

# Durham Comprehensive Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do we need a new Comprehensive Plan?**

In communities across the country, comprehensive plans are updated every 5 years on average to respond to changing conditions and to plan proactively for the future. Our Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2005 with some minor updates in 2012.

Durham has seen a remarkable transformation in the past decade and the outlook for the future, along with community priorities, has also evolved. Since the passage of the existing Comprehensive Plan in 2005, Durham County has added approximately 49,000 new jobs and 57,000 new residents. Over the next decade, we are projected to add an additional 19,000 jobs and 43,000 new residents. Durham is changing and it is critical we have a clear land use policy for the future.

An updated Comprehensive Plan with clear priorities helps facilitate prudent decision-making regarding annexations, service delivery, the annual budget process, and projects within the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). An updated Comprehensive Plan can help ensure coordinated, cross-jurisdictional, and inter-departmental policy making and implementation by getting “everyone on the same page” and agreeing to a set of priorities, values, and policies.

### **Who will guide this process?**

The engagement for the Comprehensive Plan is somewhat of a pilot project for a new way of doing business. Elected officials, staff, and the community within the City and County of Durham have shown commitment to authentically engaging the community going forward, and working to reach parts of our diverse community that are harder to reach and may have been excluded or absent from previous planning processes for a variety of reasons. The Equitable Engagement Blueprint, developed by our colleagues in Neighborhood Improvement Services, embodies this commitment, and this effort will use the Blueprint as its foundation. However, this is new terrain for us and a very far-reaching project to pilot. We hope to approach this work with humility, know that we will not have all the answers nor get everything right the first time. Our commitment is to as much transparency as possible and to continually listen to the community and reset our course as needed to move our engagement efforts in the right direction. We hope that our transparency and willingness to rethinking our strategies will help rebuild trust with our community, even if we find we have made missteps along the way. Part of our strategy to best work in this new terrain is to ensure we have a diverse guidance structure both within the City and County and within the community. Detailed information about the involvement by the community is discussed below with the Communications Team, Outreach Team, and Engagement

Ambassadors. In addition, we will look to the following groups, either existing or to be convened, for guidance:

Joint City-County Planning Committee (JCCPC): Early discussion and guidance in each project phase; Receive summary of completed phase; Provide input moving into the next phase; Ensure adherence to adopted community-based values/guiding principles for the plan.

Staff Engagement Team (SET): Sounding board for engagement process decisions while the teams are being formed; responsible for selecting team and ambassador participants based on established criteria for representation; collaborate and coordinate this engagement effort with those underway or beginning related to other City and County projects; Neighborhood Improvement Services staff has been informally assisting in this role while this group is convened.

Staff Technical Team (STT): This group will include staff from various departments that will be more involved in the technical policy development aspects of this process, but will also be kept apprised of engagement opportunities and milestones along the way.

Planning Commission: Staff will not only provide the Planning Commission with regular updates throughout the Comprehensive Plan development, but has also begun conversations with the Commission about how they can more deeply be involved in the Plan's development, possibly through a dedicated subcommittee.

Governing Bodies: Although the JCCPC will be the primary touchpoint for the project with our elected officials, there will be periodic involvement of the full governing boards throughout the process. We invite all elected officials from the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners to participate in the JCCPC discussions of the project.

Alongside all of this our consultant team will be providing their experience and guidance on the engagement process as well as the plan policy development.

### **What is the Communications Team?**

This team is tasked with developing motivating messages to create awareness of the process in the community and provide guidance on potential outlets for that messaging. Staff is working with the City's Office of Public Affairs and the County's Department of Public Information/Governmental Affairs to determine a list of people to reach out to for involvement in this team, in addition to reaching out to the members of Discover Durham's Public Information Officers Council.

## **What is the Outreach Team?**

This team is tasked with delivering participants to the process. The expectation is that this team will have a diversity of geographic, demographic, and civic representation from across the City and County. This group will work with staff and the consultant team to determine how to best reach their communities to bring them into the process for this plan. Nominations (of yourself or someone else) for potential participants in the Outreach Team are open now through June 24. The nomination form is being distributed through County and County communications, but also to a list of organizations with connections to communities that are typically underrepresented in our planning processes. In addition, we are reaching out to those organizations identified to assist in formation of the Complete Count Committee for Census 2020 and are hoping to coordinate efforts on engagement between the Census and this project.

At the end of the nomination period, the Staff Engagement Team will assist in assessing the submissions to ensure representative team make up. We will be working to balance a manageable group size with ensuring we have diverse representation. Some participants may have connections to multiple demographic, geographic, and local organizations which will be helpful in this task. Once the team is convened we will also ask the group to help us determine if there are specific groups that lack representation so we can invite their participation. The Engagement Ambassadors will be a subset of the Outreach Team.

## **Who are the Engagement Ambassadors?**

All of the Engagement Ambassadors are part of the Outreach Team, though not all team members are Engagement Ambassadors. The Engagement Ambassadors are a subset of participants in the Outreach Team that have connections to typically underrepresented communities. In addition to recruiting participants to the project, the ambassadors will gather public input. Ambassadors will engage their communities on the substance of the plan (land use concepts, issues, education, and input on the Comprehensive Plan vision, content, and policies). Engagement Ambassadors will be paid for their support of the outreach strategy and will be responsible for energizing their networks, delivering participants to the Comprehensive Plan process, and going out into the community and gathering input.

Staff is working on establishing criteria with which to determine the Outreach Team participants who will be Engagement Ambassadors. Compensation will be commensurate with amount of time and effort of specific engagement methods developed by the Outreach Team, staff, and the consultant team. Compensation is not available for Outreach Team participants that are not identified as Ambassadors.

## **Why are you compensating the Ambassadors?**

We anticipate getting questions about why some of the Outreach Team participants are being compensated for their work. We intend to be transparent about our reasoning and have developed the following explanation:

1. The ambassadors have connections and trust with communities where we, as local government staff, have been unsuccessful in creating the needed authentic connections and trust. They are a resource that we are hoping to be able to team up with to invite more people into the process and to determine where they need to take the process to the community. Often these individuals have been expected to use their expertise and community connections but are not valued and compensated for the resources they provide. The ambassadors will simultaneously be building capacity in the community and, by increasing the capacity and neighborhood organizing infrastructure, equitable representative engagement will be more effective in the future. Further, this relationship between City/County staff and the ambassadors is intended to be reciprocal so that it can simultaneously benefit neighborhood led work, while informing City/County projects.
2. The ambassadors are creating connections with communities that have fewer resources, collectively and individually, because of a system that has been set up to oppress non-whites. These individuals may often have fewer financial resources than folks in white neighborhoods and paying them to assist will be necessary to not have an adverse impact on the community or individuals.
3. The entire Outreach Team will be working to deliver folks to the engagement process. Once we review who has been able to participate in the community-wide events, we will need additional engagement to receive input from those communities who are underrepresented or not represented in those who were present. The ambassadors will be tasked with going out into their communities and hosting “meetings in a box” or other more focused efforts to get input and involvement from those communities we may have missed. Ambassadors will be expected to put in more hours “in the field” than the rest of the Outreach Team.