

NEOO Partners Draft Engagement and Communications Plan: City of Northfield-Comprehensive Plan

The following community engagement and communications plan outlines a multi-prong approach to engage the Northfield community where they are using a variety of tools and techniques. NEOO and Stantec will work with the city to monitor and adjust the plan as needed based on feedback received and how well we are reaching our target audiences. This engagement and communications plan includes **3 larger style open houses and 15 targeted engagement events**. More events can be added for additional cost.

The following document:

- Outlines the goals and objectives for public engagement for the City of Northfield's Comprehensive Plan
- Provides a job description and role of the Steering Committee
- Documents how stakeholder input will inform Northfield's Comprehensive Plan
- Identifies and explains methods, techniques, timing, and staffing assignments.

This document will guide both how the project is communicated to the public and how public input is used and shared. This document is structured as follows:

Section 1: Project introduction.

- Project Roles

Section 2: Public engagement goals.

- Goal 1: Equitably engage a diversity of stakeholders
- Goal 2: Provide the greatest amount of access to a diversity of stakeholders with a particular focus on the Latinx, disability, youth, and blue worker population in Northfield

Section 3: Public participation strategies.

- In-person strategies such as 15 pop events and 3 open houses
- Online strategies such as surveys
- Media strategies such as press releases around targeted events, targeted social media, and flyering

Section 1: Project Introduction

A Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) is a unique opportunity for a City to detail its vision for the next 20 years. Given the broad nature of a comprehensive planning document it is a tool that can document a shared vision based on community values, strike a balance between competing desires (for example a desire for diverse housing and maintaining neighborhood characteristics), and prioritize initiatives that achieve multiple objectives. The engagement plan will work throughout

the Comp Plan process to ensure that the targeted engagement informs the vision, guiding values, and each topic area. NEOO working with Stantec and City of Northfield staff (our working group) will make any adjustments to the plan based on the information gathered and the audiences we are trying to reach.

Project Team

Name	Role	Company	Scope
Denetrick Powers	Project Executive for NEOO	NEOO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide subject matter advisement of strategy and final deliverables • Provide quality control and lead the quality assurance of final deliverables • Oversee and provide support to NEOO project team
Menaka Mohan	Project Manager for NEOO	NEOO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main point of contact for Stantec and City staff • Attending PMT meetings as needed • Managing overall project timeline for phases of engagement and deliverables • Analyze and synthesize engagement data in partnership with Stantec and City of Northfield • Coordinate support from language interpreters and document translators when needed • Lead/inform development of written project deliverables • Managing design and creation of outreach materials, including print pieces, engagement toolkits, surveys with input/support from Stantec and the City of Northfield
Jasmine Carey	Engagement Specialist	NEOO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support project managers in collecting and synthesizing community feedback across all platforms/mediums • Support in the development and execution of social media campaigns, promotional and outreach materials • Support planning and execution of engagement opportunity (events, meetings, etc.) logistics • Assist with maintenance of the contact database to ensure newly engaged community members receive information
Erin Perdu	Project Manager	Stantec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist with development of the Community Engagement Plan ● Review key messages and engagement questions.
Beth Elliott	Principal in Charge	Stantec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist with development of the Community Engagement Plan ● Review key messages and engagement questions. ● Review engagement summaries.

Section 2: Goals

The overarching goal of the public engagement efforts for the City of Northfield is to build meaningful relationships in the community while gathering stakeholder and public input, respond to comments and concerns; understand the problems that need to be solved; and keep decision-makers and other stakeholders informed throughout the process.

Goal 1: Equitably engage a diversity of public & private stakeholders.

Equity can be defined as trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives, recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and adjust systemically unjust processes and institutions. In contrast, equality aims to provide everyone with the same thing to enjoy full healthy lives. This definition is derived from language used by community-based coalitions, including Nexus Community Partners and The Alliance.

Key Themes Relevant to Diverse Communities:

- Equity and inclusivity: The Comprehensive Plan is poised to provide an opportunity to determine City priorities and potential investments for communities who have historically not participated in previous Comp Plan efforts.
- Safety: Concerns about public safety vary by geographic area and by culture.
- Work schedule reality: Low-income and communities of color have historically had different work schedules according to their profession or economic status and may be concerned about safety during early morning or late-night shifts outside of rush hour.

Goal 2: Provide the greatest amount of access to a diversity of stakeholders.

Using a variety of tools and techniques for communicating with stakeholders, the project team will ensure that access to engagement activities and information is unhindered throughout our engagement process. We will meet stakeholders in places that are easily accessible by transit, potentially provide childcare, and provide both in-person and digital opportunities for participation.

Below is a list of potential tools and resources for communicating with stakeholders:

- Email
- Webpage
- Community-based forums
- Local media
- Social media groups / Nextdoor
- Announcements in places of worship
- QR codes at bus stops, businesses, and community boards
- Alternative media sources (radio)

Underrepresented communities are those whose input has been disproportionately unheard in public decision-making, including people of color, people with disabilities and low-income people. Below is a list of communities that the project team intends to proactively engage:

- Latinx (10% of the population)
- Low-income households (21.4% of households make less than \$30,000)

- Youth and young adults (around 17% are less than 18 years old, 32% are between 18-24)
- People with disabilities (around 6%)
- Renters
- Blue Collar workers or those engaging in shift work

Informing underrepresented communities will be a focus of public events and online materials. Other channels of communication will be used as appropriate, such as:

- One-on-one and small group meetings
- Listening/informing sessions
- Conversations and/or surveys
- Culturally relevant pop-ups and community events (a total of 15 throughout the project)
- Traditional and multicultural social media communications
- Community and multicultural media

The highlighted stakeholders represent who we will engage with as part of our Discovery Phase (also noted in the engagement timeline). In addition, as part of the discovery phase there will be a focus group with key City Departments and personnel.

Potential Key Stakeholders			
Community Based organizations in Northfield	Phone	Email	Address
Growing Up Healthy	-	info@healthycommunityinitiative.org	Northfield Community Education Center, 700 Lincoln Parkway, Northfield, MN 55057
TORCH (Tackling Obstacles & Raising College Hopes)	-	tkiesow@northfieldschools.org	-
Link Services (Northfield Public Library)	507-645-6606	LinkServices@ci.northfield.mn.us.	-
Northfield Promise	507-664-3524	info@northfieldpromise.org	Northfield Community Resource Center, 1651 Jefferson Parkway – Suite 128, Northfield, MN 55057
Hosanna Church	952.435.3332	info@hosannalc.org	-
Neighbors United of Northfield, MN	-	info@ricecountyneighborsunited.org	PO. Box 191 Northfield MN 55057
Carleton College – Community, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	507-222-4000	-	One North College St Northfield, MN 55057
St. Olaf College – Equity and Inclusion	507-786-2222	-	1520 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057
Northfield Racial & Ethnic Equity Collaborative (NREEC):			
Northfield Public Schools	507.663.0600	https://northfieldschools.org/contact/	Northfield Public Schools, ISD #659, 201 Orchard Street South, Northfield, MN 55057

FiftyNorth	507-664-3700		1651 Jefferson Pkwy, Northfield, MN 55057
Northfield Area Family YMCA	(507) 645-0088	https://northfieldymca.org/contact-0	1501 Honeylocust Drive, Northfield, MN 55057
Community action center	507.664.3550	gro.retnechoitcaytinu mmoc@ofni	1651 Jefferson Parkway, Suite HS-200, Northfield, MN 55057
Adult Basic Education	507.663.0600	https://northfieldschools.org/contact/	Northfield Public Schools, ISD #659, 201 Orchard Street South, Northfield, MN 55057
Faith Based Community Roundtable (Saint Johns)			
Northfield Union of Youth	507.663.0715	key@unionofyouth.org	109 Sixth St. W, Northfield, MN 55057 U.S.A.
Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	507.645.5604	info@northfieldchamber.com	19 Bridge Square, Northfield, MN 55057

Internal City Departments/Commissions

- Planning Commission
- Director and staff from the Community Development Department
- Director of Public Works/Parks
- City Administrator
- Economic Development Authority/Housing Redevelopment Authority
- Director of Public Library
- Communications Specialist
- Environmental Quality Commission
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Northfield Area Transportation Advisory Committee

Section 3: Public Participation Strategies

Throughout the Comp Plan engagement process, the public and stakeholders will have multiple opportunities to learn about the project and provide meaningful input online and in person. The specific techniques to be used fall into three primary categories:

- In-person Engagement
- Digital Engagement
- Stakeholder Communications

In-Person Engagement

1) Steering Committee

Equitable Facilitation of Steering Committee is centered in:

- Providing group members an opportunity to influence decisions, especially by underrepresented populations
- Creating a shared understanding of how decisions are made within the group
- Creating an environment that encourages informed participation
- Effective meeting design and facilitation
- Equitable facilitation is characterized by more than technical competence; it is based on kindness, integrity, and listening with an intent to understand both comments as well as the values underlying the comments.

Job Description for Steering Committee members

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

1. Planning Commission member(s)
2. One member each from relevant boards:
 - a. Economic Development Authority
 - b. Environmental Quality Commission
 - c. Arts and Culture Commission
 - d. Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
 - e. Mayor's Youth Council
 - f. Park & Recreation Advisory Board
3. Northfield Public Schools
4. Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce/Tourism/business owner
5. Advocacy/nonprofit/faith-based organizations

Roles

Steering Committee members are entitled to represent both their respective organization (if applicable) and themselves in this planning process. The body is advisory in nature and will not be expected to vote on any direction or element of the plan. Additional roles related to the Steering Committee include:

- **Chairs:** Chairs will run the meetings while referring to the consultant team or City staff to facilitate each agenda item. They will also ensure a balanced set of perspectives is represented in each meeting and all members feel they can speak freely.
- **Members:** Steering Committee members commit to attending four meetings, recognize appropriate meeting decorum, and respect ideas from members that may differ from their own.
- **Consultant Team:** The consultant team members will be responsible for setting the agenda with City staff and preparing content for discussion. They will also prepare summaries of each meeting.
- **City Staff:** City staff will work with the consultant team on meeting agendas, representing City policies and procedures when there is a question, and identifying additional opportunities to achieve an adoptable comprehensive plan.
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2) Focus Groups/ (up to 5)

Focus groups with specific stakeholder groups such as city staff, low-income residents, youth, and ethnic groups will be held to gain a deeper understanding into the needs and desires of stakeholders using a human-centered design approach. Questions will be designed in a way that encourages stakeholders to reflect on lived experiences and share how those experiences inform how they engage with the City. Focus groups will have a target of 6-8 stakeholders per meeting.

3) Pop-up engagement events (15)

We will supplement focus groups with pop up events in locations identified through engagement and suggested by the city staff and local community-based organizations. Additional events may be led by community-based organizations, in which we can then explore opportunities for project team participation. Our team may also participate in other relevant community engagement events organized by project partners.

Sample options for pop-up events for the Discovery Phase:

1. 8-17-23-Third Thursday Block Party
2. TBD at Memorial Pool
3. Sept/Aug event with Age-friendly Northfield
4. Sept 7th Defeat of Jesse James
5. Sept Back to school event timed with Saint Olaf
6. Sept Back to school event timed with Carleton (9/15/2023)
7. Hispanic Heritage Celebration (9/16/2023)

Community Open Houses (3)

Large public events will be held periodically through the engagement process with the goal of providing updates on project milestones and collecting feedback from a broad and diverse group of stakeholders. These large public events will be held in locations most accessible to all stakeholders, including those transit-dependent or with a disability. Locations and descriptions can be found in the engagement timeline.

Digital Engagement

Social Media

Social media channels will be used as a tool to help share information throughout the engagement process and promote public engagement activities. Tapping into existing social media accounts will help expand reach and allow information about the Comp Plan to reach a broader portion of the public, including underrepresented communities. Individuals who may not want to engage or be able to participate via traditional public engagement methods can still be a part of the decision-making process if they use social media.

Surveys

Surveys allow people with a few minutes to spare an opportunity to learn about a specific project topic and provide input in a variety of multiple choice, short answer, and ranking questions. These surveys will both inform the public and gather necessary information to make decisions. Surveys will be available online in additional languages as needed to allow stakeholders and the public to provide input.

For in-person events, portable tablets will have the survey pre-loaded to allow for easy input. Hard copies of surveys will also be available (upon request) at events for those who are not comfortable completing the survey on a tablet.

Stakeholder Communications

The engagement and analysis process will use the following methods to facilitate and maintain communications.

Contact Database

The NEOO team will develop and maintain a contact database that includes contact information for those interested in receiving project updates. People can provide their contact information via a survey, a comment form, or at a meeting. These individuals will receive notice when new information is available or when the project is at key progress points.

Accessible Materials

Accessible materials will be prepared that are easily understood by a wide range of project stakeholders. These materials will use nontechnical, easy-to-understand language to present project information and custom graphics and figures to present information graphically where possible. We may also develop a project poster, or other distributable collateral materials which includes project contact information and a link/QR code to an existing project website.

Engagement Evaluations

NEOO will track and analyze the input received and the effectiveness of our communication and engagement efforts. As we host meetings and collect questionnaires, we will track who we are hearing from and who we are not hearing from being mindful of the engagement activity (online versus in person) and tie it to the Equity Policy Framework. This will allow us to adjust our methods and communication as necessary to reach a better representation of people within the community. Adjustments may include connecting with additional community and cultural leaders or utilizing targeted social media advertisements.

Specific techniques will be evaluated periodically by the project team to help shape future activities. Evaluation of techniques will be based on the following criteria:

- Quantitative
 - How many people attended the events? How many people completed the activities or comment forms?
 - How many new people provided contact information for our list?
- Qualitative
 - What kind of feedback was received on the community meetings?
 - What kind of feedback was received on social media and website posts and email messages?
 - Have stakeholders expressed any challenges regarding their participation?
 - Did input received affect decision-making? How?

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures will be summarized in meeting summaries, which will also include updated information on website and social media activity.

A summary of the public engagement process, input received, analysis of that input and how it was used will be included as part of the final engagement deliverable.

Engagement Timeline

Months	Task	Activities	Deliverables	Needs from Client
Jul-23- September 23	Task 1.0 Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NEOO will develop a detailed public engagement plan, based on the scope, project background documents and recent conversations with the Project Management Team. ● Determine appropriate method of sharing content for client and external stakeholders (Sharepoint.) ● Create draft key interview/ focus group questions ● Conduct key stakeholder/focus groups to inform engagement activities (i.e., 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agreed upon Community/Communication Engagement Plan (CMP)-July 31st ● Interview guide for focus groups key stakeholders ● Summaries of key stakeholder interviews and focus groups ● Social media messaging ● Survey (digital) ● 6 targeted pop-up events with survey ● Flyers with initial information on Comp Plan and survey info ● Survey Results ● Contact database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List of key stakeholders for interviews (up to 5) ● List of up to five external partners for review ● Posting of social media messages on city channels ● 6 targeted pop-up events listed below: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8-21-23 Open Swim - Natación libre 8-17-23-Third Thursday Block Party Sept/Aug event with Age-friendly Northfield Sept 7th Defeat of Jesse James Sept Back to school event timed with Saint Olaf Sept Back to school event timed with Carlton

		<p>questions to ask on a survey, locations of activities, input on events)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop survey and release survey ● identify 5 pop up events 		
September-Oct 2023	Task 2.0 Visioning Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Targeted Engagement on visioning framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media messages for open house ● Flyers promoting open house ● Activity at open house ● 1st community open house ● Updated contact database ● Summary of open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possible locations of open house ● Posting of social media messages on city channels
Dec 23-May 24	Task 3.0 Topical Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Targeted engagement on topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Up to 4 targeted engagement pop-ups or focus groups based on topical areas ● Summaries of targeted engagement ● Community open house #2 (February 23) ● Summary of open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identifying topics for targeted engagement ● Approval of 4 targeted pop-up events ● Approval of open house format ● Suggestions of locations for open house
May - Sept24	Task 4.0 Engagement of Draft Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagement on Draft Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 pop up events focused on draft plan ● Survey on draft plan components ● Final Open house with planned activities ● Summary of Open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approval of 5 targeted pop-up events ● Approval of open house format ● Suggestions of locations for open house

Sept- De 24	Task 5.0 Adoption and Delivery		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attendance at City Council hearing to present engagement findings● Final updated contact database	