How to Engage

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Advisory Committees
A representative group of typically volunteer stakeholders are convened to guide a planning effort over an extended period of time. To ensure that membership is representative, be sure to include hard to reach populations such as youth, immigrants and low-income individuals or advocates.

Charrettes
A facilitated multiple-day process that includes interested stakeholders. Participants develop solutions that address potential concerns simultaneously.

Focus Groups
Small groups of stakeholders brought together for a limited amount of time to provide their knowledge of a project/area and discuss their concerns.

Participatory Mapping
Residents identify community assets, needs and opportunities on a large photo aerial map of the community. Participants can be encouraged to use sticky dots, markers or other similar items.

Scenario Planning
A visioning process during which the public helps a local agency generate proposed alternatives future growth and development. Computer-based modeling tools are often used.

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- Public Engagement
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Land Use Planning Resources
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- SB 375 Resource Center www.ca-ilg.org/sb-375-resource-center

Acknowledgments
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- Ron Gould, City Manager, City of Santa Monica
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Who is Involved
Everyone is affected by land use decisions. However, because planning issues can be complex, residents are often unaware of how, where and when to get involved. Local officials and planning staff have the opportunity to harness community interest by encouraging the public to actively participate in the planning process.

Typical land use decisions involve the following:

- **City Council / Board of Supervisors**: A legislative group of elected residents that oversees local government operations.
- **Developer / Applicant**: Any person, firm or entity which seeks local agency approvals for all or part of a development project.
- **General Public / Community**: A diverse group of people that may or may not share the same set of goals and concerns.
- **Interest Groups / Stakeholders**: Organizations or individuals with an identifiable stake in the issue focused on a particular priority (i.e. agriculture, business and environment).
- **Planning Commission**: A committee of residents who have been appointed by your city council or county board of supervisor to review and consider land use matters such as general plans, rezoning, use permits and subdivisions. There are also other boards and commissions, such as the architectural review board that can be involved in the process.

Planning Staff
Public employees that administer zoning ordinance and general plan provisions and provide technical planning services to a local agency. Additional local agency staff (such as public works, police, fire and building departments) often advise planners during the review process.

Why Community Engagement Matters
Public engagement processes can take time and scarce resources to implement effectively. They are not always appropriate in all situations; however, there are many practical reasons to engage residents in planning.

Better Identification of the Public’s Values
Increased Civility
Reduced Risk of Legal Challenge
Faster and more Streamlined Project Implementation
More Informed Residents
Improved decision-making
Higher Rates of Community Participation and Leadership Development

“Involve the public early in the front end of designing a public a process and be open to what the public wants to do. If you go in with a clear vision of what you want out of it people will sense that and get angry.

Involving the public in a planning process builds credibility and support for changes that are implemented.”

– ROD GOULD, CITY MANAGER, CITY OF SANTA MONICA
What is Land Use Planning

Land use planning determines how communities are built and what you can do with your property. Competing demands for the same space and resources can generate conflict. Local officials must balance these competing demands as they make decisions impacting the future of their communities. This publication focuses on land use planning at the local level where residents can easily be involved in, and impact, the process.

The fields of land use planning and community development have evolved to address a number of rising concerns. Some of the issues that have spurred changes in the way that communities are planned and built include:

- Longer commutes, rising gasoline prices, growing traffic congestion and declining mobility;
- Loss of farmland, wildlife habitat and natural resources as low-density development spreads into formerly undeveloped areas;
- Air quality and climate-change issues associated with vehicle emissions and energy use in buildings;
- Inefficient water use and water-intensive landscaping; and
- Growth that outpaces investments in infrastructure and services resulting in an increased need for maintenance and replacement.

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