

Near Southeast Area Plan Engagement Strategy

Updated: November 2, 2021



Overview

Inclusive and effective community engagement is vital for the creation of a successful neighborhood plan. This strategy lays out the engagement goals for the Near Southeast Area Plan, the methods that will be used to achieve those goals at each stage of the process, and how progress will be measured and tracked. The intent of this strategy is to conduct engagement that is supported by the community and that includes diverse representation of the community and traditionally underrepresented groups, while remaining flexible to accommodate changes throughout the process. To that end, community input on the engagement strategy is important. This draft document will be finalized as part of the first phase of the plan process.

Goals

Community Planning and Development has four general goals for community engagement in neighborhood plans. These goals will be supplemented by the community input in finalizing this strategy, as described below. The goals are:

Goal 1: Engage community members in a way that reflects the diversity of those who live, work, visit, and study in the Plan Area with transparency and clear communication about opportunities for input and how that input is used.

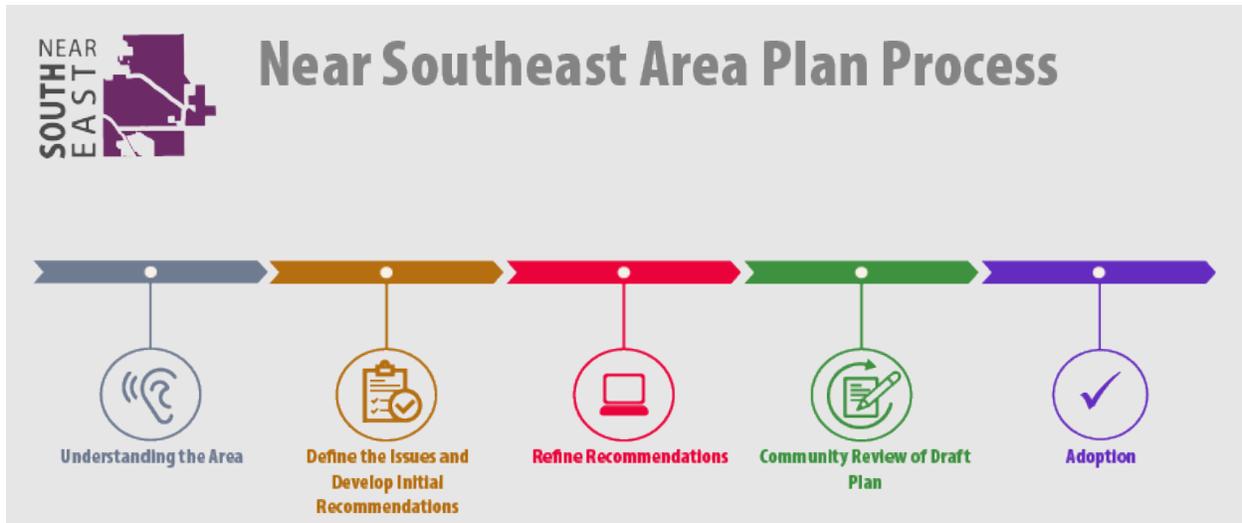
Goal 2: Proactively target traditionally marginalized or underrepresented communities. Focus populations include, but are not limited to, youth, seniors, people of color (particularly black, brown, and indigenous residents), non-native English speakers, people experiencing homelessness, lower-income residents, people with disabilities, and renters.

Goal 3: Build trust among community members during the planning process and create a space to listen so that everyone feels welcome to participate and invested in the plan, and so that the plan and the process address their concerns.

Goal 4: Educate participants on their role, the project, and the importance of a collaborative planning process.

Engagement Plan

The Near Southeast Area Plan will take approximately two years to complete, involving several different phases. Each phase will utilize a variety of engagement methods as described below.



- 1) Understanding the Area – In this phase, engagement is intended to create a shared understanding of the planning process and the plan area, to develop the plan vision, and to identify issues and opportunities for the plan to address.
 - a) Steering committee
 - b) Stakeholder interviews
 - c) Community workshop
 - d) Surveys
 - e) Group meetings
 - f) Focused population engagement
 - g) Neighborhood tours and field assessments
 - h) Intercept surveys
 - i) Community navigators

- 2) Define the Issues and Develop Initial Recommendations – In this phase, engagement is intended to confirm the plan vision, specifically define issues and opportunities in the area, generate recommendations to address those issues and opportunities, and explore alternative development scenarios.
 - a) Steering committee
 - b) Community workshop
 - c) Surveys
 - d) Focus groups
 - e) Focused population engagement
 - f) Resource fairs
 - g) Existing community events
 - h) Community navigators

- 3) Refine Recommendations – In this phase, engagement is intended to further define and improve the draft recommendations, select preferred development alternatives, and explore transformative projects to help achieve the plan goals.
 - a) Steering committee
 - b) Community workshop
 - c) Surveys
 - d) Focus groups
 - e) Focused population engagement
 - f) Neighborhood meetings
 - g) Office hours
 - h) Community navigators

- 4) Community Review of Draft Plan – In this phase, engagement is intended to refine the draft recommendations, preferred alternatives, and transformative projects and get them into their final forms.
 - a) Steering committee
 - b) Community workshop
 - c) Surveys
 - d) Focused population engagement
 - e) Office hours
 - f) Group meetings and stakeholder engagement
 - g) Community navigators

- 5) Legislative Review and Adoption – In this phase, engagement is intended to provide a final review of the draft plan by decision-making bodies and make any necessary improvements.
 - a) Steering committee
 - b) Public hearings
 - c) Focused population engagement
 - d) Community navigators

This list will be refined through public input and will remain flexible so additional tools can be added as needed throughout the process.

Community input on the engagement strategy

The first phase of the engagement process, Understanding the Area, described above includes opportunities for the public to provide input on the goals, tools, special considerations, and other aspects of this strategy. Common themes from that input included:

- A plan that responds to community concerns
- More clarity on how public comments are taken into account
- Communication on what is going on with the plan and how people can participate
- Inclusion of everyone in the area, and reaching new people in the process

- A variety of methods and timeframes to communicate and gather input
- Implementation of the plan and addressing neighborhood issues
- Building capacity of residents, RNOs and other neighborhood groups to participate effectively in the plan and following city processes
- Building trust with the community and assurance that their input matters and that the plan is for them
- Creating interest, ownership, and community cohesion
- Strong engagement throughout the process

Based on this input, changes were made to the goals of this engagement strategy and the Reporting Out section below, among others.

Equity

To ensure an equitable plan is created, the planning process must be equitable in opportunity and voice. This requires targeted outreach to underrepresented groups and providing access in appropriate languages and in appropriate venues. Key groups that are traditionally underrepresented in planning processes and are present in Near Southeast include:

Group	Potential strategies/partners for engagement
Hispanic/Latinx residents	Spanish language media; Denver Latino Commission; Mexican Cultural Center
Black residents	Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce; Denver African American Commission; African Community Center
Immigrant communities	Denver Immigrant and Refugee Commission; church/daycare employees/associations; African Community Center; Eritrean Community Center
Youth	School-based engagement; YMCA/recreation groups; religious youth groups
Residents over 65 years old	Senior apartments; targeted mailings; Denver Commission on Aging
Renters	Small group meetings; apartment visits and coordination with managers
Lower income residents	Affordable housing communities; Affordable housing waitlists; Department of Housing Stability; Neighborhood Development Council

The following table shows the percentage of the population in each neighborhood that speaks English less than well, according to the 2018 American Community Survey:

Neighborhood	Percent that speak English less than well
Goldsmith	6%
Indian Creek	5%
University Hills	4%

Virginia Village	8%
Washington Virginia Vale	10%

Based on the Community Planning and Development Language Access Plan, this means the following documents will be translated throughout the process:

- Promotional materials
- One-page summaries/handouts
- Brochures
- Surveys
- Executive summaries
- Summary reports

To help achieve equitable engagement, the following topics will be detailed in this engagement strategy in the coming months:

- A communication strategy identifying local and native language media (newspapers, bulletin boards, social media groups, etc.)
- List of community meeting spaces, hubs and popular areas for information gathering and recruitment
- Key partners, advocates, and community leaders (schools, religious institutions, etc.)
- Social Service providers

Special considerations

Beyond the traditionally underrepresented groups addressed above, Near Southeast has other unique circumstances that must be considered. Identifying these circumstances and the tools to address them will be part of the public input on this strategy, but below are a few preliminary topics:

Topic	Potential strategies/partners for engagement
Many small RNOs	RNO focus group; stakeholder group; RNO-specific survey
Lack of business organizations away from the Evans corridor	Citywide groups (Denver Chamber of Commerce; Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
Variety of religious communities and organizations	Interfaith alliance; equal opportunities to participate
Proximity to other jurisdictions	Partner with adjacent jurisdictions; Neighborhood-specific approach

Communication

The planning team will communicate often and through multiple channels to create broad awareness of the plan process, ensure transparency, and respond to the specific needs of the community. To raise awareness of the plan and give everyone who wants to participate in the planning process an opportunity to do so, the team will use a variety of communications methods, including:

- Plan website
- Email newsletters
- Registered Neighborhood Organization/neighborhood group communications
- Mailings
- Fliers
- Council office communications
- Social media
- Attending community events
- Pop-up events
- Community navigators
- Connecting with specific communities

Reporting Out

Throughout the process, the plan website will be kept up to date with the current plan status, summaries of recent activity, and next steps. Email newsletters will also be sent periodically to the mailing list with updates on the plan’s progress. Information collected throughout the process will be made available based on the following schedule. As shown in the table below, all information gathered at events will be compiled and posted. Most events will be summarized in a milestone summary report, which will reflect all community input by event type for each plan phase.

Event	Report Format	Type of information that may be included	Time of Report/Public Posting
Advisory Events			
Steering Committee Meeting	Staff Presentation Meeting Minutes	Project analysis, materials, video, chat logs, content, etc.	2 weeks from event
Focus Groups	Summary Reports	Activity Findings Staff Notes	At end of each project phase
Public Participation and Engagement			

Event	Report Format	Type of information that may be included	Time of Report/Public Posting
Community Workshops	Staff Presentations, Summary Reports	Project presentations Summary of event activities (findings) Scanned activity materials (Maps, Boards, Dot Exercises) Transcribed activity public comments Event Photos Staff notes Demographic summary	At end of each project phase
Office Hours	Summary Reports	Staff notes Scanned activity material	At end of each project phase
Pop-up Events	Summary Reports	Staff notes Scanned activity material	At end of each project phase
Neighborhood Tours and Field Assessments	Summary Reports	Staff notes and analysis	At end of each project phase
Surveys	Full Reports	Direct community feedback Demographic summary	At end of each project phase
General Public Meetings (RNOs, community groups, etc.)	Summary Reports	Staff event notes	At end of each project phase
Project Materials			
Public Plan Drafts	Full Reports	Direct community feedback Demographic summary	At end of public review period
Project Phase Engagement Summaries	Summary Reports, Full Reports	Summaries of feedback from all engagement in the plan phase Full reports of all comments from Community Workshops and Surveys	At end of each project phase - 4 weeks after survey closes
Other			
Public Email	Compiled Reports	Feedback submitted via emails.	At end of each project phase

Relevant results from existing conditions reports and technical analyses will also be shared at appropriate stages throughout the process. In addition to making information available on the plan website, documents will be provided in appropriate formats in response to community needs. This includes in languages other than English as described in the language access plan above, as well as hard copies for those without internet access. Requests for alternative formats will be considered and evaluated based on the engagement goals of this strategy.

Progress Tracking

The city will track several metrics and establish performance measures to gauge how well engagement is meeting the goals of this strategy. These measures will be tracked throughout the process and reported on the plan website. Measures to be tracked include:

- Demographics of participants
- Participant sectors (residents, business owners, etc.)
- Number of participants
- Email sign-up and open rates
- Website traffic
- Promotional material distribution locations
- Online tool and social media interactions
- Number of outreach events

Participation

As described above, this strategy is intended to generate participation in the planning process from a broad range of interested parties. Besides those addressed in the Equity section above, the following groups should be active participants in the creation of the plan:

- Residents
- Employees
- Students
- Business owners
- Commercial property owners
- Neighborhood groups
- Advocacy groups

Engagement Tools

The following is a list of the engagement tools that will be employed throughout the process:

Activity/Tool	Description	Anticipated number of meetings/events/activities
Community Workshops	Opportunities to vary location, format, time and date to offer large platforms for engaging with community. They will be virtual and in-person as safety allows.	Four
Surveys	Digital and print opportunities for input. In person exercises will be mirrored online and available digitally and in print. Also includes review and commenting on plan drafts.	Four
Steering Committee	Made up of representatives from across the plan area, the steering committee will provide guidance on the plan process and development, while also serving as	18 meetings

Activity/Tool	Description	Anticipated number of meetings/events/activities
	connections to the community. All meetings will be open to the public.	
Intercept Surveys	Intercept Surveys meet people where they are and provide simple and brief opportunities for input. These activities can also be used to share project information.	As needed
Neighborhood Meetings	Meetings will be held in community establishments (Restaurants/coffee shops, parks, places of worship, schools or recreation centers). Small group interactions will be organized at the neighborhood level.	As needed/as invitations arise
Group Meetings and Stakeholder Engagement	Meetings with existing groups and stakeholders in the area, either at their regular meetings or specially organized events.	One round
Focused Population Engagement	Focused population engagement is tailored to meet needs of underserved or underrepresented groups throughout this process. They may include additional services for accessibility (language, physical ability, cultural), or be intentionally organized to offer easier access to particular groups. The project team will work with area organizations to help organize and support these meetings. See Equity section above.	As needed
Focus Groups	Focus groups will be identified to address key topics and/or key areas throughout the planning process. Focus groups will be intentionally comprised of diverse community members.	Two rounds
Neighborhood Tours and Field Assessments	On-site activities with community members to learn about specific areas or discuss recommendations for those areas.	Two
Community Navigators	Members of the community employed to serve as liaisons between the project team and community groups that traditionally are less engaged in planning processes.	TBD
Community Resource Fairs	Community resource fairs pull in other city departments, organizations, and subject matter experts to create opportunities for the	As needed

Activity/Tool	Description	Anticipated number of meetings/events/activities
	community and builds an understanding of the holistic nature of this planning process. This helps connect residents to community services, resources, and information, and creates opportunities to address pressing neighborhood issues directly and with expediency	
Existing Community Events	Attending events such as town halls, block parties, and community fairs to provide information about the plan and collect input.	As opportunities arise
Office Hours	Specified times where community members can meet one-on-one or in small groups with members of the project team to have their questions answered and provide detailed input.	As needed
Public Hearings	Public meetings before Planning Board and City Council where public comment is taken before decisions are made on adopting the plan.	Minimum of two (Planning Board and City Council)