

Title	Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan
Organizing Group	City of Charlotte, Planning, Design and Development Department
Location	Charlotte, North Carolina
Key Question/Problem	In order to create a Comprehensive Plan that is successful and meaningful, the values and aspirations of the community must be central to the process. This understanding has been at the heart of the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
Sample Methods	Guiding principles are the values that establish a framework for decision-making throughout the life of the 2040 Plan. These principles were conceived through robust and meaningful conversations with over 6,500 voices from the community. The four guiding principles that emerged form the basis for the Plan vision and goals and ensure that the recommendations are in-line with how we as a community want to grow and change in the coming years.
Results	Over 500,000 total interactions; more than 6,500 voices and comments received; over 40 methods of engagement used.
Impact Level	Citywide
Time Frame	3 years
People Engaged	477 key stakeholders were involved, including committees, City Council and the community at large
Web Link	https://cltfuture2040.com/

The Problem and Challenge

Describe the problem and challenge faced and how the question or decision statement for public participation was developed.

The ways in which a community grows go far beyond what should be built and where to include how it should grow and how its residents are affected. As a city in the American Southeast, Charlotte has experienced its share of issues with equity and inclusion. The City has experienced redlining, urban renewal, race-based policies, and exclusion of minority groups from the decision-making processes.

Core Value: How did the project promote sustainable decisions and ensure that the needs and interests of all participants were communicated?

In 2019, the City published a Growth Factors Report to identify growth related trends that have impacted the current demographic, economic and market conditions in Charlotte and which will impact the future of Charlotte. The approach to the report involved analyzing historic and recent growth-related trends to provide an understanding of how Charlotte is growing, compare Charlotte to national peer cities, and set the context for the future of the City as the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan was developed. This Growth Factors Report is a companion report to the Equity Atlas Report that explores equity issues within Charlotte that impact land use and physical development of the city. Summarized in the Equity Atlas Report are the historic implications of social and physical segregation and other issues impacting equitable growth. This report considers a range of additional national and local issues and factors that have shaped the growth patterns and socioeconomic makeup of Charlotte, including overall population growth, urbanization, housing trends, economic conditions, commuting patterns, and environmental trends. The report concludes with considerations for the future and provides a discussion of how these trends can be addressed within the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

As Charlotte created its Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Equity and Inclusion were central themes of the plan policies and public engagement process. The project team incorporated equity into all parts of the plan and worked hard to ensure minority voices were included. From ensuring meeting locations in underrepresented areas, to what policies were recommended, to how the plan will be implemented, equity was included in every step of the

process. With the adoption of the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive plan, new tools are available to residents to help Charlotte become a more inclusive and prosperous community. The Plan lays out an Equitable Growth Framework that builds upon the community's input regarding long-standing disparities and inequities. For many existing policies and resulting practices, equity and the impact on our more vulnerable neighborhoods and residents have been an afterthought. The Comprehensive Plan is crafted through a lens of equity and with a commitment to thinking of our most vulnerable populations first with a vision of help.

The Role of Public Participation

Briefly describe the role of public participation in addressing the problem or challenge.

The development of the Charlotte Future 2040 Plan has been a nearly 3-year process, including eight additional months for review and adoption. This process included significant analysis, community outreach, education, and coordination across departments, organizations, and entities.

Core Value: How did the project ensure that those most affected by the decision or problem were involved?

To ensure that the Plan represents an equitable future for all Charlotteans, the public engagement process was robust, innovative, and inclusive. The planning team engaged many perspectives through a variety of tools so that all Charlotteans could be included at the table. The outreach focused on accessibility and input from groups representing all segments of Charlotte's population, including those we don't hear from often enough – people of color, youth, the elderly, non-English speaking residents, and those with lower incomes.

Core Value: How did the project seek out and facilitate the involvement of those most affected?

Public Participation Methods

Describe the methods used to implement public participation.

City of Charlotte strived to develop and execute an equitable engagement process using a variety of techniques. Our outreach strategy was made uniquely challenging by the pandemic, which started about halfway through the plan development process. We used multiple methods of

communication to meet people where they were and to have discussions in ways that resonated with them, and gaming was one of the critical components. Prior to the pandemic, our outreach methodology included a mix of traditional meetings, social media, pop-up events, and games. During the pandemic, we pivoted to create more socially distant engagement opportunities. The games were particularly successful because they are fun, relatable and a unique way to facilitate dialogue about urban growth issues while illustrating how policy decisions shape the way our city will grow. Our approach was to connect with people in ways that are convenient and comfortable to them.

Digital Engagement:

Online engagement and outreach have always been important to our strategy and are critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our online reach grew substantially throughout the Comprehensive plan process, and citizens demonstrated their excitement to engage in a virtual environment. From social media to a one-of-a-kind Drive-In Workshop there have been over 2 years of events and activities to ensure that the public's voice is heard. The City's Planning Department was recognized by APA's Planning Magazine in April 2022 as providing engagement strategies to include underrepresented segments of the population. Read the article [here](#).

In the fall of 2020, we launched a TikTok challenge as a creative way for the Charlotte community to show what they think matters most for Charlotte over the next 20 years. Engagements, which were over 12,000 total, included views, likes, reactions, comments, and shares.

Gaming for Charlotte

As part of an effort to make the Comprehensive Plan content more accessible to kids of all ages, two games were created. Growing Better Places is a board game designed to facilitate conversations amongst players in order to build consensus about the top priorities for the city, and to allocate new growth across the city based on those policy priorities. Over 1,800 people participated in the in-person and online games!

The Charlotte Future City-Building Game is designed to teach people about core concepts of the plan. As an educational tool, its focus is to help players understand core concepts of the game by reinforcing the relationship between policies, land use, and programs. This game has been particularly successful at connecting with Millennials and GenZ residents, with 74% of participants being under the age of 34. Other key demographics are representative of the city overall, with participants being 31% Black and 13% Hispanic/Latino (as of January 2021). Over 900 people

have requested a copy of the in-person game to play at home, and the online version has over 250 hours of online gameplay (as of January 2021). The city also hosted 7 virtual gaming events for people to play the online version of the game over Zoom.

Core Value: How did the project seek input from participants on how they wished to participate?

Pivoting our Engagement Approach

In 2020, when the world changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we changed with it. We pivoted from in-person to online formats and expand our means of interacting with community members along with our efforts to keep people interested in and informed about the Comprehensive Plan process.

Listening Sessions

In addition to meetings with Ambassadors and Strategic advisors, we hosted 6 virtual listening sessions centered around the topic of equity and economic mobility. Many sessions took place as part of requested meetings from the community, and in total, we heard from 28 community members, organizational leaders, and representatives. Many sessions took place as part of requested meetings from the community and received over 184 comments.

Imagine Charlotte

To better engage Charlotte's under-18 population, which makes up 27% of the city's population, the city partnered with local artist Marcus Kiser to design a coloring sheet that depicts a futuristic version of Charlotte with recreation, and a variety of housing types, and a 2040-branded robot. According to an interview with the Charlotte post, Kiser used "Afrofuturism," as a way to show young people of color that they have a place in the city's future.

The Imagine Charlotte coloring sheets were a two-fold effort to get young people interested in and excited about planning and provided some activities for families stuck at home during the COVID-19 "Stay at Home" orders. In total, over 1,125 sheets were distributed to four elementary schools, two restaurants, an apartment building, and four community organizations.

Drive-In Community Workshop

To celebrate the launch of the Charlotte Future 2040 Public Review Draft Plan, the City held a day-long Drive-In Workshop, where community members, spread out over four 1-hour long

sessions, could learn about the Draft Plan, ask questions, and be directed to opportunities to comment on the document, all while watching the movie *Back to the Future*, which was screened drive-in style.

The event was designed to be fun, family-friendly, and functional, creating excitement about the Plan and delivering all information and resources participants would need to learn more and provide feedback. The drive-in format created a sense of community and connection while being completely COVID-safe, and in total over 500 Charlotteans attended.

Getting the Word Out

We kicked our distribution strategy on Election Day 2020, where city staff distributed over 500 Executive Summaries and digital copies of the entire draft plan spread out over 12 polling locations. The Draft Plan was also made available in each of Charlotte's 19 libraries and staff distributed flyers sharing how Charlotteans can leave feedback to over 70 businesses across all 7 city council districts. Further distribution plans include creating distribution little libraries, located at city parks, police stations, and libraries, among others.

Virtual Open House

Residents were able to explore the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan in the online Virtual Open House. This new, interactive experience details foundational research supporting the plan contents along with plan concepts and goals. This information is explained by staff via recorded video.

Project Results

Core Value: How was the outcome of the project influenced by the public's contributions?

The community's contribution influence heavily the results of the Comprehensive Plan. First with the creation of the Equitable Growth Framework on which the entire plan is crafted using an equity lens. Second, with the changes suggested regarding some of the most critical plan policies including those affecting housing and neighborhoods. And lastly, with the adoption process itself as the public was given additional time from the original intended approval date to provide additional input and voice their concerns.

How did the information provided to participants support or contribute to meaningful participation?

Through the public engagement process, we were able to interact with over 500,000 people and receive over 6,500 comments. Staff distributed over 500 Executive Summaries and digital copies of the entire draft plan. Residents were able to explore the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan in the online Virtual Open House. This new, interactive experience details foundational research supporting the plan contents along with plan concepts and goals. This information is explained by staff via recorded video.

How did the communication of the project results ensure that participants knew how their input affected the decision or addressed the problem?

The public was kept abreast of what comments had been submitted and what changes resulted from those comments throughout the entire Comprehensive Plan process. The City's project website included published comments and their intended resolutions as well as the revised versions of the plan. This made for a transparent process and demonstrated to the community that their individual concerns were being heard and addressed.

Creative

Project Website: cltfuture2040.com



CF2040 Board Game



Community Workshop



Festival Pop-Up



Community Event Pop Up



Election Day Info Distribution



Festival Pop-Up



Community Open House



Drive In Open House



Media Interviews



Ambassadors & Strategic Advisors Meeting



Drive In Open House