

Public Participation

Public Participation is a vital component of any successful comprehensive planning process. Strategic public participation and engagement efforts were carried out from the beginning of the Sumter 2040 process. Efforts were geared toward obtaining broad, diverse, and meaningful input that would truly shape and steer the direction of this community planning effort. This chapter provides a description of the different public participation efforts that were carried out for the Sumter 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Community Survey

A community survey was developed by staff and designed to be broad in subject matter. The survey questions aimed to elicit responses related to quality of life issues, land use matters, and development trends and patterns. The survey was not designed, nor intended, to produce statistically significant samples in any scientific respect. Instead, it was designed to prompt community comment from as many people as possible.

The survey was distributed widely via the internet, links on the City and County websites (as well as Facebook and Instagram). The local newspaper (The Item) placed a link to the survey on their homepage. Paper copies were placed at City and County government locations across the community and individual outreach took place at community events such as the Sumter County Fair, the Downtown Farmers Market, and Art in the Park (outreach activities further discussed in this section).

The survey was available from June to September 2018. In total, 1,207 responses were received. Those responses included 2,974 open-ended, written comments, both complimentary and critical of the Sumter community.

A report was developed in November 2018 that summarized and provided analysis for the survey responses received. This report is available on the Sumter 2040 website (www.Sumter2040.com) and at the office of the Sumter City-County Planning Department.

Community Events

During the early stages of the Sumter 2040 process, staff from the Sumter City-County Planning Department established a presence at numerous events throughout the community. The purpose of attending these events was to promote community survey participation and to establish overall community awareness of this planning effort. At these events staff manned a Sumter 2040 information table, spoke with community members, distributed and collected surveys, and promoted ways to get involved in the planning process.

Attended Events

- Downtown Farmers Market - August 4, 2018
- Back to School Bash - August 14, 2018
- Downtown Farmers Market - August 25, 2018
- Sumter Farmers Market - August 31, 2018
- Art in the Park - September 22, 2018
- Sumter County Fair - September 25 - 30, 2018



Photo: Downtown Farmers Market



Photo: Display at Sumter County Fair



Photo: Art in the Park

Stakeholder Group Meetings

Key stakeholder groups were engaged throughout the Sumter 2040 planning process. These groups included neighborhood associations, development industry representatives, public works officials, utility providers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Sumter Board of Realtors, Economic Development officials, and City and County Management to name a few. Staff working on the Sumter 2040 Comprehensive Plan met with and received important input from these groups. This input established a firm foundation for the policies established in this Plan.

Public Meetings

Public meetings were a critical component in the development of the Sumter 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Public meetings were held at two key points throughout the process.

Public Meeting #1 (Kick-Off) - December 6, 2018

A public kick-off meeting was held at the Central Carolina Technical College (CCTC) Health Sciences Center to solicit public input. This meeting was held after initial public feedback was received via community survey and community event participation. The meeting included displays of important baseline planning information (demographics, zoning, existing policies and goals, etc.), a public presentation, and break out conversations. Input from this meeting was used to evaluate and develop Plan policies.

Break-Out Conversation Topics

Community Survey Deep Dive - Participants were asked to discuss, in greater depth, the questions included in the initial community survey. Additionally, participants were asked to share their thoughts and opinions on local development patterns, design, and things they preferred about the community.

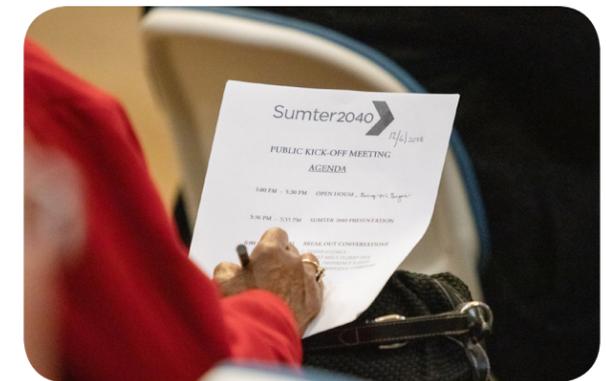
Sumter 2030 Overarching Goals - Participants were asked to review the overarching goals of the Sumter 2030 Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2009. The primary aim of this conversation was to determine if the existing overarching goals established for the community 10 years ago were still valid. These overarching goals inform all other policies within the planning document.

Neighborhoods & Corridors - Participants were asked to share their thoughts on what they liked and did not like about their neighborhoods and surrounding areas.

Visual Preference Survey - Participants were shown various development types. Development types were broken out by environmental context (Urban, Suburban, and Rural). Participants were then asked to rank in order the development types they preferred and would like to see in the Sumter Community.



Photo(s): Public Meeting #1



Public Meeting #2 (Open House) - June 20, 2019

A second public meeting was held at the CCTC Health Sciences Center in order to receive feedback and input on draft Sumter 2040 policies. This meeting also served as an unveiling of draft City and County Planning Area maps. Proposed land use policies and changes from the Sumter 2030 Comprehensive Plan were a primary focus of this meeting. This meeting was an open house format with attendees able to view policy and map displays at their convenience. Staff members were available to receive input, discuss proposed policies and maps, and to answer questions. Comment forms were available to all attendees.

Website, Social Media, & Branding

Prior to the formal start of the Sumter 2040 planning process, a dedicated project specific website was created (www.Sumter2040.com). Through this website, residents and interested parties could check in on the status of the plan, view important plan deliverables and drafts, and provide input to staff members. Additionally, plan progress and important milestones were shared via social media (Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram). Specific branding was developed for this planning effort and was used on all important Sumter 2040 documents and releases.