

Public Engagement Plan



Prepared for:
City of Farmers Branch

Prepared by:
Stantec

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1.0 Purpose

The City of Farmers Branch is beginning the process of engaging community members and stakeholders to envision the future of Farmers Branch through an update to the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this public engagement plan is to create a customized engagement strategy that defines timing, strategies, appropriate audiences, and responsibilities for each phase of engagement. The engagement process will educate the public and stakeholders on the purpose and importance of a Comprehensive Plan and will give participants a chance to meaningfully participate in shaping the vision and goals for Farmers Branch over the next ten years. This Public Engagement Plan is meant to be a working document that will be updated throughout the planning process as the work evolves.

2.0 Goals and Intended Outcomes

Through our past experiences, we have learned that public engagement must be meaningful and focused on enriching the planning process and recommendations to be valuable to the project and the public. Our engagement approach, as well as our proactive stance, will help to ensure your success in reaching out to and communicating with different segments of the public. A key part of engagement is a “no jargon” philosophy, particularly for a high-level policy plan like a Comprehensive Plan. We will make extensive use of graphics to translate complex ideas and the design process in every phase of the project.

2.1 Engagement Goals

The first step is to set commonly understood goals for how stakeholders are involved and decisions are made to arrive at a successful outcome for the Farmers Branch Comprehensive Plan. These goals are the backbone of the engagement process and will help shape the tools we use to connect with stakeholders. In other words, every meeting, survey, interview, or tour will be derived from and contribute to these goals. We propose the process is guided by these engagement goals:

Engage in meaningful and relevant dialogue – Stakeholders should feel that the dialogue has been meaningful and relevant to their interests and daily lives.

Prioritize inclusive representation – The perspectives and participation of a broad range of stakeholders should be equitably represented in the process and resulting plan.

Provide access to information and opportunities – The public should have the information they need to participate in ways that are appropriate to their experiences and lifestyles.

Make sure contributions have impact – Stakeholders should feel their input has been thoughtfully considered and see their contributions reflected in the plan.

Create empowering experiences – Community leadership and capacity should be built through the process.

2.2 Outcomes

Goal	Outcome
Meaningful and relevant dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement activities were designed with 2, 5, and 10-minute interactions in mind. • Conversations were focused on how the plan results can positively impact the daily lives and interests of participants. • Activities were facilitated by Stantec, K Strategies, and City staff consistently with facilitation guides, trainings, and other tools.
Inclusive representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-traditional promotion for engagement activities has been used. • Attended or hosted events geared toward underrepresented audiences. • Utilized interprets at events.
Access to information and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants had access to decision-makers throughout the process. • Other City initiatives and events were advertised through the Comprehensive Plan process when feasible. • Different channels (social media, email, telephone forum, flyer drops) and languages (Spanish) were used to provide access to info and opportunities
Contributions with impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final plan reflects community feedback. • The final plan includes feedback quotes and photo documentation of process.
Empowering experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants learned how the comprehensive planning process works, and how planning decisions are made. • Participants attended more than one event.



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3.0 Outreach Schedule

We estimate the schedule for the proposed project to be a 15-month timeframe as recommended by City staff. The contract was approved May 3, 2022 and initial data gathering has been going on since then. Concurrently, this Public Engagement Plan has been under development and will be unveiled to City leadership on July 11. We anticipate approval of the Comprehensive Plan and the delivery of final documents by October 2023.

4.0 Key Audiences

There are many key audiences to consider when designing engagement for a comprehensive planning process. The list below is not all encompassing and is intended to change throughout the process as key groups and audiences are identified.

General Public

The general public encompasses any residents, workers, and visitors of the city that do not identify with a specific group or organization. Outreach to this broad group may be accomplished where everyday life happens – at parks, gas stations, transit stops, in the grocery store, a strip mall’s parking lot, or walking down the street. In an online engagement format, the public can participate from the comfort of their home or mobile device, allowing people to participate on their own schedule.

Residents

Residents, including homeowners and renters, have widely different perspectives on cost of living, housing conditions, and neighborhood amenities. Some residents can choose where they live while others have limited options due to limited means. Homeowners are more connected to their neighborhood groups and more likely to attend traditional community meetings than renters since renters have the flexibility to move more often, and therefore the public engagement process will need to reach out to renters through non-traditional methods like flier drops or coordinating on-site activities with property management.

Property Owners

People who own homes or other properties in Farmers Branch encompass a wide breadth of interests depending on the type of use – residential, office, retail, industrial, mixed-use – and size of their sites. Large property owners likely have staff or representation through property management companies and therefore have potentially more flexibility to participate in engagement events. Residential property owners include owners of smaller

units and duplexes up to large rental complexes and may be connected to the City of Farmers Branch already through rental license programs. Industrial property owners are usually the owners of the on-site business and may not have direct lines of connection to government.

Developers and Brokers

Developers invest in and develop properties. Brokers market them and serve as the bridge to ultimate users. Most developers have a specialty such as housing (rental, ownership, or affordable), industrial, commercial, or historic rehabilitation. They tend to work in a sub-market where they own a lot of property, have a market-tested development model, and/or understand the political climate. They will be interested in a vision for how and where the City anticipates development opportunities and how those affect the growth of their own business. Brokers are highly attuned to market conditions and expectations, whether they are dealing with residential or commercial properties, for sale or lease. Their insights about what drives value, where demand is short of supply, and what contextual elements are key to achieving enduring value are important inputs.

Small Business Owners

Small business owners include people running brick-and-mortar businesses or entrepreneurs working from home or a co-working location. Those who own a physical business may be connected to a business group like the Farmers Branch or Metrocrest Chambers of Commerce who represents their interests. Those who work independently, without a physical storefront, likely have different goals and opinions on the city's future and may choose to get involved during off-hours through an interactive website.

Institutions

Institutions can be colleges and universities, churches, theaters, hospitals and other organizations with physical property assets. Institutions perform a certain function as a destination for students and residents, which in turn require them to be physically recognizable through branding or signage. As destinations, institutions also need to be accessible by transit, biking, walking, and driving. Institutional partners may be interested in engaging through an interactive website and small group discussions. Attending already organized events may also be an effective outreach effort as well as online engagement.

Cultural Organizations

Cultural organizations are agencies that represent people who share one or more unique characteristics, such as race, national origin, ethnicity, or religion. This includes organizations that assist immigrant populations in Farmers Branch and other historically



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underserved populations like the Carrollton-Farmers Branch Hispanic Chamber of Commerce or Unidos. While not all people who share a cultural characteristic may be involved with a representative organization, official cultural organizations can be an effective stakeholder to assist in engaging their members in this visioning and planning process.

Hispanic Population

More than 45 percent of Farmers Branch's residents identify as having a Hispanic origin. These are stakeholders that should be engaged directly on the future of Farmers Branch. Important to the process will be translating material, adding a Spanish portal on the website, including interpretation at meetings, working with Spanish-language media outlets to promote engagement events, and engaging at churches with Spanish services.

Youth and Families

A comprehensive plan is particularly relevant for youth and young families because they are most likely to be the city residents, employees, and visitors of the future. The engagement process could reach them in person through games or activities at local parks, or online via virtual public engagement on their own time. Determining what will keep them in Farmers Branch will be important.

Seniors

Senior citizens may be Farmers Branch residents, work full- or part-time in the city, or visit Farmers Branch to go to a restaurant or other destination. Many senior residents are aging in place in homes where they raised their families, while others live in residential facilities that can take care of their daily needs. The population of seniors will continue growing with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation, so the voices and needs of seniors should be drivers in the engagement process. Customized outreach efforts may be required to reach seniors. As a vulnerable population during the COVID-19 pandemic, safety will be an important consideration when engaging with senior citizens.

Boards and Commissions

The City of Farmers Branch has several boards and commissions that will play varying roles in the Comprehensive Plan engagement process, including the Planning & Zoning Commission. City Boards and Commissions may be invited to represent the City at engagement events and the Planning & Zoning Commission will be in an official review capacity in the plan approval process. Other potential boards and commissions to engage could include the Sustainability Committee, Youth Advisory Council, Senior Advisory Board, Arts & Culture Committee, Library Board, Historical Preservation and Restoration Board, Park & Recreation Board, and DART.

Advocacy Organizations

Groups that are passionate about topics like public art, parks and trails, economic development, and the environment should be involved in long-range planning projects like this comprehensive plan. Advocacy organizations may be invited to focus group discussions, asked to host meetings related to their topic of interest, or help spread the word about community workshops through their social media outlets.

Employees

Farmers Branch has a large population of employees that commute to its more than 250 corporate headquarters. This audience is harder to engage due to the transient nature of their relationship with Farmers Branch but are a valuable audience for understanding potential service and housing needs in Farmers Branch. For example, employees who do not live in Farmers Branch have a unique perspective on a lack of housing options that are impeding their ability to live closer to their jobs. Reaching this audience where they work will garner the best input.

Transit Users

Transit users can be Farmers Branch residents, employees, or visitors. Many people ride transit because they have no other options and therefore where they live, work, and get their daily needs done matter to their overall livability. Opportunities to gain valuable feedback from this audience can be accomplished through riding the bus or engaging at transit facilities. Stantec and K Strategies will also consider ways to promote engagement activities such as through bus announcements and bus advertisements (QR code). Any transit interactions should be coordinated through DART.

5.0 Project Advisory Structure

The input gathered through this engagement process will inform major milestones of the Comprehensive Planning process and how Council and Planning and Zoning Commission review and approve this plan.

Technical Advisory Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee will provide advice throughout the process on current City policies, procedures, and regulations to make sure the work is realistic and has the longevity and buy-in to be implemented from the moment it is approved. The TAC members will include:

1. Department heads and key staff



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2. Two members from DART

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee will include representatives from different community sectors/institutions, community members, and other stakeholders. This group will guide the entire planning process, review draft material, and provide input on the engagement process as it evolves. Stakeholder Advisory Committee members include:

1. Two members from the City Council
2. Two members of Planning & Zoning Commission
3. One member each from relevant boards (6)
4. Five community members appointed by City Council members (except the Mayor)

6.0 Outreach Techniques

This plan's goals and outcomes are the touchstones to gauge an effective plan that has buy-in and support from the community. The City of Farmers Branch hopes all the identified engagement methods offer opportunities for meaningful and relevant dialogue, are inclusive, provide participants with access to information and opportunities, participants can see how their contributions have impact, and participants have an empowering experience.

Project Webpage

Many people use the web to stay up to date on current events, including what is happening in their own backyard. The project web page will be hosted on the City's website and will be used as an information portal for project updates, promotion and summarizing of outreach activities, and information on the decision-making process. The web page will include a Spanish-language portal and/or comprehensive Spanish-language material.

Community Workshops

Public meetings should be fun, interactive, and accessible. Most stakeholders that attend a community meeting are those with a strong interest in the Comprehensive Plan and who lack barriers to attending such as time, childcare, and language barriers. The project team will design public meetings that eliminate as many barriers to participation as possible by providing refreshments, formatting the meetings to be family-friendly, designing creative engagement tools, offering interpretation and translation if needed, and offering many ways to provide feedback. City staff will be responsible for identifying and securing locations. The Stantec team will provide all material and activities for the

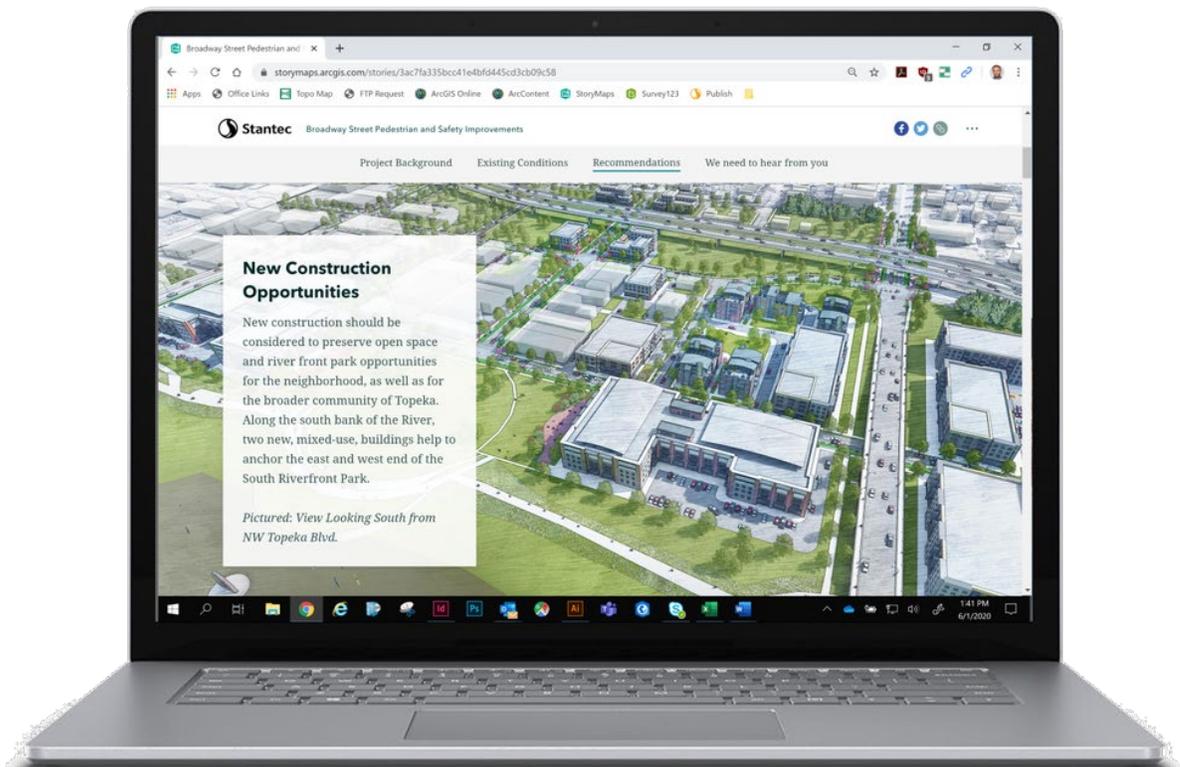
community workshops for review and approval during each public outreach phase of the project.

Focus Groups/Listening Sessions

This engagement method offers the project team an opportunity not to just give a presentation and take questions, but actively listen to the concerns of stakeholder interest groups such as property owners, institutional partners, business owners, specialists in some of the project topics, real estate specialists, and others. Some of these stakeholders will provide robust feedback in small group discussions and others may be more honest if in an individual interview.

Story Maps

Story Maps are an engaging and effective online engagement tool to bring a user through the story of your project that may include narrative, interactive and static maps, survey questions, videos, infographics, and more. Standard online engagement allows a participant to interact with the project's content and questions at their speed but it often lacks the context someone would gain during in-person engagement. Story mapping is the best of both worlds. An online survey will usually be paired with the interactive online map – or all encompassed within a Story Map – to ask more detailed questions in reaction to work done so far or in preparation for decisions to come. Surveys will be available on



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the project webpage. We will also publish “quick polls” or short surveys of one or two key questions along the way; these quick polls present information in easily-managed chunks and do not require much time for stakeholders to respond.

An example of a Story Map from a planning process in Topeka, KS.

Pop-Up Events

A kiosk can be set up in vacant lots, parks, or for outdoor events. This method will draw key audiences such as residents, youth, and families. The display will be designed to start a conversation about a specific topic and allow participants to interact with each other and Plan representatives. This method can employ large colorful artwork or interactive pieces such as chalkboards for users to provide feedback on the planning process. Interactions with the public are usually short and designed to focus on quick descriptions and quick feedback. K Strategies will develop a list of priority events or activities to pair with a Pop-up event along with locations to reach traditionally underrepresented stakeholders. Some priority events may include Chalk the Park, Come Fly a Kite, and Denton Drive Live.

Walkshops/Bikeshops

A walkshop or bikeshop offers the opportunity for a small group of people to experience the public realm first-hand. Particularly beneficial for considering design options, the group can interact with existing conditions opportunities and constraints and then offer recommendations for improvements. Participants should be provided with an evaluation tool such as a workbook, urban planning zine, or survey. This is most beneficial as plan recommendations are being developed and refined with public input.

Community Ambassador Program

Stantec and K Strategies will work with the City to pilot a community ambassador program as a unique approach that invites a small group of residents/stakeholders to participate in the process at an enhanced level and serve as ambassadors for the comprehensive plan update, particularly among harder to reach populations. This program will create Champions of the Comprehensive Plan through a grass-roots approach. This task will include providing training in communicating and engaging about the comprehensive plan process and focused on a particular critical question or phase of the project. They would be expected to help spread awareness through their network of friends, neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances. Potential candidates for the ambassador program would include neighborhood leaders, non-profit organization leaders, professionals and students in fields related to planning and land development.

Meeting in a Box

Meeting-in-a-Box is designed for community groups, neighborhood organizations, or friends to gather at a convenient time and location to share their opinions about the future of Farmers Branch. The kit contains an agenda template, attendee sign-in sheet, surveys, group questions, and project contact information. The individual deploying the method then collects the items and submits it back to aggregate and summarize. This tool will likely be an essential part of the Community Ambassador Program.

Implementation Workshop

To help make the handoff from plan to implementation, we will convene a workshop for people/agency representatives who may play a leadership role in implementing aspects of the plans. We invite them to roll up their sleeves and think through implementation opportunities and challenges. They identify potential challenges that will be faced in implementing the plan, and brainstorm approaches to surmounting those challenges. They talk through the roles that different parties might play in implementation and the very first steps that might be taken.

Social Media

People are busy but want to stay connected in a way that works best for them. We will work with the City's Communication Director to use social media to promote input opportunities and solicit feedback. Stantec and K Strategies will be responsible for crafting the content. The goal for the project's social media presence is to promote attendance at outreach events and participation in virtual engagement tools. The City of Farmers Branch has accounts with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram along with a YouTube channel.

7.0 Project Phases

This process has been designed in three phases:

1. Discovery and Preliminary Engagement
2. Vision and Plan Development
3. Plan Review, Refinement and Adoption

This section will be updated prior to and after each phase of engagement as a detailed work plan. This detail will include schedules/agendas, engagement questions, key messages, specific audiences, and finalized activities.



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Phase 1 - Discovery and Preliminary Engagement

Our approach to engagement during this phase will focus on informing the public about the comprehensive planning process and gaining broad insights about the vision for Farmers Branch for the next 20 years. Information provided to stakeholders during this phase will include the Community Profile, trends in community-wide planning, and a synthesis of existing plans. Priority activities for this phase of engagement include:

- Kicking off project with the TAC and SAC with roles and responsibilities
- Project website setup
- Community Ambassador Program establishment
- Media engagement/promotion
- Vision and Goals Development – 2 days of engagement
 - TAC and SAC meetings
 - Story Map
 - Interactive community workshop
 - Topical focus groups (2)
 - Pop-up events (2 completed by K Strategies)

Phase 2 – Vision and Plan Development

Based on all the input received during Phase 1, Stantec will draft a Vision Statement, Values and Goals to be used to guide the drafting of the comprehensive plan. The Second phase of engagement will be used to vet that vision framework and utilize it to influence initial analysis of future land use, mobility, housing, and economic development. Stantec and K Strategies will facilitate a wide variety of opportunities to engage the public over three days of activities. Priority activities for this phase of engagement include:

- Project website updates
- Community Ambassador Program implementation
- TAC and SAC meetings to vet vision framework and plan structure
- Meeting-in-a-box setup
- Plan Elements Engagement – 3 days of engagement

- TAC and SAC meetings
- Story Map
- Topical Focus Groups (up to 6)
- Walkshops or bikeshops (up to 4)
- Pop-up events (2 completed by K Strategies)

Phase 3 – Plan Review, Refinement and Adoption

In the final phase of the project, the priority for engagement will be gaining input on the draft comprehensive plan. Priority activities for this phase of engagement include:

- Project website updates
- TAC and SAC meetings to vet the draft plan
- Draft Plan Engagement – 2 days of engagement
 - Story Map
 - Listening session (1)
 - Planning and Zoning Commission/City Council Workshop
 - Implementation Workshop
- Planning and Zoning Commission presentation
- City Council presentation and adoption

8.0 Promotion and Communications

Engagement will only be as effective as its promotion to diverse audiences and key messaging about why involvement matters. In coordination with the City’s Communications Director, the City and its partners will utilize this list (and maybe more) to promote the activities associated with each engagement push. Stantec and K Strategies will support these efforts by writing or designing the communication.

The list of priority communications outlets include:

- Social Media
 - Farmers Branch Facebook, Twitter, Instagram accounts



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- Farmers Branch YouTube video content
- Farmers Branch newsletters – one that goes to employees and one to the residents
- Project website
- Spanish media radio – Saturday Community Hour
- Spanish language print media
- Flyer drops
- Community board posters
- Bus announcements and bus advertisements (QR code)

9.0 Documentation of Outreach Efforts

Documentation of each step of the engagement process will be critical in defining the direction and priorities for the comprehensive plan as well as better understanding which stakeholder groups are being reached. For each event or activity, Stantec will document:

1. What methods were used?
2. Who participated?
3. What information was provided?
4. What questions or issues were identified?
5. What feedback was received?
6. How was the feedback collected and analyzed?
7. What decisions did this input influence?

This documentation will shape the content process for each successive phase of engagement. At the end of each phase, an Engagement Summary will be written to answer the questions outlined above. With the goal of complete transparency, documentation of all engagement activities as well as the Engagement Summaries will be available on the project website.

Criteria and Techniques

Based on the type of engagement and following certain selection criteria to ensure data integrity and usability, a list of possible documentation techniques has been chosen for this study.

- Comment Cards
- Six-Word Stories
- Sign-in Sheet
- Engagement Summary
- Debriefing
- Topical and Process Surveys
- Visual Preference Survey
- Voting Software/Hardware
- Mapping
- Photos and Videos
- Flip Charts

The documentation techniques outlined above is not the final list and can be adjusted accordingly. Informal engagement methods such as Pop-Up Events will require unique documentation techniques based upon key audiences and the types of events that are held.

