

Community Involvement Element

Introduction

The City is committed to community involvement in decision-making processes that affect community members. City departments use community involvement to create plans, policies, and programs to guide city investments.

The City benefits from community involvement in many ways:

- Better understanding of community values, needs, priorities and differing perspectives;
- Local knowledge and expertise of community members are valued and shared;
- Improved decision-making leading to better quality plans and projects;
- Informed community members understand tradeoffs in decision-making;
- Enhanced trust and confidence in government;
- Increase understanding about the different roles community input can play in the decision-making process;
- More community support for plans and projects; and
- More cost efficient and timely implementation.

Inclusive and Equitable Community Involvement

Discussion

Equity is essential to any community involvement process to improve relationships and outcomes. The City is committed to conduct inclusive and equitable community involvement that effectively reaches a broad range of community members. Community involvement should reflect Seattle’s commitment to race and social justice, and use practices that are culturally sensitive, responsive and address barriers to participation of marginalized communities

GOAL

CIG1 Provide opportunities for inclusive and equitable community involvement.

POLICIES

CI 1.1 Create equitable representative systems that are reflective of and accessible to communities throughout the city.

CI 1.2 Develop well-designed, responsive, culturally-relevant community involvement plans.

CI 1.3 Build community capacity for meaningful and authentic community involvement.

CI 1.4 Provide a wide range of opportunities for obtaining information and involvement in decision-making processes.

CI 1.5 Achieve greater equity in decision-making processes through meaningful involvement of diverse community members (homeowners, renters, businesses, employees, property owners, institutions, youth, seniors, etc.), and especially members of marginalized communities.

- CI 1.6 Effectively and efficiently manage the use of City and community resources to plan and implement community involvement.
- CI1.7 Partner with other governments, schools, institutions, and community-based organizations to plan and implement community involvement.

Community Planning

Discussion

Community planning is a specific type of community involvement process that produces plans for small geographic areas. The City’s approach to community planning has evolved over time to become more inclusive. The top-down approaches of earlier decades gave way to a “bottom-up” neighborhood planning process for unique areas, including “urban villages” and “urban centers” designated in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. Between 1995-2000 the City funded neighborhood groups to draft goals, policies and actions that would encourage the pattern and distribution of growth outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. By 2000 City Council adopted 33 neighborhood plans (plus five urban center village plans within the Downtown urban center). In recent years, city staff has initiated planning processes in partnership with many neighborhoods to update neighborhood plans, develop implementation plans, and address other planning and development issues. Currently, the Neighborhood Plans Element of the Comprehensive Plan contains goals and policies that emerged from different community planning initiatives.



Caption: Land Use and Community Planning Over Time

Community planning continues to evolve as the needs of communities, the city, and the region change over time. For example, race and social has become an important part of community planning. Moving forward, community planning will be an integrated and equitable approach to identify and implement a community’s vision for how their neighborhood will grow. Plans will reflect the history, character, and vision of the local community but also remain consistent with the overall citywide vision and strategy of the Comprehensive Plan. The City will undertake community planning to review and update current plans, as well as for other purposes.

GOAL

- CIG2 Work with a broad range of community members to plan for the future of their community to provide homes, jobs, recreation, transportation options and gathering places.

POLICIES

CI 2.1 Undertake planning and implementation to guide the development of geographic areas through an inclusive community involvement process.

CI 2.2 Consider areas with the following characteristics when allocating City resources for community planning.

- Areas designated urban centers or villages in the Comprehensive Plan;
- Areas with high risk of displacement;
- Areas with low access to opportunity and distressed communities
- Areas experiencing significant improvements in transit service;
- Areas experiencing a growth rate significantly higher or lower than anticipated in the Comprehensive Plan;
- Areas identified for multiple capital investments that could benefit from coordinated planning;
- Areas experiencing environmental justice concerns; and
- Areas with outdated plans that no longer reflect a citywide vision of the Comprehensive Plan or local priorities.

CI 2.3 Encourage transparency in the development and updating of community plans by:

- Creating a detailed project description with purpose of plan, tasks, timeline and anticipated products;
- Sharing a community involvement plan outlining the tools and methods to be used, and how results will be communicated; and
- Establishing a project committee.

CI 2.4 Address some or all of the following topics in the preparation of community plans:

- Land use and zoning
- Urban design and community character
- Parks and open space
- Housing, amenities and services to support a range of incomes and household types
- Transportation, utilities and infrastructure
- Economic development
- Community services, institutions and facilities
- Health
- Arts and culture
- Climate resilience and adaptation
- Emergency preparedness
- Community organizational capacity
- Equitable development and risk of displacement

CI 2.5 Use an integrated, interdepartmental planning approach to implement community plan recommendations such as capital improvement projects, affordable housing, services, zoning and other City investments.

CI 2.6 Assess and report on the implementation of community plans periodically.

CI 2.7 Use outcomes of the community planning process to update the goals and policies in the Neighborhood Plans Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Definitions to be added to glossary (will send final version by August)

- Community
- Community involvement
- Marginalized community (may alter the current definition)
- Environmental Justice
- Neighborhood Plan