

Successful Planning Processes

Communities are made up of people with different needs, expectations, and backgrounds. There are business persons and stay-at-home moms; recent immigrants and residents with deep roots; property owners and renters; young and old.

Planning, properly done, can bring a community together to establish a shared vision and a way to achieve that vision.

Communities set the direction in which they want to go and the tone and content of discussion through the planning process.

Steps in the Planning Process

Each planning process, like each community, is unique. There is no “one size fits all” way of preparing for the future. However, in GTC’s experience, public processes that result in successful plans share the following essential steps:

- Identify issues to be resolved, from the beginning and throughout the process.
- Inventory existing and future socioeconomic, environmental, and infrastructure conditions.
- Assess needs and opportunities relative to the issues to be resolved and conditions.
- Formulate alternatives to address the needs and maximize the opportunities.

- Choose the preferred alternative(s) that provides the most benefits relative to costs.

Every community should ask the same questions, but not expect the same answers

In other words, every community should ask the same questions, but not expect the same answers.

Questions

What are some of the questions?

Do neighbors have convenient opportunities to meet one another?

Are most shopping areas inviting?

Can some daily needs be met by walking?

Can residents bike safely to parks, schools, or other places?

Where do people like to gather? Can we get there without driving?

What are the resources that truly define our community, that we must protect and make more accessible?

What economic uses are dependent on vehicles, and how do we incorporate this with other considerations?

Successful Planning Processes

As communities work through these types of questions — and there most likely will be many others — they begin to commit themselves to creating thriving communities for current and future residents while enabling economic prosperity.

The recommended process is a framework for analyzing questions in their proper context. It helps communities to avoid overlooking or overemphasizing important issues and to recognize connections and relationships between transportation, land use, and quality of life.

Getting People Together

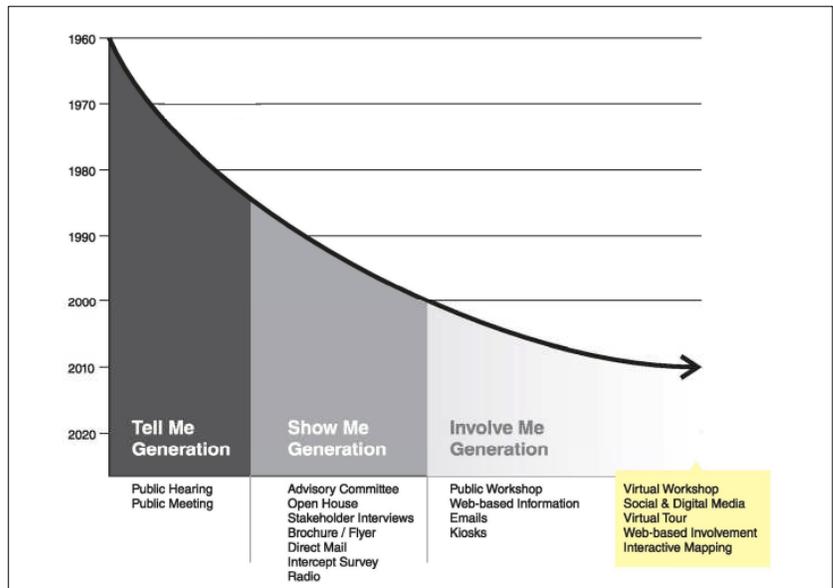
Although American democracy cherishes public input, getting people to participate in public events is not a given. People want their views to be heard, but that doesn't mean they will show up at a particular time and place. Communities must engage their residents in planning in creative ways.

There are many different ways to engage citizens, and not all of them are appropriate for every situation. A survey, interactive website, workshop, focus group, design charrette, citizens advisory board — even a

pancake breakfast or pot-luck supper — can be effective means of getting people together to discuss the future of their community. It all depends on the details of the particular situation, the character of the community, and what is to be accomplished.

Resources

The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, a network of 1,600 groups and professionals in the fields of public engagement, conflict resolution, and collaboration, has defined a set of core principles for what constitutes effective public engagement: www.ncdd.org



People in different age groups respond most positively to different outreach efforts

Source: Innovative Public Engagement Techniques for Transportation Projects, Kittelson & Associates for the Transportation Research Board, 2010

- Genesee Transportation Council - October 2012