



Department of City Development
City Plan Commission
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

Lafayette L. Crump
Commissioner

Vanessa L. Koster
Deputy Commissioner

Breaking Down Barriers to Participation in Neighborhood Planning: Implementation Plan

Department of City Development – Planning Division

GARE Racial Equity Tool Kit

April 2021 DRAFT

Introduction:

The DCD Planning Division has developed an implementation plan to reduce barriers to participation in the City of Milwaukee's neighborhood planning process, with an explicit focus on reducing barriers that may be disproportionately impacting residents of color. This plan was developed utilizing the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Toolkit, including a review of existing data, national best practices, and internal and external stakeholder feedback.

This implementation plan will advance the City of Milwaukee's commitment to place public engagement at the forefront of planning efforts. DCD partners with citizens and community-based organizations in the planning process so that residents can shape the future vision for development and public investment within their neighborhoods, and influence resource allocations and land use policies.

The use of the GARE Toolkit to develop this implementation plan aligns with the City of Milwaukee's adopted policy directing all City Departments to examine current practices and make strategic improvements to further racial equity. It also reflects the American Planning Association's Code of Ethics that obligates planners to seek social justice, with a special responsibility for planning for the needs of historically disadvantaged groups and altering policies that oppose such needs.

Continue What Is Already Working:

The following are engagement practices that DCD Planning is already carrying out as part of neighborhood planning efforts that stakeholder input indicated have been successful in reducing barriers to participation in communities of color. They will continue to be a core element of future planning projects.

Action:	Commitments / Notes:
1. Partnering with and compensating community based organizations with leadership and staff reflective of the racial makeup of the neighborhood to lead neighborhood engagement efforts on planning projects.	DCD Planning will continue this practice on all funded neighborhood planning projects taking place in neighborhoods with a majority of residents of color. Depending on project specifics and budget, DCD Planning will evaluate the use of this strategy in projects occurring in other neighborhoods as well.
2. Offering opportunities to engage in DCD Planning processes at local community events (e.g. block parties, farmer's markets, festivals, resource fairs).	This will continue to be a cornerstone of DCD neighborhood efforts. Project-specific public involvement plans prepared for each planning project will identify potential events to carry out engagement.
3. Providing food and refreshments at community meetings.	DCD Planning will continue this practice, with a focus on supporting locally owned neighborhood



	businesses and using meals at events as an opportunity for informal neighborhood dialogue and fellowship.
4. Facilitating one-on-one meetings and smaller focus groups with community representatives.	This will continue to be a cornerstone of DCD Area Planning efforts. Project-specific public involvement plans prepared for each planning project will identify potential individuals/groups for direct engagement.

Strategic Actions to Overcome Identified Barriers to Participation:

Partner input identified four specific barriers as posing the most significant obstacles to participation by residents of color in neighborhood planning processes. Each of those barriers is listed below, along with a series of action steps that DCD Planning will commit to reduce these barriers based on feedback received during this process.

The listed action steps represent high priority and measurable actions. For each barrier, multiple additional tactics and planning practices were also identified to improve neighborhood engagement and address barriers. Planning staff will continue to deploy those tactics where appropriate, even if they are not included on the list below. While each of these action steps can be carried out to some degree with existing resources, additional resources (funding/staffing) may be required to more meaningfully implement a number of the recommendations.

Barrier #1: Not hearing about meetings or opportunities to participate

Action:	Commitments / Notes:
1. Expand use of social media to provide opportunities for engagement.	DCD Planning and its project partners will continue to advertise all neighborhood planning meetings and opportunities for engagement via social media channels.
2. Ensure traditional (non-digital) methods are being utilized for notifying residents who may not regularly use the internet about opportunities to participate.	For any major public meetings on neighborhood planning projects, DCD staff will work with community partners to identify one or more non-digital methods to share information (this may include interviews or advertisements on Black/Latinx radio stations, flyers, posters, banners, direct mailings, door hangers, yard signs, materials on MCTS buses, videos on Channel 25, etc.).
3. Expand ways for residents to provide input on neighborhood planning outside of a formal "public meeting."	DCD Planning commits to provide these opportunities both in-person and digitally. In addition to continued attendance at neighborhood events in areas of ongoing planning projects, Planning will expand the use of online tools to allow residents to provide feedback at all stages of a planning process. During 2021, Planning will pilot the use of a more interactive online platform to host planning content and facilitate online engagement.

Barrier #2: Lack of advance information about the subject matter being discussed

Action:	Commitments / Notes:
1. Ensure residents have access to the background knowledge on relevant DCD processes (comprehensive/neighborhood planning, zoning, CPC, BOZA, TIF, Real Estate, NIDC) to effectively engage in the neighborhood planning process and advocate for neighborhood goals after plan adoption.	<p>In 2021 DCD Planning will work to develop a training module to better empower residents to engage in DCD processes impacting land use and development.</p> <p>In 2022, DCD Planning will begin to utilize this training. DCD anticipates offering periodically to the general public, but also in targeted sessions tailored to neighborhoods embarking on planning projects, and for community based organizations that work in neighborhoods of color.</p>
2. More clearly communicate what topics are being discussed at various meetings and where people can go for more information.	<p>DCD Planning will provide at least 14 days advance notice for public meetings on neighborhood planning projects.</p> <p>In 2021, Planning will redesign future meeting notices to more clearly state the topics/decisions that will be on the agenda, and where residents can find additional information in advance. Planning staff will review meeting notices for readability, with a goal of having meeting invitations readable at an 8th grade level. Planning staff will also continue to translate invitations when necessary.</p>

Barrier #3: Feeling that input is not being listened to by the City

Action:	Commitments / Notes:
1. Communicate how each recommendation will be implemented; specifically, which are action items that DCD is responsible for implementing, and which are longer term recommendations requiring identifying future funding or developer interest.	Final DCD neighborhood Planning documents and accompanying presentation materials will provide additional clarity on implementation roles, responsibilities, and timelines.
2. Demonstrate progress on implementation of neighborhood plan recommendations.	<p>When setting annual Planning Division work plans and determining projects to pursue, DCD Planning will prioritize projects that implement neighborhood plan recommendations where DCD Planning has been identified as the lead entity. Priority will be given to implementation projects within the city's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs).</p> <p>During 2021, the Planning Division will develop a mechanism to more holistically track and report on progress of plan implementation and to communicate back with community partners.</p>

3. Make it easier for residents to participate in the rezoning process.	Beginning in 2021, DCD Planning will transition to utilizing the Legistar system for all City Plan Commission (CPC) Files, including enabling eComment for public hearing items. Planning staff will also explore options to allow for continued virtual participation in CPC hearings after the conclusion of the COVID-19 public health emergency. During the second half of 2021, Planning staff will pursue an ordinance change to expand the mailing of CPC Public Hearing notices to include neighbors living in rental units (current ordinance limits mailings to property owners) and evaluate the potential for a City Ordinance change that would require physical posting of notices at properties subject to a zoning change.
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Barrier #4: Lack of existing relationships with City staff and not feeling welcome in process

Action:	Commitments / Notes:
1. “Co-host” planning meetings with neighborhood partners serving in lead roles.	When working on neighborhood planning projects in communities of color, Planning will structure planning meetings to be co-hosted by community based organizations, with those groups playing a lead partner role in agenda setting, facilitation, and confirming feedback received. As noted above, partners will be compensated for their time and expertise when carrying out these roles.
2. Proactively strengthen relationships with community organizations and residents through continuous information exchange.	During planning projects, DCD Planners will prioritize “showing up” at neighborhood events and meetings, even when Planning topics may not be a formal agenda item. Area Planners will proactively share information about ongoing current planning projects (zoning changes, BOZA applications) with community partners on an ongoing basis.
3. Have a Planning staff that more closely reflects the racial demographics of the city of Milwaukee.	In the short term, Planning Managers will work closely with local universities and organizations to broaden the applicant pool for Graduate Internships to hire more interns of color, as the Graduate Internship program is a primary pipeline to City employment. For future full-time openings, DCD Planning Managers will work with the Department of Employee Relations on multiple strategies to ensure a racially diverse applicant pool.

<p>4. Compensate residents for their time and expertise when asking for significant time commitments to support neighborhood planning.</p>	<p>During 2021, DCD Planning will pilot a paid “neighborhood advisory council” model to facilitate the engagement of residents of color from downtown and near-downtown neighborhoods during the Downtown Plan update.</p> <p>Planning will work to refine practices and policies (and identify funding sources) to determine how to best implement this practice on an ongoing basis, with a priority on engaging residents of color.</p>
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Resources available and resource needed for this Implementation Plan:

The items in this implementation plan were designed to be able to be carried out at a base level with currently available staffing and resources. However, to meaningfully achieve the goals of this implementation plan and to implement the strategies above in a robust manner, additional resources will be required (both staff and funding), especially to allow for more meaningful partnerships and ongoing communication with community based organizations on neighborhood planning and implementation projects, and providing training/technical assistance as proposed in the plan. Funding available for neighborhood planning and staffing within the Planning Division has decreased since the time period when most of the City’s Area Plans were developed, and DCD Planning is committed to pursuing internal and external resources to achieve the goals of this implementation plan of better engaging with neighborhoods of color working to develop and implement their vision for their neighborhoods.

Without additional resources, carrying out this implementation plan will require DCD Planning to continue its existing practice of shifting funds away from hiring planning consultants towards directly funding engagement led by neighborhood based organizations when carrying out planning projects in neighborhoods of color. However, relying on internal Planning staff to carry out tasks that would have otherwise been completed by consultants has significant impacts on internal staff capacity and limits the number of projects DCD can carry out and extends project timelines. Furthermore, funding will continue to be required to engage consultants for specialized tasks that cannot be carried out internally.

Results: How will impacts be documented and evaluated?

- DCD Planning already tracks resident participation on neighborhood planning projects. Successful implementation of these strategies should result in increased participation in neighborhoods of color. For future planning projects, DCD will implement mechanisms to better track the racial identity of participants in the planning process.
- During 2021, DCD Planning will develop an updated mechanism for tracking and reporting on the implementation of recommendations of the City’s Area Plans, and ways that DCD and residents have used the Area Plans to shape development decisions and resource allocations.

Communication: How will results be communicated to stakeholders?

- DCD Planning will prepare an annual report summarizing the results described above related to resident participation and Area Plan implementation. DCD Planning will release a report in Q12022 summarizing the activities of 2021.

Accountability: Who will be accountable for successful implementation of these practices?

This implementation plan was developed collaboratively by DCD Planning staff, and all staff are committed to achieving these goals.

Ultimate accountability for advancing these action steps rests with Planning Division managers. Beginning in 2021, progress in implementing this implementation plan and reducing barriers to participation in neighborhood planning will be a primary factor considered when Planning Division managers' performance appraisals are conducted (including in determining eligibility for any future merit based pay progression).

Supporting Actions by Others:

Beyond the DCD Planning action items listed above, there are a number of action steps that were identified during this process that would reduce barriers to participation that would require support from other Departments in city government. As Planning staff carry out the action steps in this implementation plan, they will also collaborate with other Departments to explore the following actions:

- **Standardize and expand the use of translation and interpretation services (DOA):** Current resources don't allow for the amount of language interpretation and document translation that would be needed to fully address some of the barriers identified during this process. This impacts all Departments and would benefit from additional city-wide process development and resource allocation.
- **Expand the use of texting via the e-Notify system (ITMD):** Broadening the ability for City Departments to send text messages via e-Notify would assist in notifications and engagement for neighborhood planning.
- **Align the Capital Improvement Planning process more closely to the Area Planning Process (DPW):** Linking capital improvement projects to neighborhood planning recommendations will help reduce the barriers to participation caused by the perception that resident input during the planning process does not translate to city investments. This will be an element of the Complete Streets Manual being developed by DPW in 2021.
- **Develop a citywide list of neighborhood organizations that is regularly updated (TBD).** Discussions with other city departments indicate that all departments would be able to strengthen their engagement efforts and reduce inefficiencies if there was a centralized list of neighborhood based organizations that city staff could utilize for outreach and engagement.