

Public Participation Processes

*Prepared for the 2016 Dane County Housing
Summit: Addressing Workforce Housing in Dane
County*

5/2016

Prepared by Mindy Habecker and Sharon Lezberg
Dane County UW-Extension

Dane County Housing Community Conversations: Building Public Participation into the Process

This factsheet provides background information and process suggestions for engaging public stakeholders, in meaningful and effective ways, in planning discussions and decision making about topics that affect the community. Efforts to develop and maintain affordable workforce and family housing is of concern and consequence to Dane County citizens, public officials, and stakeholder groups. Citizens and community groups are a source of tremendous creativity, and incorporating their creativity and input into local planning processes will produce better planning decisions.

Public Participation and Housing

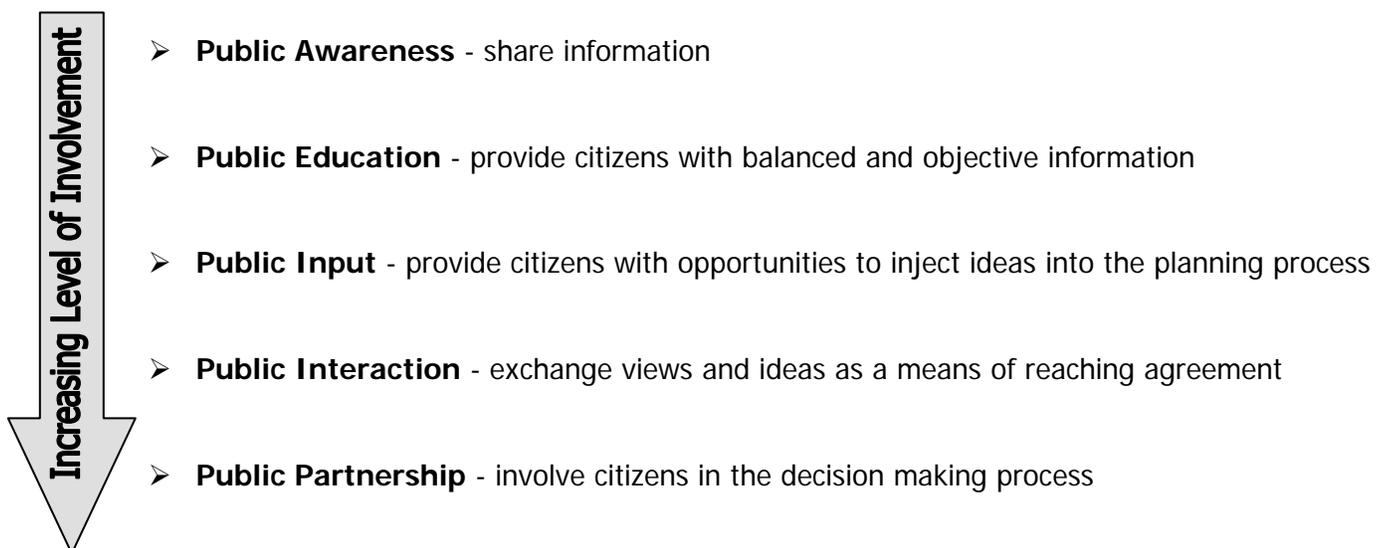
Local government decisions about housing availability and affordability are interconnected with many other variables of community life, from economic development to community cohesion and school outcomes. Decisions made now on housing development will impact the future, for example, regarding:

- the availability of housing for the local workforce and the ability to expand the workforce,
- the socioeconomic mix and diversity of the community,
- whether residents have stable options for affordable housing, and
- how to mitigate the impact of housing instability on children, families, and schools.

By engaging a wide diversity of community members in discussions about these issues, local government and housing organizations can benefit from the insight, ideas, and understanding of community members, and can be better prepared to address current and future housing needs.

Public Participation Methods

A wide variety of public participation methods, serving distinct purposes, can be employed to provide for broad public participation throughout the planning process. The range and objective of public participation efforts can be summarized as follows:



Objectives of Public Participation Processes

1. To build public support for, and ultimately ownership of, local decision making on issues of importance to a community.
2. Recognizing that there are many levels of public participation, to provide for an effective mix of participation opportunities that include public information, public education, public input, public interaction and public partnership.
3. Recognizing that not everyone participates in the same way or at the same time, to include a mix of participation strategies that provides for a broad and diverse set of participation opportunities that considers the diversity of the county's communities and citizens.

The following guiding principles are included to ensure that public participation becomes an integral part of the process.

Guiding Principles for the Effective Public Participation Processes

1. Public participation strategies should be designed for active participation and numerous opportunities for the public to contribute in accessible and unintimidating forums.
2. Public participation strategies should be designed to include representation from diverse constituencies that reflect the diversity of the population.
3. Public participation events should be scheduled at times and locations that are most convenient for citizens.

Overview of Various Public Participation Process Tools

Public Awareness

Standard public participation tools such as use of mass media, websites and direct mailings may be used to inform the public of specific public participation steps scheduled in the future and about the process and data gathered thus far.

Public Education

Standard public participation tools such as developing a speakers bureau, developing fact sheets and web information, utilizing local cable access TV channels and holding open houses or other public events may be used to accomplish a number of educational objectives such as expanding understanding of housing issues and priorities, informing housing developers about incentives for affordable housing, and sharing population projections and land use information to aid in housing development decision making.

Public Input

Public input processes are designed to solicit and record public feedback on issues, alternatives and/or decisions. A wide variety of data collection techniques may be used during this step including focus groups, mail and telephone public opinion surveys, visual preference surveys, specially scheduled public forums when key input is needed in the process, visioning sessions, workshops,

charrettes, and open houses. These techniques may be used to gather data and feedback related to previously generated planning goals and objectives, responses to new or emerging issues/concerns, and developing a vision of what housing in the community should look like in the future.

Public Interaction

Public interaction engages the public more deeply by engaging constituents directly throughout a process of addressing public issues and concerns. Methods for interaction include more long term and involved methods including community visioning, design workshops, and community centered planning processes. One form of public interaction is 'deliberative dialogue.' In deliberative dialogue, participants use discussion to think together to find the best course of action. Distinct elements of collective discovery through dialogue include use of personal narratives, open ended questions, revealing hidden assumptions, and searching for common values.

Public Partnership

Public partnerships put decision making (and sometimes implementation) directly in the hands of the public, through creation of public bodies with responsibility for addressing an issue. Citizen planning committees, workgroups, and councils comprised of both community residents and public officials work together over the long term to address issues of public concern.

Resources:

US EPA. Public Participation Guide. [EPA's Public Participation Guide](#) provides tools for public participation and public outreach in environmental decision-making.

[University of Wisconsin's Local Government Center](#). The Local Government Center's website contains tools on deliberative governance and resources for public participation. The Local Government Center is a part of UW-Extension.

Dane County UW-Extension. Our [Community Development web page](#) contains information and tools for public participation. We will continue to update these materials, so please bookmark this site.

The [University of Minnesota Extension's website on civic engagement](#) has an extensive collection of resources on process methods and theoretical underpinnings of civic engagement.

This fact sheet was prepared by Mindy Habecker and Sharon Lezberg, Dane County UW-Extension, and was developed from the following materials:

Grabow, S. H. Grabow, Hilliker, M., Moskal, J. 2006. Comprehensive Planning and Citizen Participation. UW Cooperative Extension Publication G3810. <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Comprehensive-Planning-and-Citizen-Participation-Guide-P1158.aspx>

International Association for Public Participation. 2000. The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/Foundations_Course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum.pdf
<http://www.iap2.org/?page=A5>

INCREASING LEVELS OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

<i>Public Awareness</i>	<i>Public Education</i>	<i>Public Input</i>	<i>Public Interaction</i>	<i>Public Partnership</i>
Objective: To make the public aware of the comprehensive planning process.	Objective: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solution.	Objective: To obtain public feedback on issues, alternatives and/or decisions.	Objective: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	Objective: To place decision-making responsibilities in the hands of the public
Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed.	Promise to the Public: We will try to help you understand.	Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced decisions.	Promise to the Public: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced decisions.	Promise to the Public: We will work to implement what you decide.
Example Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • News releases and mass media • Displays and exhibits 	Example Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education meetings • Websites • Newsletters • Tours 	Example Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open houses • Public hearings • Visual preference surveys • Opinion surveys • Focus Groups • Community Conversations 	Example Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visioning • Workshops 	Example Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen planning committees • Work Groups

Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation

