



Triangle J Council of
Governments

Smart Growth Collaborative & Water Resources Collaborative Joint Meeting

Meeting Focus: Equitable Development

Thursday, December 12, 2019

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Triangle J Council of Governments

4307 Emperor Blvd, Durham NC 27703

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions from the Co-Chairs

*Wendy Jacobs, Durham County and Steve Rao, Morrisville | Smart Growth Collaborative
TJ Cawley, Morrisville and Lori Bush, Cary | Water Resources Collaborative*

2. Presentation on Community and Social Equity in Downtown Development

Carl Kolosna, Senior Planner at Durham City-County Planning Department

The ENGAGEDurham program was born from public input and concern regarding previous projects and initiatives that may not have considered equity as well as possible. The program helps ensure that any projects/efforts from the City and County of Durham take into account how they may impact all communities and social groups. The Equitable Engagement Blueprint is the path forward for implementation of this program in the area.

- One pillar of the program is a robust outreach and engagement efforts, such as promoting and ensuring diverse attendance at public meetings for new projects.
- Another is to make sure technical, complex, jargon-y, or confusing information or scenarios are conveyed clearly and in an understandable way to all groups.
- Comprehensive Plan and Transit Plan directly impacted by this equitable effort. ENGAGEDurham intends to be malleable and adaptive to adjust the program and projects as public comments are received.
 - Public meetings for the Plans have been fundamentally re-thought to break the mold– 10-15k contacts were approached to join the outreach team, to break down real or perceived barriers to public participation, and to build justification and communication tools to use when convincing the communities to participate.
 - They hold meetings near transit routes, provide food, childcare, and Spanish interpretation/written materials to ‘meet people where they are’ as much as possible. However, they still need to overcome participants’ perceptions about how their input will be used, as well as communicating realistically when input will have an impact on plans (ie, it’s not immediate!)
 - They leave the worksheets and other questionnaires open-ended to be able to hear what is actually important and what comes up organically in a free platform for the community members.

- They make sure that outreach staff are truly engaged and listening at these meetings, rather than having a prescribed ‘agenda’—“listening and learning sessions.”
- Held five meetings between 40-120 attendees, that asked only two questions:
 - What does an ideal Durham look like to you?
 - What else is on your mind about Durham?
- Survey results show significant improvement from previous public engagement efforts, but still skewed white, English-speaking, and affluent compared to comprehensive Durham demographics.
- Additional work is needed to overcome this disparity and connect with other groups and encourage their participation. Training and deploying ambassadors for the community, who will be paid to host meetings with their own networks, on their own time.
- Jen asks if any proposed plan components have been changed based on feedback?
 - Carl – not really, because the intent is to flip the process on its head, so that there isn’t a proposed plan that they are running by the community, but the reverse.
- Michael Palmer asks – how are you dealing with comments/responses that aren’t directly related to the Plans, but needs to be addressed by someone? (staff, electeds, etc.)
 - Carl – we are summarizing the data and will present some to Council/Commission and/or other groups that need to know and respond to that information.
 - Wendy Jacobs – the next step for this effort is exciting, going out to meet people where they are (grocery stores, bus stops, etc.) and paying people who wouldn’t normally have the means to devote to this important work.
 - An idea that came up repeatedly in listening sessions was reimagining existing single-use development close to major employment centers, such as Hillsborough Rd in Durham, as mixed-use development so that people could easily walk or bike to work.

3. Presentation on Equity and Climate Change in a Time of Growth

Heather Keefer, Executive Director at WakeUP Wake County

WakeUP is working on how the issues of climate change, equity, and density overlap, blend, and are connected. They want to address the fact that when growth and development issues are pressing, climate change may not be a top priority. They want to ensure it is still a consideration since it impacts marginalized populations far more than others. Recently hired a young, outgoing, and connected person of color for their outreach coordinator, and have significant subject matter expertise on staff to help speak to the issues.

Rely heavily on volunteer committees and other volunteers, so work hard to ensure those speaking and working on their behalf share and convey their values and missions.

Some outreach considerations:

- Envision their role as being in-between ‘grass roots’ and ‘grass tops’

- Work hard to educate public (voters) and decision-makers about equity and development, and speak up for good growth policy.
- Work hard to reach the people where they are – might even bring back the concept of full neighborhood canvassing!
- Obstacles include digital overload, survey exhaustion, language barriers, leading questions, and other issues that may mask or skew responses.
- Focus on having a comprehensive messaging approach.
- Frequently use a ‘mirror map’, a magnetic engagement tool that gets people engaged
 - They often ask basic questions like ENGAGEDurham does. Simply: “What’s missing in your neighborhood?”
 - Transportation?
 - Housing?
 - Food?
 - Other? (recreation a common response)
- Looking to find funding/minigrants to support and enable diverse outreach, such as childcare, salaries for ambassadors, food at meetings, etc.
- Wendy asks – does WakeUP work directly with racial equity?
 - Heather – internally, certainly. We developed a diversity plan for our own operations, and then work closely with Raleigh and Wake County to keep racial diversity considerations at the forefront.
 - It’s important to have a suite of tools, since no policy or program will be a best fit for all communities/situations.
 - WakeUP recently started focusing on smaller, more targeted events to better enable relationship building. By working with existing organizational partners in community, they hope to tap into broader networks.
- Alisha Goldstein – Chapel Hill currently dealing with the conflict between the need and desire to put in affordable housing, but most require stormwater variances because they are in floodzones
 - Wendy – elevate!!
 - Alisha - the cost is too high compared to ‘normal’ development. Additional considerations for emergency access in the event of expected flooding.

4. Questions & Open Discussion

Lessons learned and best practices for equitable community engagement

Jen asks - how were Durham City and County officials convinced to invest in EngageDurham?

- Wendy - it didn't take much convincing; they wanted to come up with the best plan possible. Engagement budget was a drop in the bucket compared to impact it has.
- Jen - how do we share those best practices with Raleigh, Wake, CH, etc?

Outreach tools:

- Steve – Podcasts, social media, radio (allows people to ‘participate’ from home)
- Alisha – low tech approaches worked for GoTriangle, including ambassadors riding the bus and talking to people
- NCDOT – lots of ‘job fair’ or ‘hub’ meetings where they hold one meeting to discuss lots of different projects within a certain radius, to try to reach groups multiple times at once.

- Liz Johnson – Morrisville recently updated their transportation plan and utilized a ‘transportation feedback box’ that was a kit that could be used by anyone, anywhere to gather feedback at any time, anywhere, even at a non-transportation related event.
 - Steve – we use this to try to hear more from the ‘silent majority’.
 - ENGAGEDurham is utilizing similar toolkits, refreshments, and pay to endorse this approach as well.
 - WakeUP utilizing ‘minigrants’ to accomplish the same goal.
- Cy – how does WakeUP overcome the bias/perception that the organization is simply white and part of the establishment?
 - Heather – a constant work in progress! Internally, went through a grassroots nonprofit leadership academy.

Impacts of equitable engagement on equitable outcomes:

- John asks – EngageDurham has spent a lot of time implementing equitable input process; have you begun designing how to measure outcomes on the back end—ie, in which parts of the community investments have been made?
 - Carl – Equitable engagement and equitable outcomes are two separate and challenging efforts. It’s key that the public co-develop the engagement process with Outreach Team, who responded in real time to incorporate public input to improve the process, which builds trust.
 - EngageDurham process intends to “flip the script” so that public input colors choices the city makes about development. Durham is at the beginning stages of the process so stay tuned for concrete examples in future.
 - Durham has Comp Plan broke up into portions so that some can be adopted sooner, so that the public will see the impact of their input in the short term. i.e., goals/vision statements to be adopted next year, and used as criteria to review potential decisions such as zoning map changes.
 - Wendy – it’s important to clearly communicate to the community that all choices have tradeoffs; ie, more density may mean fewer trees and more stormwater.
 - Maya asks—what tools or examples do we have to lead to equitable outcomes, especially in engaging with private developers/landowners?
 - Wendy – The affordable housing density bonus is one of our best tools.
- Jen asks – what can we learn from how the Durham-Orange LRT project turned out?
 - John – while the project was unsuccessful, the equitable communities’ components were extremely successful, and the project overall would have been a critical tool for addressing poverty in the region. The outreach and equity considerations were the strongest part of the proposed work- principally, a match of \$45M from federal funding that would have gone to affordable housing and other equity initiatives.
 - Alisha – are there next steps?
 - Carl/Wendy – the ENGAGEDurham effort is utilizing a lot of principles and groundwork from the Durham-Orange LRT project. With the new transit plan, everything is on the table.

2020 Meeting Calendar

Mark your calendars! The meeting schedule for 2020 has been set. All meetings will be held 2-4pm @ TJCOG.

Thursday, March 5th - Water Resources Collaborative (Topic TBD)

Thursday, March 12th - Smart Growth Collaborative - Development Trends

Thursday, June 11th - Joint Smart Growth & Water Resources Collaborative meeting (Topic TBD)

Thursday, September 10th - Joint Smart Growth & Water Resources Collaborative meeting (Topic TBD)

Thursday, December 10th - Joint Smart Growth & Water Resources Collaborative meeting (Topic TBD)