

Becoming Brooklyn Center: Opportunity Site Phase II Public Engagement Approach (10/4/19 draft)

Purpose

Building on Phase I, responding to community concerns. The purpose of the second phase of engagement is to evaluate the draft Opportunity Site master plan developed at the conclusion of Phase I, to assess potential impacts and identify unintended consequences of the plan. The purpose is to ensure that the master plan and its subsequent implementation proceed in a way that truly benefits people in the community – while also ensuring it is technically and financially feasible. Due to the nature of this engagement, there will be strategies operating at a couple levels: a more general community conversation about impacts, priorities and concerns; and topic-specific engagement relative to supporting technical analyses, all of which will revolve around identifying potential impacts of the plan.

Deeper discussion, more data. This stage goes deeper than Phase I, both in terms of involvement in the community and supporting work. This is a direct result of conversations in the community and from city leadership that additional work is needed to both address potential impacts, identify unintended consequences, and build community support and buy-in. As a result, the engagement tools focus on opportunities for discussion on identified issues, alongside leveling/educational components regarding information and findings from supporting technical work. This will also further extend the commitment from Phase I engagement to involve a representation of people and perspectives from the entire community, with a focus on those that have been historically underrepresented. Questions to the community will revolve around obtaining input on the draft plan itself, continuing to identify desired community benefits, and seeking potential impacts from a holistic, human-scale, and equity lens.

More than a development site. Concerns being addressed through this process reflect not just the engagement process to date, but longer-term issues (in the city and broader society) regarding how some groups have been systematically not involved in public processes and have therefore not benefitted from community improvements. To this end, the process will utilize the best tools available to move towards a model of equitable engagement that can be utilized not just for the Opportunity Site master plan, but throughout the City.

Near-term opportunities. There are near-term opportunities for benefits to be seen in the community via redevelopment, and a limited window of opportunity in terms of market feasibility for some elements of that development, particularly on this long-vacant site. Additionally, it will not be possible for the Opportunity Site development to fully address all needs in the short term – there must be some priorities. This will be part of the conversation as well: not to limit other goals, but to ensure that the opportunity is not missed due to a protracted process.

Part of a bigger picture. This engagement approach will follow the general guidance of the Becoming Brooklyn Center public engagement plan, including the general goals and approach to engagement. This report focuses specifically on how this engagement plan informs the Opportunity Site master planning process.

Transparent and accountable. This approach will clarify both the process and result of the engagement. This will include information on the engagement process, technical studies, the overall decision-making approach, and how community input will inform the result. The intent will be to build community trust and buy-in, both in the process and the resulting plan. Input from this second phase of engagement will be used to revise and refine the draft master plan, which will be iterative throughout the engagement process. Once the master plan is refined and adapted based on this second phase of engagement, a third phase of engagement will be initiated. The third phase will focus on identifying and incorporating measures to mitigate and prevent negative impacts that were

identified as part of the second phase. Each phase will also continue to include gathering input on the draft plan itself as well as identifying desired community benefits to be included in the master plan.

Approach

It is anticipated that this second phase of community engagement will begin in early November and run through the end of January.

The engagement plan will proceed on two tracks. One will be general engagement, focused on engaging community stakeholders to identify their needs, concerns, and insights. The other will be more specific to technical studies that will proceed during this time.

There will be a close relationship between these two types of engagement.

- Information collected through the technical studies will be available as a resource for the more general engagement approach. Information will be brought forward in summary format as needed.
- Insights from the general engagement will be used to inform the values and goals in the technical analysis. This will start with the input that has already been received during the Phase I engagement.

GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

Community Conversations

To provide space for more in-depth conversation, engagement will be focused through a series of convened meetings that allow for deeper and more meaningful conversations around key questions. While the questions will be refined through the process, they are expected to focus on the expected positive and negative impacts on people from the project, through a human-scale, holistic, and equity lens. This format will include sharing information about the proposed project and seeking potential impacts in the context of facilitated discussions within the community.

While the intent is to create space for a wide range of stakeholders to participate, resources will be focused on reducing barriers to participation for groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in the process. This includes recognition of the costs imposed on participants, particularly those of limited means, and how that has contributed to a lack of participation in the past. As identified by the Working Committee, this includes youth, renters, communities of color, and low income communities – including West African, Latinx, African American/Black, and Hmong/Lao communities.

Ways that barriers to participation for these groups can be reduced include:

- Engagement through partners with connections and relationships in the groups being reached
- Location, timing, and format of engagement that creates a safe, accessible and culturally-appropriate place for people to participate – including provision of food, childcare, translation services, culturally specific elements, and/or other accommodations as needed
- Where appropriate, stipends or incentives to reduce barriers to participation may be offered. These may be in the form of a gift card or similar item of value, or drawings for gift cards to encourage participation.

Based on this approach, community discussions will be conducted by three different groups: Community-based organizations, City staff and consultants, and involved community members. The section below describes the different approach for each of these.

Community-based Organization-Convened Meetings – 4-6 Events

During the engagement process to date, it has been recognized that there are people and groups in Brooklyn Center who are relatively well connected to communities that have been identified as underrepresented in the engagement process to date. These may include local organizations participating on the Opportunity Site Working Committee, community leaders, religious organizations (churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.), and others who have a presence in Brooklyn Center.

The Working Committee consists of a collection of partners who are uniquely qualified to reach identified groups within Brooklyn Center due to their relationships, connections, programs, and organization missions. They have been invited to submit proposals to do targeted outreach on a contract basis in partnership with the City. The exact nature of this engagement is to be determined by the individual partner organization based on what they feel is most appropriate.

In addition, and alongside their work, the City would seek opportunities to be invited by community-based organizations who would be willing to host a facilitated dialogue within their community. Participants would be invited by the organization and the number per event would be limited to allow for a scale of meeting that encourages active participation. Organizations would be compensated for their time and resources hosting a gathering. The meetings will be cited at locations and times convenient to participants. Food will be provided, as well as possible compensation consistent with the approach described above.

Results from these meetings will be compiled into meeting summaries.

City-Convened Meetings – 2 Events

To supplement and broaden the targeted outreach conducted through community-based organization-convened meetings, the City will also be hosting meetings in the community that invite residents and other stakeholders to the table to provide input. Participants will be invited based on connections through the City's targeted outreach to date, including neighborhood-level engagement.

Participation will be open to the public, but the number of participants per event will be limited, to allow for a scale of meeting that encourages active participation. Meetings will be advertised through a variety of public channels, although direct invitations may also be used. The meetings will be cited at locations and times convenient to participants. Food will be provided, as well as possible compensation consistent with the approach described above.

Results from these meetings will be compiled into meeting summaries.

Community-Convened Meetings

There are also groups and people in the community who may not have the time or interest in attending a City-facilitated meeting or event, but who have connections within the community either through an organization, employer, civic group, at the neighborhood level, through church, etc. To better leverage city resources and staff time, and to allow broader engagement and participation, it is proposed that the project equip these individuals with the tools to conduct their own engagement with some limited support from City staff and consultants.

A "meeting in a box" format will be developed, including all that is needed for an interested individual or group to conduct their own outreach. This will include background information about the project, a discussion guide, and instructions to facilitators. This information will be available publicly so that all stakeholders have access to the same information.

Organizers will be instructed when and how to submit input received to the City, which will be compiled into summaries. Additionally, they will be recognized for their effort and contribution to community outreach.

Citywide Engagement

Not everyone will be able to participate in convened meetings, so information will also be available through broad reaching citywide engagement approaches. The intent is a process that is fully transparent so that all people have access to the process and the ability to participate.

Open House

Near the conclusion of the community conversations, there will be an open house to provide both a summary of input received to date and information from technical studies. The general public will be invited to participate and provide feedback. This will be widely advertised, feature interactive elements, and include components designed to reduce barriers to participation as described above. The timing will be designed to coincide with engagement on the technical studies as well, so that it may also meet the need for required reviews on draft documents.

Online Engagement

All materials developed for engagement will be posted on the Becoming Brooklyn Center website. Open house materials will be set up in an “online open house” format that allows for people to review materials and comment on them at their convenience, without attending any meetings at all. Outreach summaries will also be posted online.

Social media posts and email updates (to city contacts and subscriber lists) will be used to let people know about project updates and opportunities for engagement.

The City’s subscription to Polco will be used to send out engagement questions online, so that people can respond to them there. Results from this will be compiled with other engagement. As the platform can provide information on where comments originate from, this can be used to determine where people engaged are originating from, to ensure balanced representation.

Planning Commission and City Council Updates

Working sessions with both the Planning Commission and City Council will be used to review input received through the engagement process, particularly in the context with how it may be addressed in the draft master plan and related implementation documents.

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS ENGAGEMENT

While the technical analysis will be completed under separate scopes, there will be an ongoing need to coordinate that work with the overall approach to engagement. This is to ensure that both are informed by the other, and that decision making does not proceed on parallel tracks. Below is summarized how each technical element is expected to interface with the broader community engagement process. These descriptions do not include any engagement that will be done specific to these topics apart from the main engagement, as that is to be developed with the study scopes.

Equity Assessment

The equity assessment will be done to provide guidance for how the Opportunity Site master plan can forward equity. This will be done through an assessment of how the project will impact the well-being of community members, especially underrepresented and vulnerable groups as described above. At this point, a range of tools that could be used to assess impacts, including an equity development scorecard, health impact analysis, or other tools that have been developed for this purpose are being explored. The resulting process may use one of these directly, or a hybrid that is specifically developed for community needs. The purpose is to identify unintended consequences of the master plan using a holistic, human-scale approach.

This analysis will draw directly on public engagement for insights on community impacts, and therefore will be closely coordinated with the engagement approach. Additional research on related topics may help inform that engagement further. The exact nature of what is evaluated, and the information collected, will be dependent on the tools chosen.

Housing Study – Affordability, Displacement, and Gentrification

The purpose of this element is to look at the potential impacts on housing affordability and accessibility from the new development, determine the risk for displacement and gentrification, and recommend potential mitigation and prevention strategies. It is anticipated this will include a City-wide approach that will include an analysis of the City's existing housing stock, identify gaps in the housing need based on existing and future population, as well as an assessment of means for tracking housing indicators on an ongoing basis. The study will also look at larger regional trends around affordability, gentrification, and displacement that may be affecting Brooklyn Center's market.

It is anticipated that this analysis will involve a broader discussion on housing policy and approach, beyond the scope of the Opportunity Site, but that the recommendations that come out of the study will be incorporated into the Opportunity Site master planning work.

This information will be relevant to community conversations on the topic, as well as informing the master plan development and implementation. As results are available from the technical study, they will be shared with the community through the engagement process.

Environmental and Traffic Assessments

Impacts on the environment are also a significant consideration – including natural areas, water, historic and cultural sites, parks, air quality, traffic, noise, wildlife, and other elements. Assessing these impacts will help inform the design, mitigation strategies, and implementation of the master plan. At this time, the City is planning for an alternative urban areawide review (AUAR), an environmental assessment that can address the impacts of multi-phase redevelopment scenarios like the plan for the Opportunity Site. Traffic and stormwater analysis will be a major focus areas in this AUAR, informing the development of new roads and stormwater features, respectively.

This analysis serves a dual role: informing the master plan development and implementation and meeting environmental review requirements as dictated by state statute.

As defined under statute, AUARs have requirements related to public review and comment at various steps in the process. These will be coordinated with the overall engagement process whenever possible. Additionally,

summaries of materials produced through this analysis will be made available publicly for people who have an interest in these findings.

Financial Analysis

This analysis is done in order to develop and evaluate a high level public subsidy and financial plan for the master plan. The analysis includes how the city will address subsidies, costs, and revenue sources with the developments and infrastructure costs. The analysis will examine the cost/benefit of development scenarios based on the draft master plan as well as identify if there are financial gaps between the taxes generated by the new development and the cost of the public infrastructure serving the development. If gaps exist, the analysis will include recommendations for how they can be filled. This analysis will be largely a technical exercise, though recommendations will be shared publicly.

The analysis will be informed by community goals and priorities related to the use of public resources.