



Downtown Revitalization Initiative

Public Engagement

The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) is a comprehensive approach to boosting local economies by transforming downtowns and neighborhoods to serve as centers of activity and catalysts for investment. Broad public outreach is important throughout the DRI planning process, as public input will help shape and enhance the plan. Public engagement should be undertaken to inform and educate, to solicit and receive input, and to build support for plan implementation.

Local Planning Committee (LPC) members will play a pivotal role by helping to identify key individuals, organizations, and entities that should be involved in the planning and implementation process and by determining the best way to involve them.

METHODS

Informing and educating the public can be done through formal public meetings and workshops, open houses, websites, social media, presentations at meetings of community organizations, and other means of communication.

Full meetings of the LPC, whether in person or virtual, should be open to the public and held in facilities that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. LPCs are encouraged to provide some opportunity for the public to make comments or otherwise contribute to the planning process. The extent that the public will be able to actively participate in a meeting will depend on the purpose and structure of the meeting. In general, meetings will fall into three categories:

- **LPC Meeting** – These sessions are working meetings conducted by the LPC co-chairs to provide for discussion among the LPC members and presentations on scheduled topics. At the discretion of the LPC, meeting agendas may include time for public comment or other engagement exercises. For example, 15 to 30 minutes could be set aside at the end of the business meeting for public comments.
- **Workshop** – These sessions may be held to solicit ideas from the public, and comments on various planning topics. These public engagement workshops, charrettes, and focus groups are intended to be very interactive, with participation by both the public and LPC members.
- **Open House** – These sessions will be largely conducted by consultants to educate the public and get the public's reactions to information and ideas. LPC members may also be present.

The LPC may form work groups to provide an opportunity for some LPC members to dig deeper into an issue, sometimes with the help of non-committee members such as local businesspersons, labor specialists, academic experts, and neighborhood advocates. Work groups provide an opportunity for brainstorming, building a sense of community spirit and buy-in of the plan, and better time management at LPC meetings.

One-on-one conversations may also take place. Some of these conversations may be scheduled interviews, but others may be more casual, such as encounters with interested citizens outside of a meeting or at a community or school event. While LPC members are free to engage in conversations with people, members should also encourage them to share their ideas in writing or during a public comment session so other committee members can benefit from their input.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The consultant team will work with the LPC to plan for robust public engagement throughout the planning process to enable residents, public and private agencies, community organizations, local businesses, and institutions of learning to work towards a shared vision for a more vibrant downtown. Public engagement should occur early and consistently throughout the process and should encourage participation from a broad and diverse population.

DRI communities are asked to plan a minimum of three public events, whether in person or virtual. Events will be held at important milestones for the project, as described in the public engagement plan, including one event where proposed projects are presented to the public for comment.

A variety of public engagement techniques such as use of social media, traditional media, email blasts, online forums, surveys, and presentations at meetings of local organizations should be used to engage a wide range of participants. Additional activities may include but are not limited to charrettes, surveys, information booths, and storefront information centers. Outreach should include an interactive web presence in addition to the state DRI website that provides meeting notices and other basic program information.

