard | • More voices providing input  
• Improved process and final decisions  
• Pay attention to power within City and groups  
• 4 c’s of social trust (caring, competence, commitment, consistency) |
| **1.6 Evaluation** | • Feedback  
• Measure if participation increased  
• Measure if interest increased | • Iterative, constant improvement |
| **1.7 Comprehensive Plan** | Data for comprehensive plan | • Increase business owner participation in comprehensive plan process |
# Problem: Creative Visioning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Outcome/Purpose</th>
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</table>
| **2.1 Generating Publicity** | 2.1.1 The city website  
2.1.2 The city Facebook account  
2.1.3 Newsletters  
2.1.4 Posters at key activity centers of the city | • Help the participants understand the objectives for visioning  
• Create interests among residents  
• Give time for participants to form ideas |
| **2.2 Collecting information about the current state of the City** | 2.2.1 Census and ACS data  
2.2.2 Metropolitan Council Local Forecasts  
2.2.3 Online forum  
2.2.4 Community surveys  
2.2.5 One-on-one communication with the residents  
2.2.6 Images taken by the residents | • Stimulate conversations about existing problems and assets |
| **2.3 Project kickoff for the visioning** | 2.3.1 Display the current state of the City through statistics and pictures from the residents  
2.3.2 Introduce the objectives of the visioning | • Create shared experience  
• Create connections among participants |
| **2.4 Developing various formats of the visioning process** | 2.4.1 Big group meeting and workshop  
2.4.2 Online forum with the information presented at the kickoff  
2.4.3 Pop-up events at local activities  
2.4.4 On-street conversations with residents | • Engage as many residents as possible  
• Promoting diverse and inclusive participation |
| **2.5 Using categories to help participants describe their desired future** | • People  
• Housing  
• Schools  
• Jobs  
• Businesses  
• Health care  
• Crime  
• Transportation  
• Infrastructure  
• Environment  
• Public involvement | • Avoid vagueness or barriers for visioning when the future is too far away and when the topic is too broad |
| **2.6 Creating a non-intervention scenario** | Ask the participants to imagine the future the city might face if no significant interventions occur | • Help the community define the priority and key areas that need improvements |
| **2.7 Selecting experienced facilitator and utilizing different visioning techniques** | 2.7.1 Design charrettes  
2.7.2 Graphic visualization  
2.7.3 Interactive zoning maps | • Create a comfortable and encouraging environment for visioning  
• Encourage long-term visioning through engaging and interesting activities |
### Problem: Participation Burnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Outcome/Purpose</th>
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</table>
| **3.1 Inclusive and Collaborative Processes** | 3.1.1 Public Advisory Committee  
3.1.2 Workshops  
3.1.3 Design Charrettes and Other Creative Processes  
3.1.4. Develop ongoing projects for participants | Create new connections among community members        |
| **3.2 Engage New and Unreached Stakeholders** | 3.2.1. Provide clarity as to how former feedback has guided the decision-making process to excite new participants  
3.2.2. Deliberate outreach to new stakeholders to minimize burnout from existing participants  
3.2.3. Research locations where previous outreach has occurred, and include new locations during outreach  
3.2.4. Use existing networks such as the business community that have not been “tapped” for participation in the past | Gather information and feedback from new participants  
Develop new ‘champions’ |
| **3.3 Creative Engagement Techniques**     | 3.3.1. Visual thinking and graphic facilitation during informational sessions and presentations  
3.3.2. Ensure techniques are implemented that are non-repetitive  
3.3.3. Play-doh and other ‘hands-on’ activities  
3.3.3. Fishing survey questions from a barrel  
3.3.3. Demonstration projects  
3.3.3. Pop Up Meeting *(City of Saint Paul)*  
3.3.3. Kayak on Mississippi River *(Canoe-Share/Nice-Ride model)*  
3.3.3. Bike tours to inform and gather feedback  
3.3.3. Bus tours to gather feedback  
3.3.3. Dots/stickers for spatial analysis and gathering survey responses  
3.3.3. Give those engaged an ongoing project- stakeholders work together on ‘separate’ project  
3.3.3. Design Charrettes  
3.3.3. Internet deliberative polling  
3.3.3. Create platform for allowing stories  
3.3.3. Apply techniques that engage participants through social media (idea sharing on different platforms; information gathering by informal polling)  
3.3.3. Applying appropriate interactive techniques based on culture and social variables such as considering multi-generational families, families with no children, or others historically marginalized from civic engagement  
3.3.4. Emerging Techniques [1]  
3.3.4. “Remote” community mapping  
3.3.4. Real-Time Integrated Display Models  
3.3.4. Photo-Assisted Methods  
3.3.4. 3D Visualization | Avoid burnout from participants through active participation methods |
| **3.4 Compensation**                       | 3.4.1. Food provided during events *(advertise and promote)*  
3.4.2. Provide child-care during events  
3.4.3. Tickets/Vouchers for free admission to community events  
3.4.4. Cash gifts or drawings for prizes  
3.4.5. Acknowledgment of participation | Provide rewards and incentives for participants |
Appendix D: Evaluation Survey for Business Owners

The City will want to evaluate the effectiveness of participation activities in achieving the desired outcomes. In this process, advisory committees have been suggested to increase participation by business owners in the comprehensive planning process. The following is a suggested survey which could be given to the advisory committee members. As described by Bryson, the survey questions should evaluate the achievement of both process criteria and impact criteria. In addition, questions could address individual- and group level outcomes, process-oriented outcomes (specifically the building of trust and increasing the diversity of stakeholders) and user-oriented outcomes (participants’ satisfaction in the advisory committee). Finally, the survey will want to try to measure immediate effects as well as longer term impacts. As it is quite difficult to discern longer term impact, the City could consider asking for planners from the Metropolitan Council or participation experts at the University of Minnesota to review their process and specific activities, for advice on increasing success of the City’s participation approaches and outcomes.

Survey questions:

1. Are you an owner of a business located in Brooklyn Park? If not an owner, are you a member of the management team of a business located in Brooklyn Park?
2. Is your business a franchise or a secondary location of a business headquartered outside of Brooklyn Park?
3. Do you live in Brooklyn Park?
4. Please answer this optional question about which ethnic group you identify with.
5. How did you learn about this advisory group?
6. Circle: received mailing, was asked to join by city employee or council member, learned from other business owner, learned from presentation by City at a community- or business-organization such as Rotary or African Heritage Association (this group doesn’t exist, used as example), other.
7. What were the reasons you joined the advisory group? Describe.
8. Have you previously participated in any Brooklyn Park discussion groups (for example about BP2025 during the 2016 summer) or served on any City committees? Please list.
9. The following questions will have responses rated from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree: I felt the time I spent at advisory group meetings was worthwhile.
10. During some of the meetings I learned about subjects that will be helpful to me as I manage my business.
11. I met other business owners that I did not know before these meetings.
12. I will continue in contact with the business owners I met during these meetings.
13. I felt respected by City staff at these meetings.
14. I felt respected by other business owners and managers at these meetings.
15. I believe my comments about City issues were valued and may be used by the City to develop new policy or approaches to these issues.
16. As a result of my participation on this advisory committee, my trust of the City of Brooklyn Park staff has increased.
17. As a result of my participation on this advisory committee, I am more interested in what is happening within the City of Brooklyn Park.
18. I am interested in continuing to serve on this advisory committee.
19. I am interested in participating in upcoming comprehensive plan discussions about future direction for the city of Brooklyn Park.