

## Becoming Brooklyn Center: Phase I Public Engagement Summary (10/4/19 draft)

### Purpose

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The purpose of the first phase of engagement in Becoming Brooklyn Center was to provide a foundation for goals and priorities for the Opportunity Site master plan. The process began with a series of facilitated workshops that identified a list of community priorities and recommended benefits. Subsequent events built upon this work by sharing out these ideas for review, input and further comment. The intent was to gather feedback from a diverse representation of the community to inform the development of a draft plan.

### Events and Activities

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- Corridor Development Initiative Workshops, March 20, April 3, April 17, and May 1, 2019
- Brooklyn Center Health Fair Pop-up, April 27, 2019
- Multicultural Advisory Committee Workshop, May 28, 2019
- Earle Brown Days Pop-up, June 22, 2019
- City Council Presentation, July 1, 2019
- Second Saturday Market Pop-up, July 13, 2019
- APA Minnesota Brown Bag Lunch, July 16, 2019
- Youth in Governance Day with Brooklynk Interns, July 22, 2019
- National Night Out with Brooklynk Interns, August 6, 2019
- Second Saturday Market Pop-up, September 14, 2019
- Empire Media Podcast, *Voice of Hope with Pastor Loveth*, September 17, 2019
- Becoming Brooklyn Center Open House with focus on the Opportunity Site, September 19, 2019
- CEAP Farm Fresh Fest, September 20, 2019
- Community Band & BBQ, September 21, 2019

In addition to the events, an online poll was circulated on the City's Polco survey platform throughout July 2019. Project information was shared via the project website and social media. This resulted in numerous online social media postings (on both city and neighborhood social media accounts), and an additional 80+ people signing up for project updates.

The city's Brooklynk interns, a cohort of local high school students paired with city departments, were used at several events to both provide input and collect input from others. The hiring of a temporary intern, also focusing on youth outreach, followed the conclusion of these internships.

To provide more focused guidance, two ongoing working groups were formed during this time to provide support: Opportunity Site Working Committee and Zoning Task Force. The Opportunity Site Working Committee is focused on informing and facilitating the public engagement process, and the Zoning Task Force will provide feedback on the zoning code update. These groups were convened during Phase I and will continue to meet into the next phase of engagement.

Additionally, some ideas emerged around how barriers to engagement could be better addressed. These included finding ways to offset the cost of engagement for participants, especially those that have been underrepresented in past processes.

## Results

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Over **1,000** direct engagements with residents and other community stakeholders. While participants were not asked to identify themselves directly, around one third to one half of participants were estimated to be people of color. By comparison, approximately 57% of the total population in Brooklyn Center, and 45% of the adult (18+) population, are people of color (*Source: US Census 2013-2017 American Community Survey*).

The following general themes have emerged from the engagement to date. More specifics are available in individual event summaries.

- **Create space for the community.** This reflects a desire for more active community spaces that meet multiple needs. This includes places for people to gather and hold events; places for children/youth to be safe, active, engaged; places to enjoy the outdoors; and places to have fun and draw visitors. The focus on places and activities for youth was strong and heard from all age groups – including everything from after school programming to youth-oriented shopping options.
- **Make it accessible and affordable.** This represents the value that this should be accessible to all residents, not just those able to pay more. This includes the addition of quality affordable housing options, space for small local businesses to locate and thrive, and activities and destinations that are fun and affordable.
- **Build upon asset of cultural diversity.** This represents a recognition and valuing of the city’s rich diversity. This includes supporting culturally focused retail, services, and institutions; including local entrepreneurs and businesses; ensuring that the place feels welcoming to everyone and developing new institutions like a multicultural arts center,
- **Counteract disinvestment.** This addresses the concern that the city needs to shore up its economic vitality and tax base through new private sector investments. This includes making positive change happen on long-vacant land, increase retail/service opportunities to help replace what has been lost, boosting the community tax base to offset resident tax burden, and developing the Opportunity Site area as a new downtown district.
- **Connect this to the community.** This reflects the need for both physical and social connections between the site and the surrounding area, so it truly is part of the community. This includes making multimodal connections with transit, trails, and walkable design; working with community partners; ensuring design and function don’t create an “island” of development, and proactively seeking accountability on community benefits.
- **Environmental Sustainability.** This reflects the desire that the development be designed in a way to minimize its environmental footprint. This can be done through green infrastructure planning and site design as well as through sustainable building materials and the use of renewable energy.

These results form the basis for (1) the development of an initial draft of the master plan and (2) guidance for Phase 2 regarding both technical work and outreach priorities.

## Feedback on Process

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While effort was made to ensure a diverse representation of participants in the engagement process, the city wished to go further to ensure that all voices are heard. To this end, the next phase of public engagement for the Opportunity Site will incorporate strategies that more directly focus on underrepresented groups.

Additionally, the last topic in the summary above, “proactively seeking accountability on community benefits,” was a major focus for those who wanted to ensure the project truly benefitted existing residents. The next

phase of engagement, which parallels additional technical work, will be transparent and accountable on both the assessment of potential impacts and the mitigation strategies to be pursued.

There were also ongoing questions for how the public engagement being collected would be considered in the master planning process, particularly in relation to the more technical components of the study.