



# Connecting with the Community:

## Maximizing Public Participation in Planning Initiatives

Mike Narcowich, AICP, Principal Planner II  
Maggie Dobbs, Planner II  
Kristyn DiDominick, Manna on Main Street



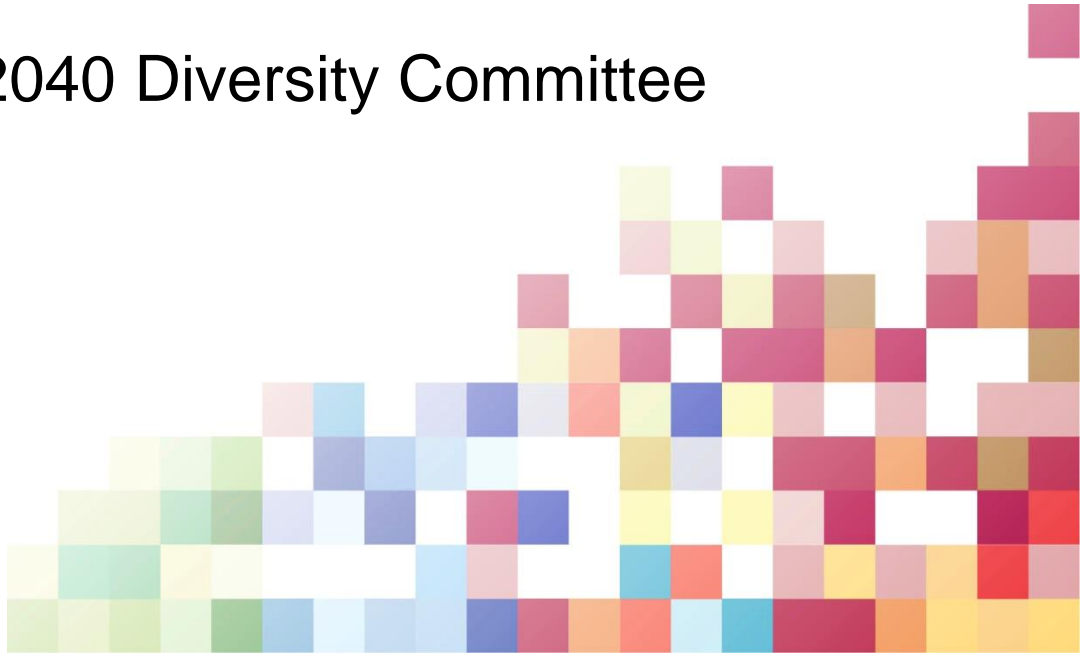
# Introductions



- Mike Narcowich, AICP  
Principal Planner, MCPC
- Maggie Dobbs  
Planner II, MCPC
- Kristyn DiDominick, MSW  
Program Director, Manna on Main Street

# Connecting with the Community

- Planning in Montgomery County
- 3 Step Public Outreach Process
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Case Study: Lansdale2040 Diversity Committee



# Planning in Montgomery County



# Montgomery County: Background

- Demographics in Montgomery County (MontCo)
  - Population: 3<sup>rd</sup> largest, after Philadelphia and Allegheny
  - Largely affluent
    - Median income \$53,336
  - Racial and Latino composition:
    - Non-white population: similar to state
    - Hispanic or Latino: 5.0%
  - Age: median 41.4

# Montgomery County: Background

- Character
  - Adjacent to Philadelphia
  - Comprised of older, dense suburban areas and boroughs, primarily in eastern portion
  - West: includes rural areas
  - Four regional planning commissions

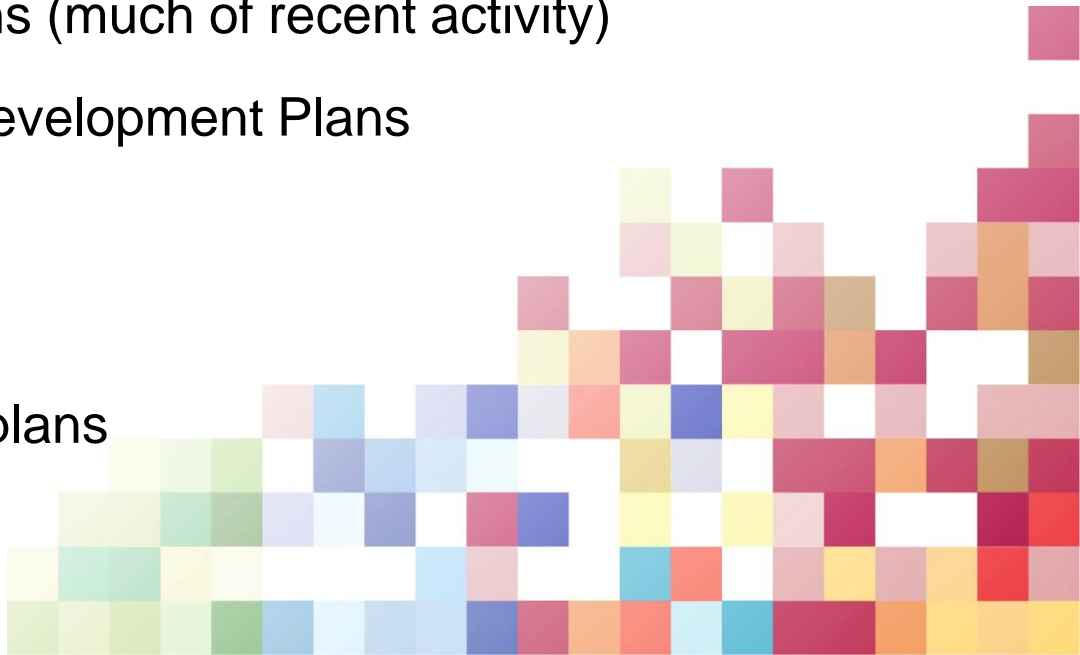
# Planning in Montgomery County

- Examples of MCPC outreach:
  - Walkability study: Walk Montco
    - Physical walking surveys
    - Wikimaps data gathering
  - Bike Montco
    - Large Steering Comm. (45 people)
  - Montco2040 Comprehensive Plan
    - Extensive outreach (public meetings, surveys, Google Hangouts)



# Planning in Montgomery County

- Community Planning
  - Offer planning assistance contracts (34 of 62 municipalities)
  - Examples of planning outreach:
    - Comprehensive plans (much of recent activity)
    - Revitalization or redevelopment Plans
    - Zoning ordinanceas
    - Walkability studies
    - Park & open space plans





# AICP Ethics

## Principals to Which We Aspire

- *1.e. We shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence.*

# Ask the Audience!



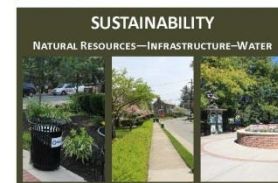
## Jenkintown2035 Open House

Please come out to the Jenkintown2035 Open House to learn about the themes and recommendations of the draft Jenkintown2035 Comprehensive Plan and vote on your priorities for improvement.

Jenkintown Borough Hall  
Wednesday March 22 | 5:00-8:00 pm  
700 Summit Avenue, Jenkintown, PA 19046

*FREE refreshments will be provided*

*FREE parking is available after 5 pm in public parking lots and at metered spaces*



Questions or comments?  
Marley Bice at [mbice@montcopa.org](mailto:mbice@montcopa.org) or 610-278-3740



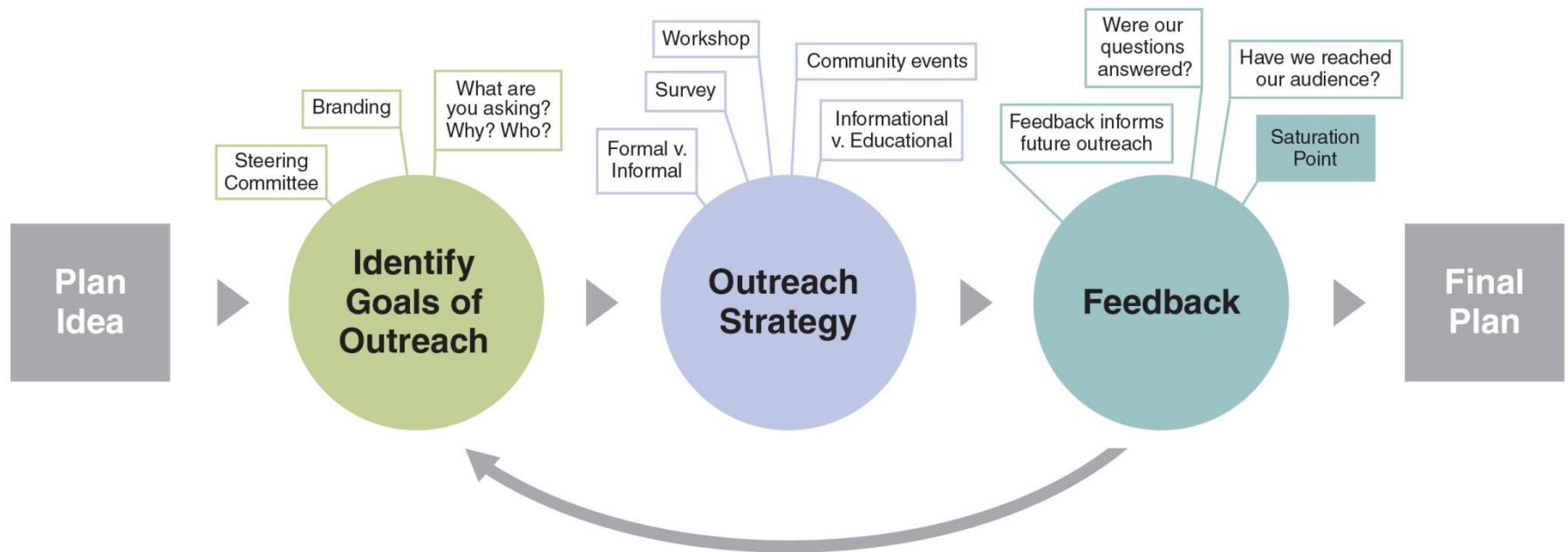
# Setting the stage...

- Important to be representational of the whole community
  - Outreach efforts must be deliberate and intentional to diversify who participates
- **Event** = any outreach strategy
- **Plan** = final result of planning process; can include projects, ordinances, etc.

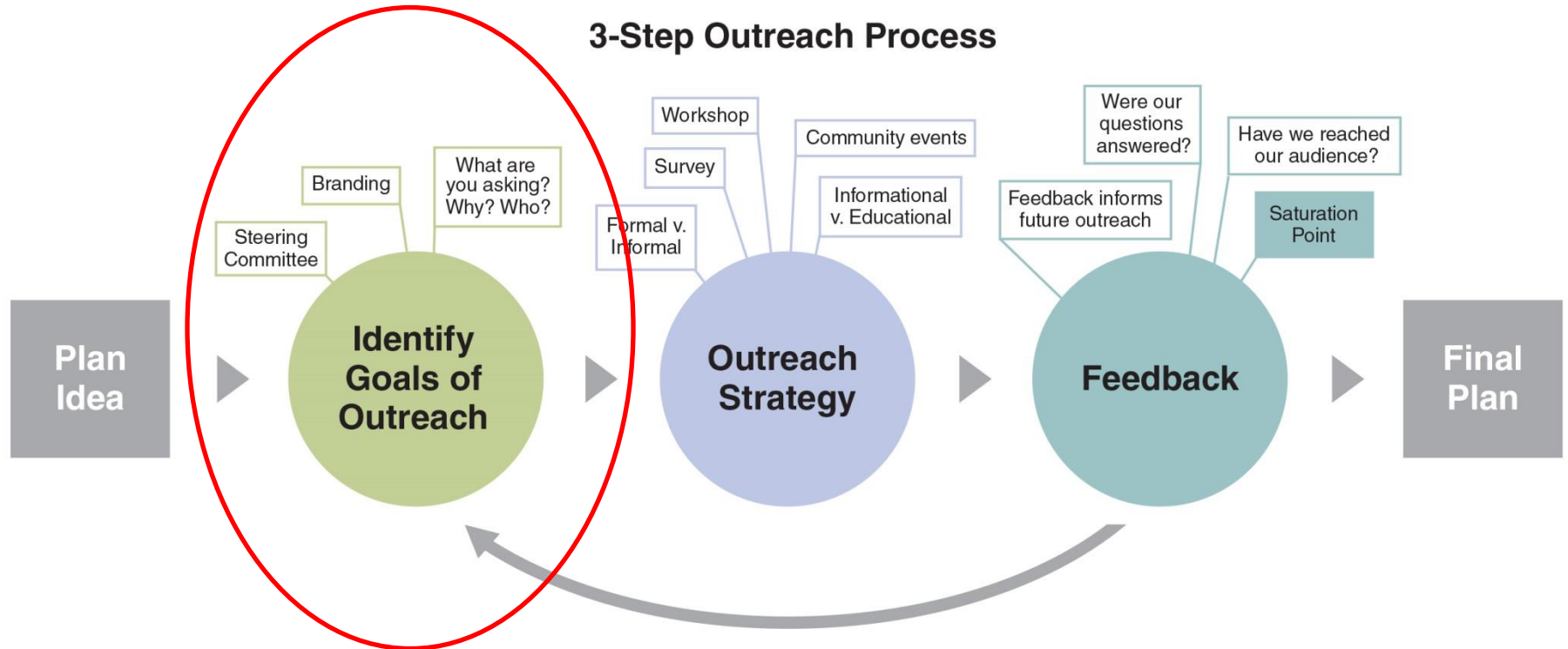
# 3-Step Process



## 3-Step Outreach Process



# 3-Step Process

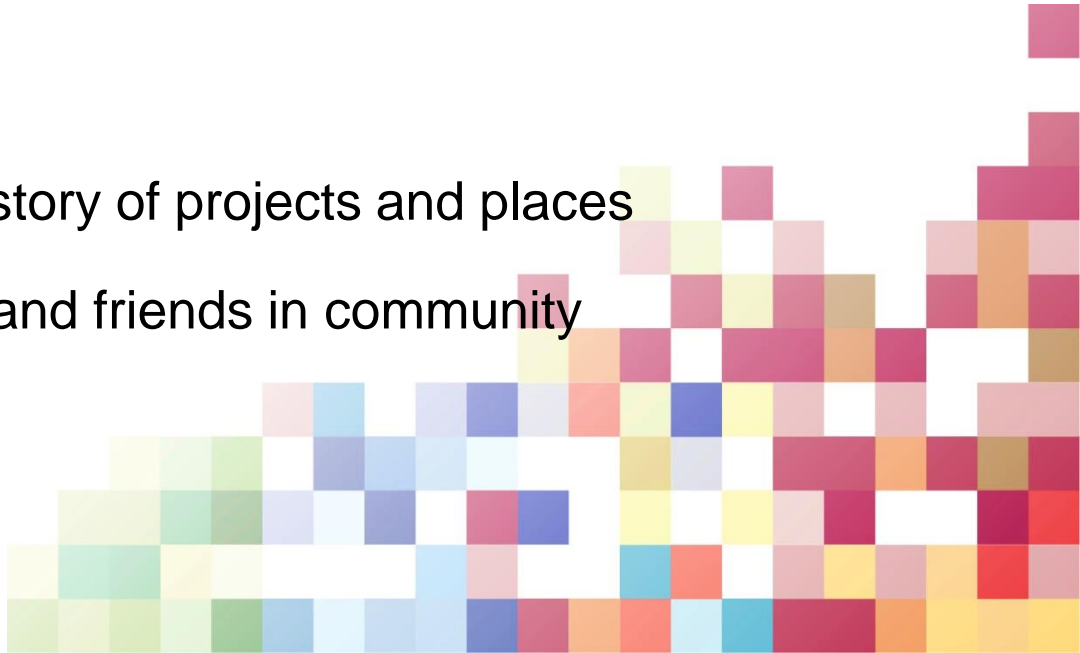


# Identify Goals of Outreach



# Identify Goals: Steering Committee

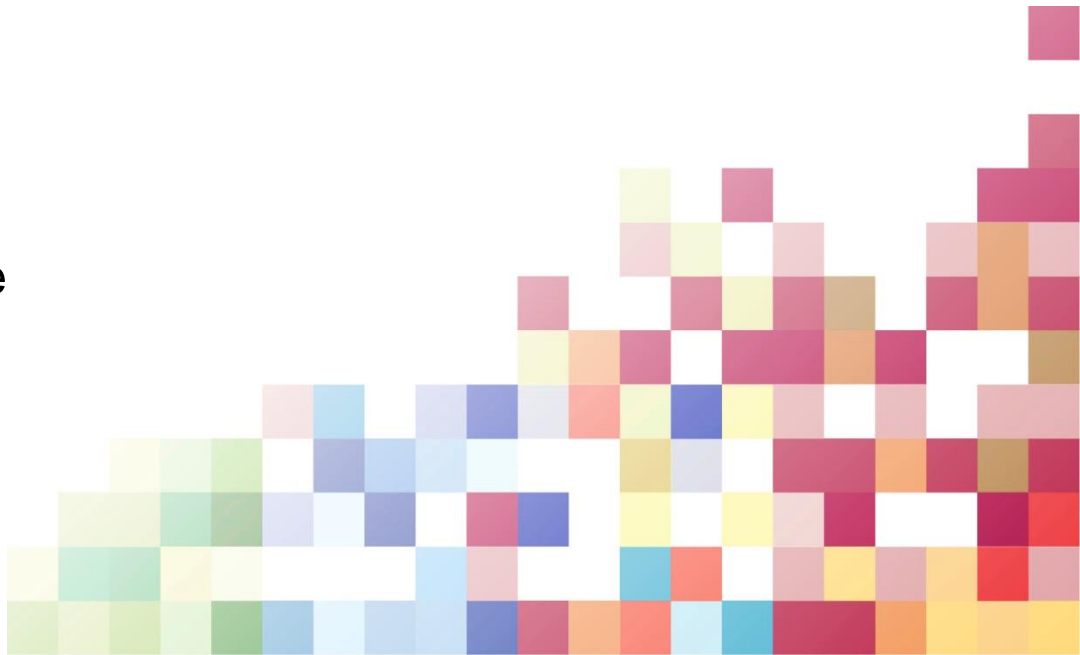
- Steering Committee or other group of stakeholders = community representation on a small scale
  - First line of information
  - Provides context and history of projects and places
  - Engage with neighbors and friends in community
  - Volunteer base





# Identify Goals: Questions to Ask

- What question are you asking?
- Why are you asking that question?
  - Opinions
  - Preference: this OR that
  - Values
  - Areas of concern
  - Areas of community pride
- Who are you asking?





# Identify Goals: MCPC Examples

- Comprehensive Plan
  - Outreach goal: determine which aspects of the community residents value the most and why
- MCPC Bike Plan
  - Outreach goal: identify locations where people bike/would like to bike

# Identify Goals: Create a Brand



# Identify Goals: Create a Brand

North Wales Borough  
2040



North Wales Borough  
2040



# 3-Step Process



# Outreach Strategy

- Plan
- Goals
- Stage in planning process
- Diversity



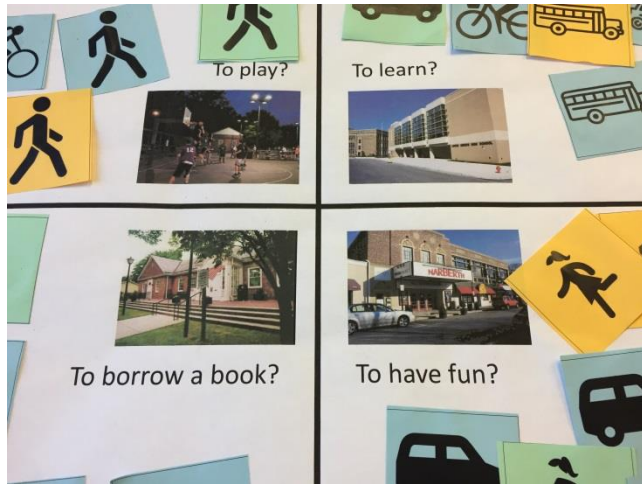
# Outreach Strategy: Formal v. Informal

- Process Stage
  - Early: informal engagement methods
  - Middle: formal engagement methods
  - End: informal public engagement; formal municipal engagement





# Outreach Strategy: Community Events



# Outreach Strategy: Surveys

Welcome to the Lansdale2040 Comprehensive Plan Community Survey!

**INTRODUCTION**

Lansdale Borough is updating its Comprehensive Plan and we need your input!

The *Lansdale2040* Comprehensive Plan will guide the Borough's future development, revitalization and land use policy well into the future. Your opinion is critical for us to understand what you, the residents, business owners and visitors of the Borough want to see happen in our community. **Please note:** All residents, people who work in, and people who visit Lansdale Borough are invited to take this survey. **However,** the questions in this survey only pertain to the Borough of Lansdale (see map) -- not areas with a Lansdale post office address that are outside the Borough.

**Please note that all responses are kept confidential and your personal information will not be shared with anyone. The full survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.** This survey is being conducted by the *Lansdale2040* Comprehensive Plan Task Force, with support from the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

For more information contact: Mike Narcowich, AICP | mnarcowi@montcopa.org | 610-278-5238 or Brian J. Olszak | bolszak@montcopa.org | 610-278-3737 at Montgomery County Planning Commission.

**Lansdale Borough**

Map showing Lansdale Borough boundaries and surrounding areas. Key streets include: SCHWAB RD, HARTFIELD ST, HANCOCK ST, STATION RD, ALLENWOOD RD, and others. Landmarks include: York Ave Elms, Upper Graysfield Township, and others.

Next

Powered by SurveyMonkey

**Lansdale 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

## Lansdale Borough is updating its Comprehensive Plan and we need your input!

The *Lansdale2040* Comprehensive Plan will guide the Borough's future development, revitalization and land use policy well into the future. Your opinion is critical for us to understand what you, the residents, business owners and visitors of the Borough want to see happen in our community. **Please note:** All residents, people who work in, and people who visit Lansdale Borough are invited to take this survey. **However,** the questions in this survey only pertain to the Borough of Lansdale (see map)—not areas with a Lansdale post office address that are outside the Borough.

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### About You

Please tell us a little about yourself. These questions are optional and will not be identified to you personally. Your answering these questions will help us in our efforts to reach a representative sample of the Borough's population.

**AY-1. Age: Which age group do you fall into? Check one.**

☐ 0-17    ☐ 25-34    ☐ 45-54    ☐ 65-74    ☐ Prefer not to say

☐ 18-24    ☐ 35-44    ☐ 55-64    ☐ 75+

**AY-2. What is your race and/or ethnicity? Check all that apply.**

☐ African-American/Black    ☐ Caucasian/White    ☐ Mixed

☐ Asian-American    ☐ Latino    ☐ Other

**AY-3. What is your gender/gender identity?**

☐ Male    ☐ Female    ☐ Transgender    ☐ None

**AY-4. Do you speak a language other than English at home?**

☐ Yes    ☐ No

**AY-5. If you speak a language other than English at home, what is the language?**

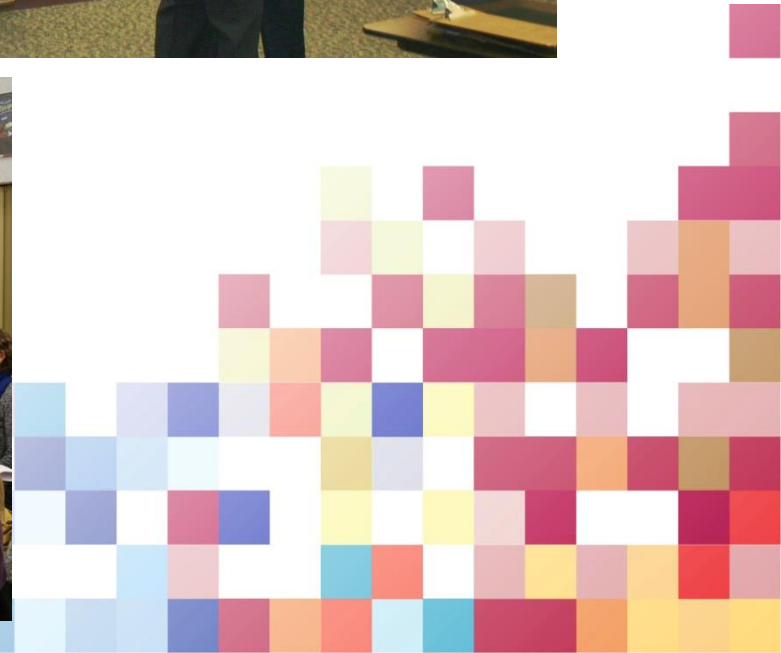
☐ Spanish    ☐ Korean    ☐ Arabic

☐ Bengali    ☐ Gujarati    ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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# Outreach Strategy: Workshops



# Outreach Strategy: Event Structure

- Choose appropriate location
  - Proximity to population
  - Anticipated audience size
  - Partnership with civic/religious organizations or community events
- Timing of event
  - Survey: multiple weeks
  - Workshop: single event, defined hours
  - Open House: multiple events, time of day, drop in hours

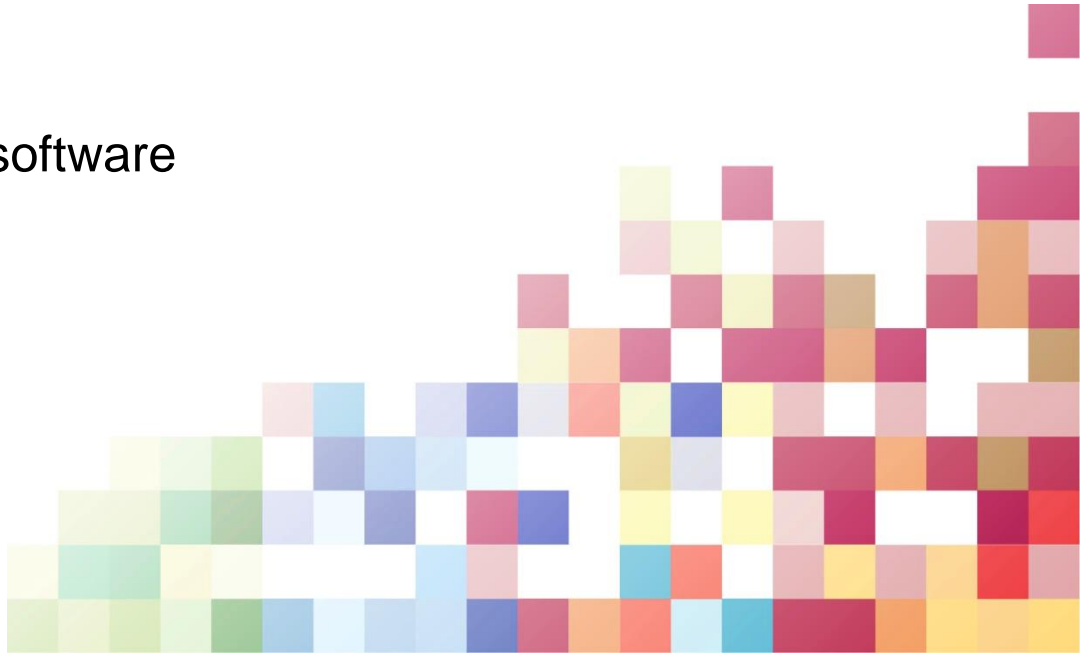
# Outreach Strategy: Event Structure

- Budget

- Advertising
- Refreshments
- Venue costs
- Professional services or software

- Staffing

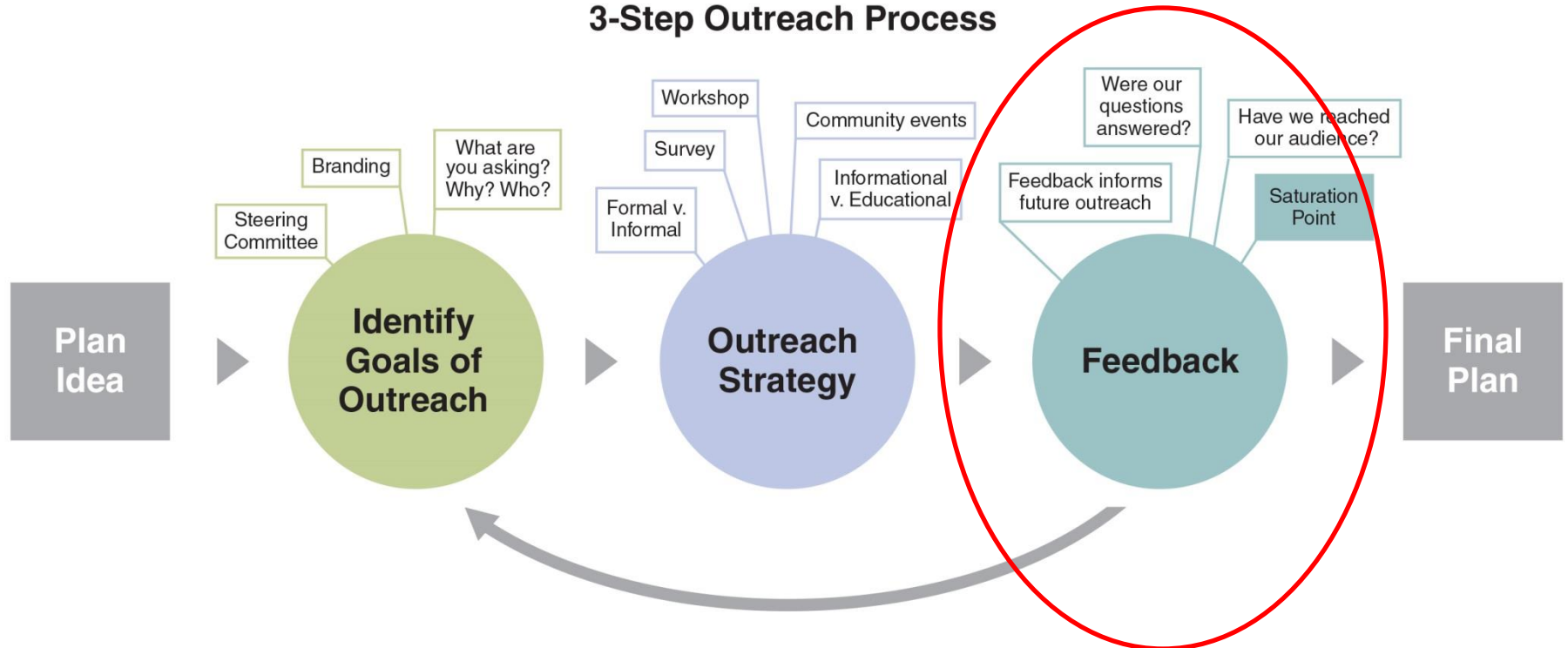
- Volunteers



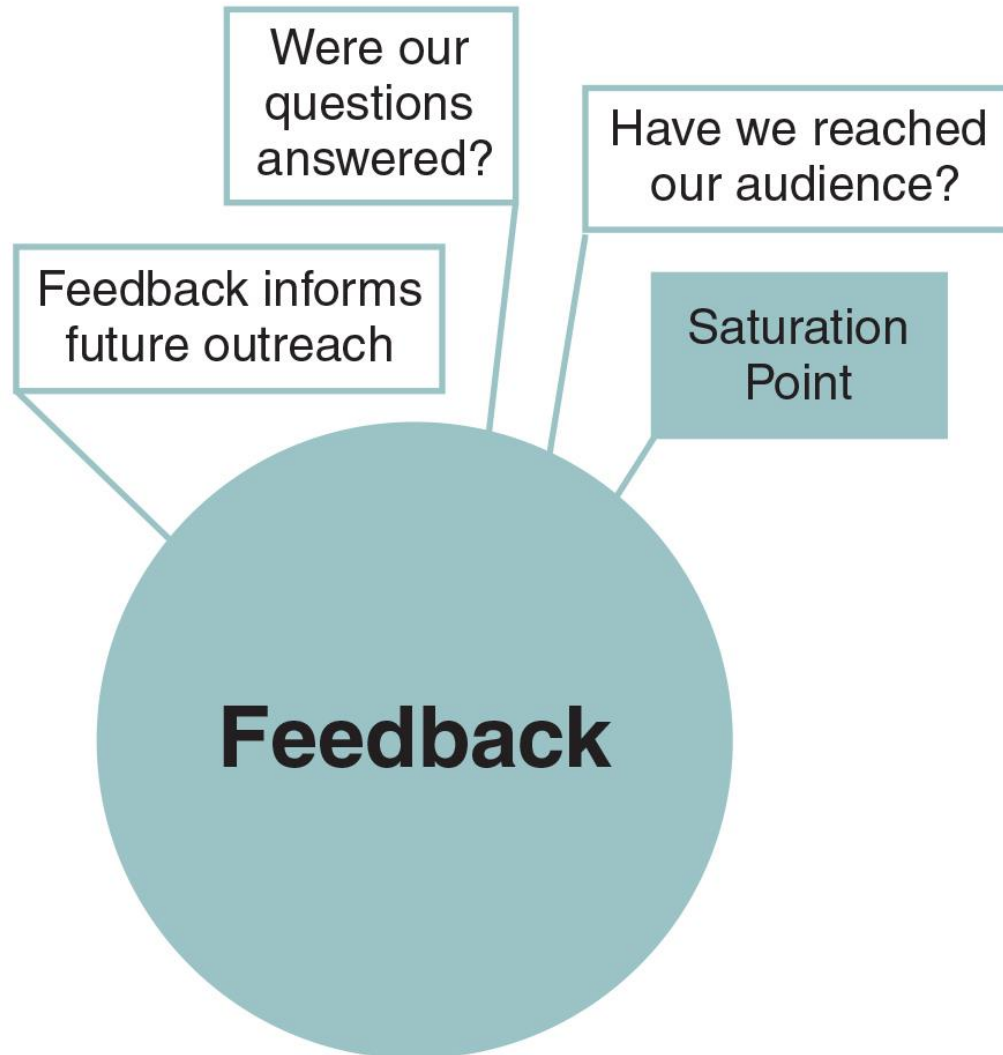
# 3-Step Process



## 3-Step Outreach Process



# Feedback

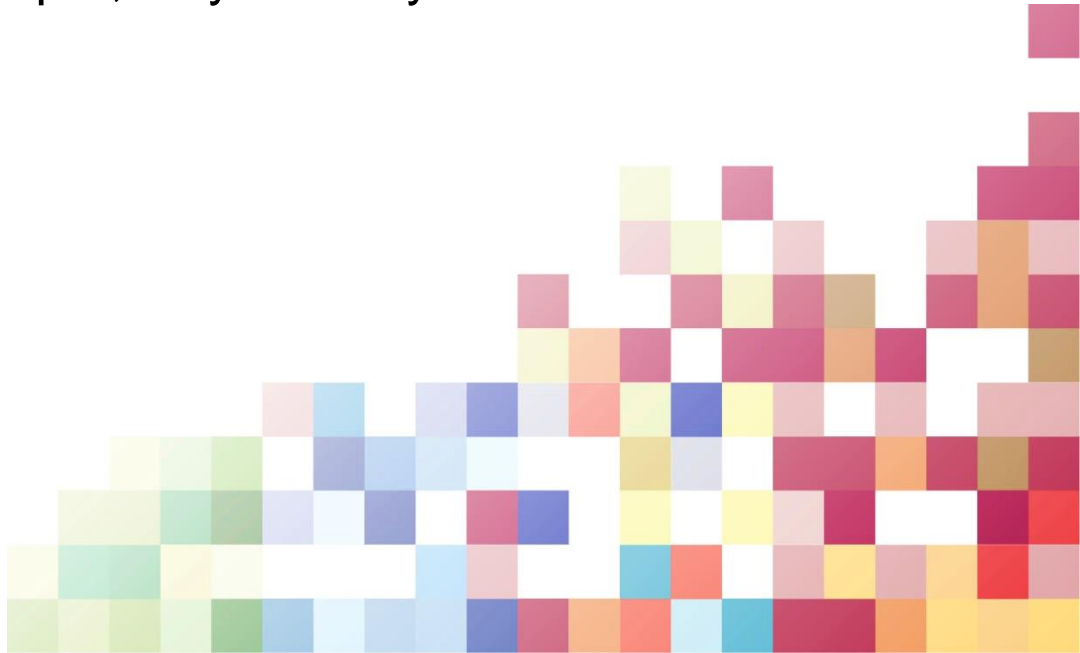


# Feedback: Checking your work

- Have we reached our target audience?
  - Did we include enough diversity, is the response representational of all community members?
- Were all of our questions answered?
  - Think of the initial goals you identified
  - Do you need to revisit any areas for additional feedback?

# Feedback: Saturation Point

- Final touch with the community
- Focus on the follow up with the community
  - Thanking them for their input, ways to stay involved



# Feedback: Inform Future Outreach

- Feedback from first touch informs future outreach
  - Also informs plan recommendations and implementation strategies



Example here of a project timeline with a feedback loop



# Challenges & Lessons Learned



Reaching various groups for a plan that truly represents the community requires a range of techniques, proactively implemented.

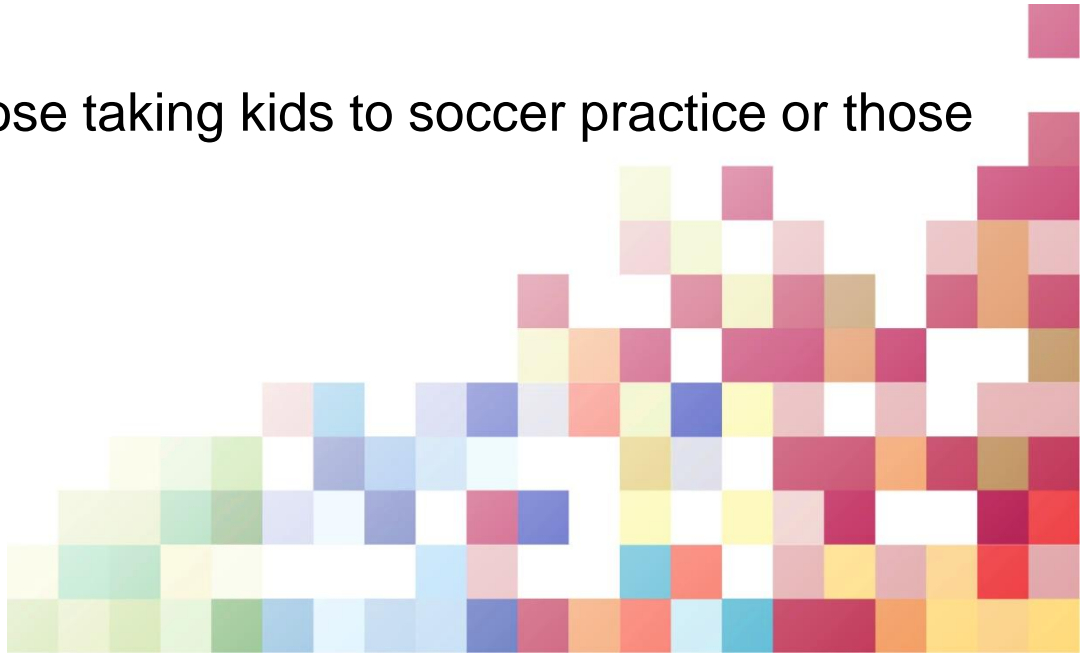
When you hear, “We gave people every opportunity to participate; if they didn’t participate, it’s their own fault”  
-DON’T accept it!

# Challenges

- Personalities
  - Some dominate conversation, others shy
- Choice of venue – more comfortable/convenient for some than others
- Communications
  - Translation time & cost
  - Hearing & visually impaired
  - Some groups can be more difficult to reach

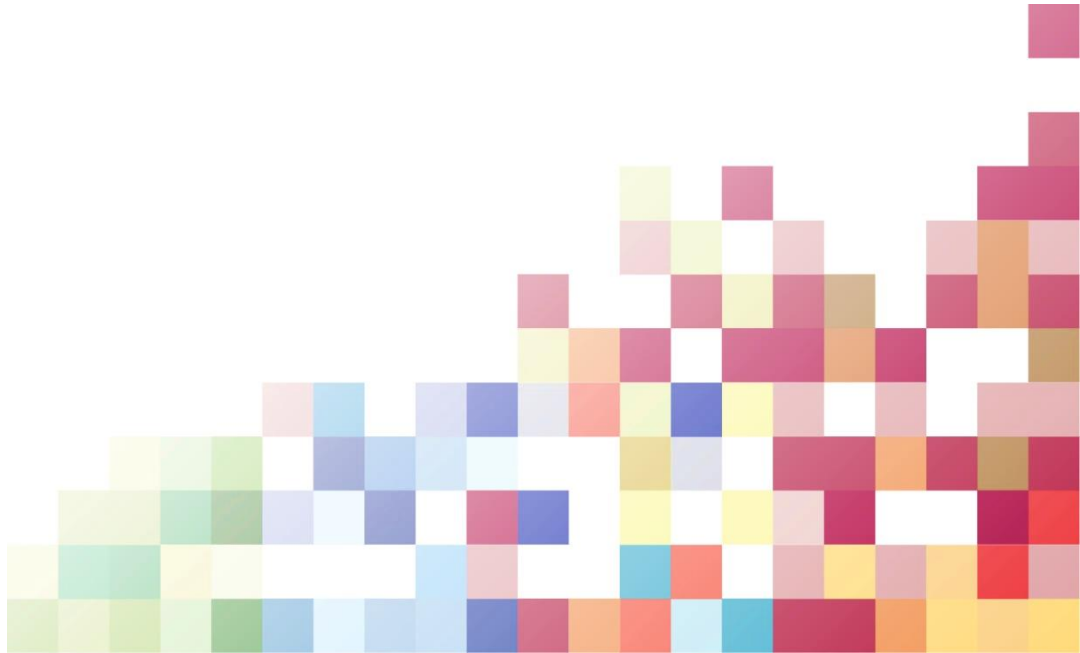
# Challenges

- Budget constraints
- Short attention spans
- Date/time
  - Evenings: difficult for those taking kids to soccer practice or those on evening shift



# Challenges

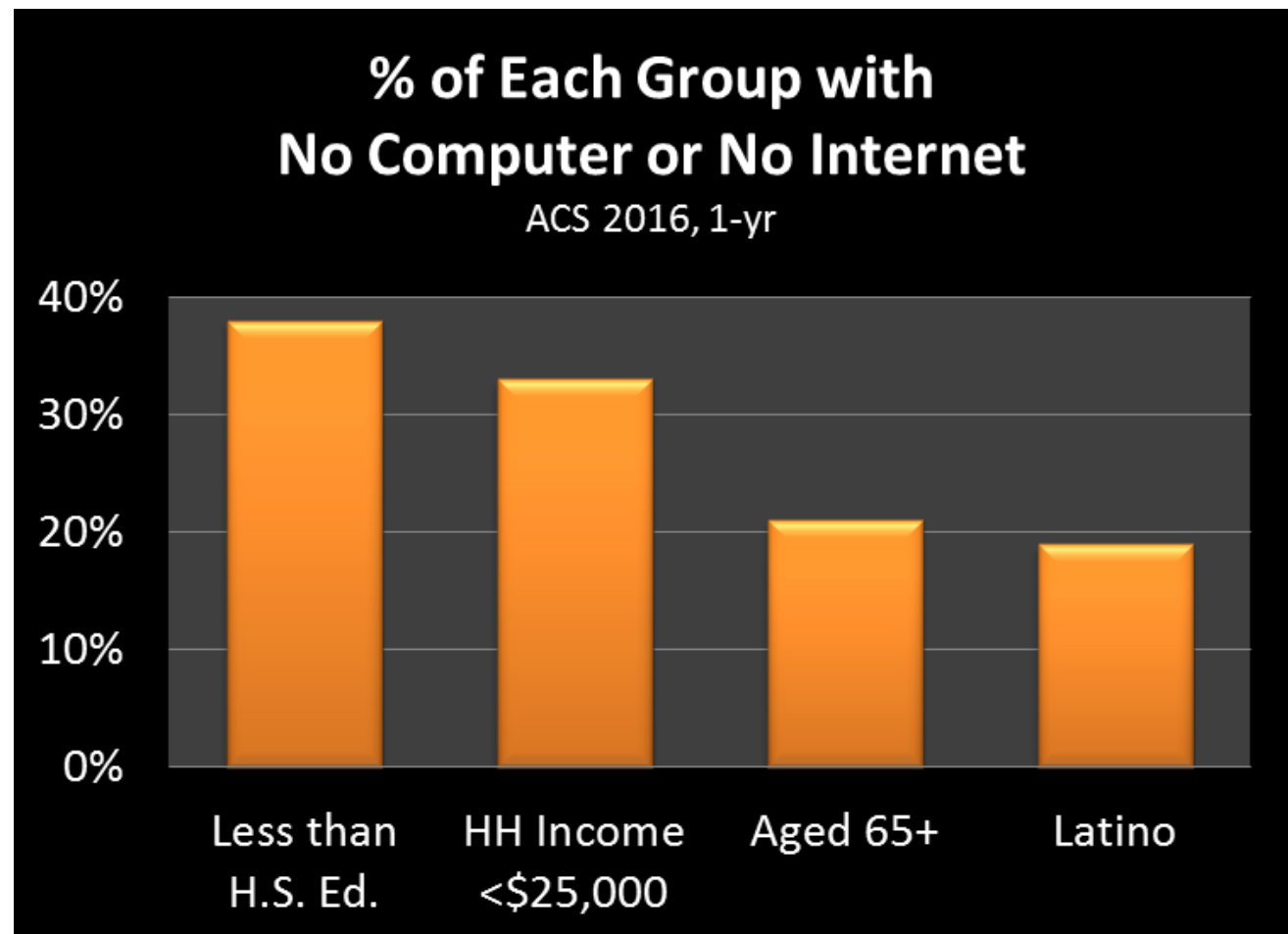
- Surveys
  - Internet: less control over distribution (validity); internet access
  - In-person: VERY short attention span
  - Mail: cost & time



# Challenges

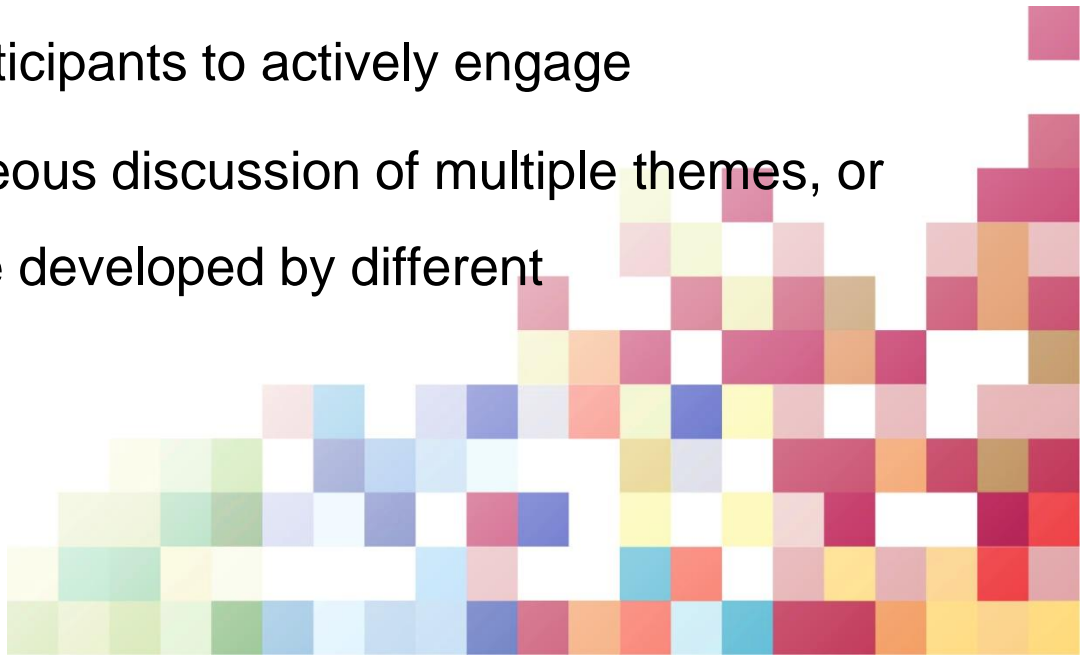
- Internet Access

*Data shown is  
for Montgomery  
County*



# Lessons Learned

- Conventional public meeting: useful for presentation and education with questions
- Breakout groups:
  - Can encourage more participants to actively engage
  - Flexible: Allows simultaneous discussion of multiple themes, or multiple alternatives to be developed by different groups for area of focus



# Lessons Learned

- Open House:
  - Informal, can encourage attendance and active participation by those not inclined to attend formal meetings
  - Flexible format encourages people to arrive when convenient throughout 2-3 hour period, focus on their interests



# Lessons Learned

- Speaking event— add to agenda of chamber of commerce or other civic organization to promote planning process
  - Advertising and organization already taken care of
  - Add staffed table for mini-survey and other feedback





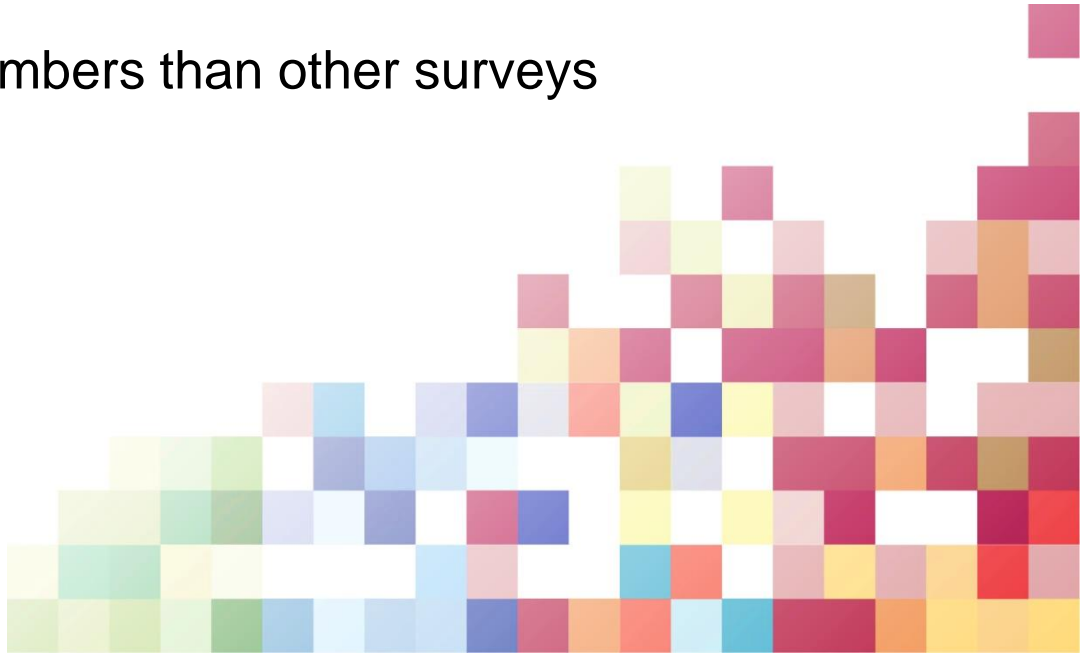
# Lessons Learned

- Interviews. Fewer people, facilitates in-depth discussion (phone or in-person)
- Explanations go a long way
  - Thoroughly brief assisting volunteers for effective event facilitation
  - Provide context for public
    - “Studies already completed recommended \_\_\_\_\_”
    - Land use discussion? “Think about these fiscal and other impacts: \_\_\_\_\_”

# Lessons Learned

- Internet Surveys

- Open-ended responses: encourage unique ideas, but multiple choice or ranking makes it much easier to tabulate and see trends
- Easier to reach large numbers than other surveys



# Lessons Learned

- Mail Survey (compared to internet survey)
  - More expensive, time consuming
  - More control over distribution
  - Can reach all/most households
    - Is there regular municipal mailing to all residents with which it can be included?

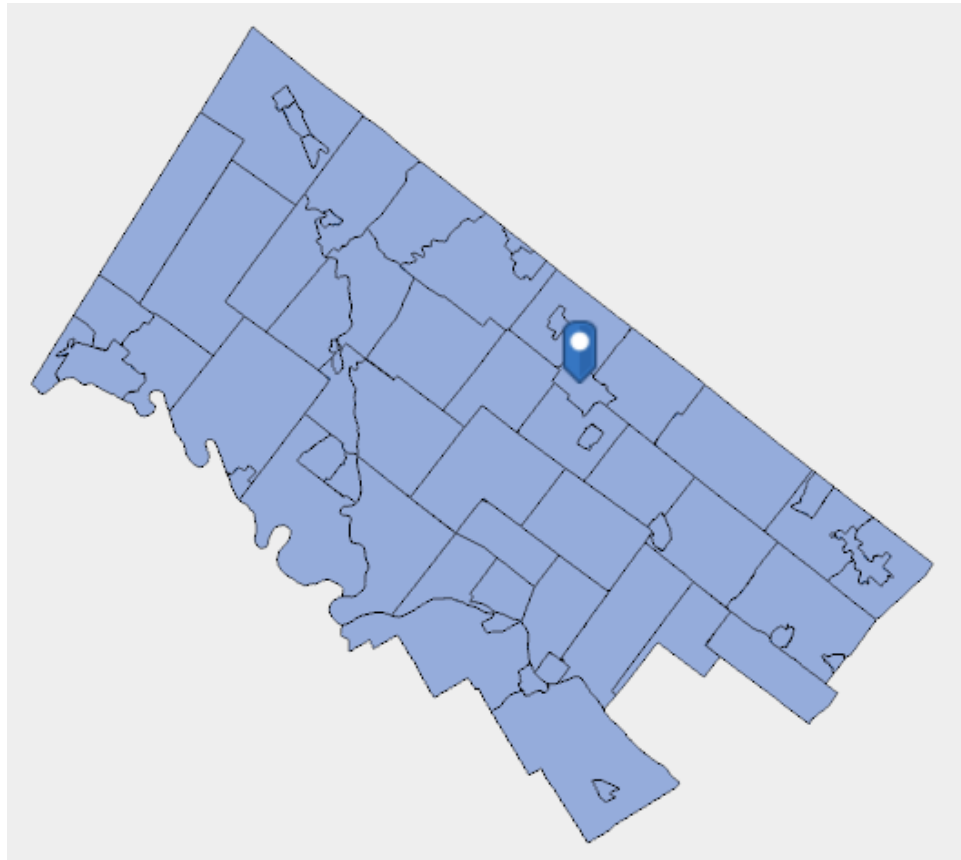
# Lessons Learned

- In-Person Survey (direct interaction)
  - Allows respondent opportunity for questions, clarifications
  - Typically needs to be very short (2-3 minutes)
    - Dot surveys
    - Introductory “what do you like most about...?” gets interaction off to positive start

# Case Study: Lansdale2040



Lansdale Borough's location in  
Montgomery County



# Diversity, Equity & Inclusiveness

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- *LANSDALE2040*, Lansdale Borough Comprehensive Plan



# AICP Code of Ethics

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## Principles to Which We Aspire (noted earlier)

*1.e. We shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence.*

# AICP Code of Ethics

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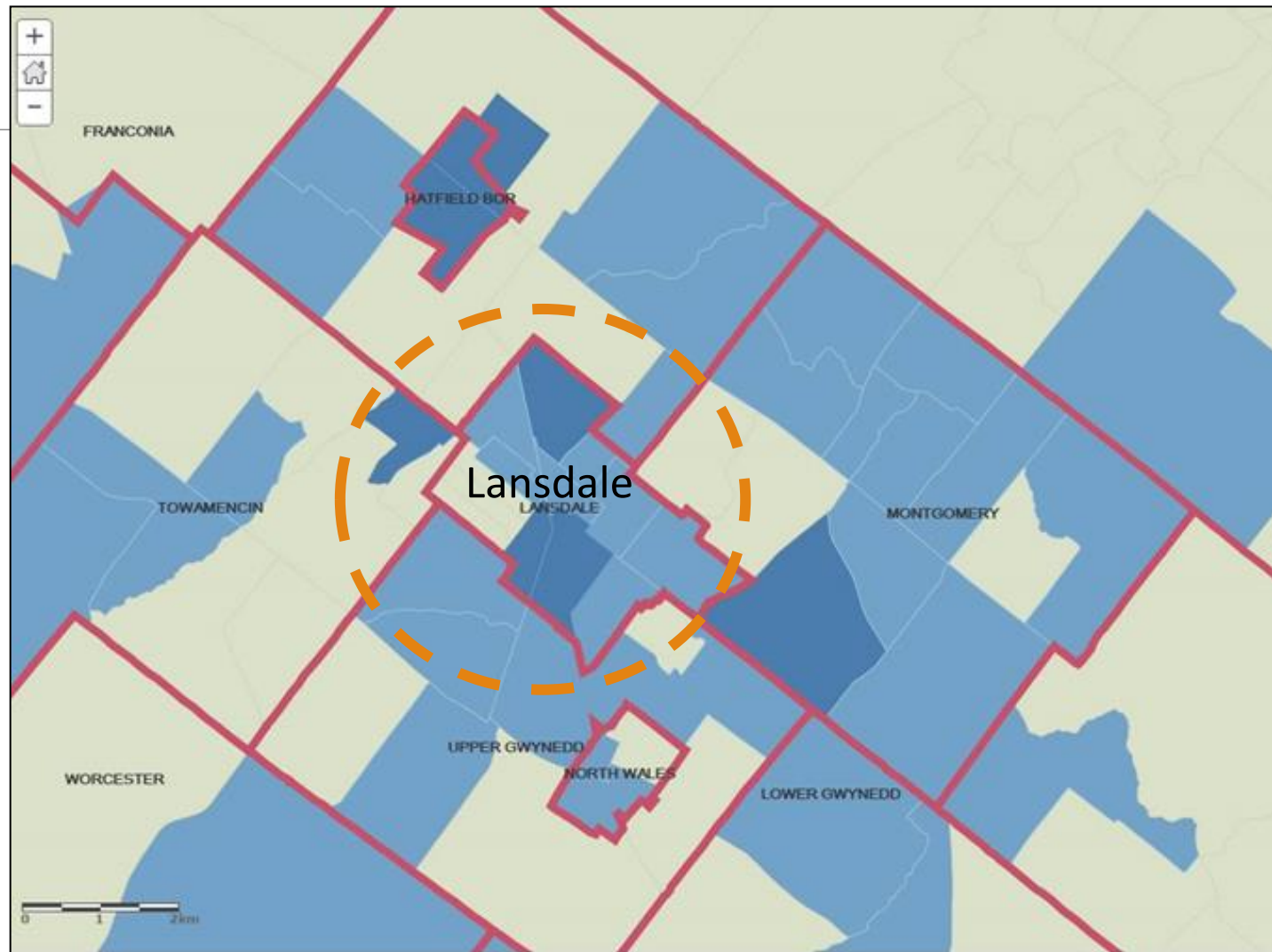
## Principles to Which We Aspire

*1.f. We shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs.*



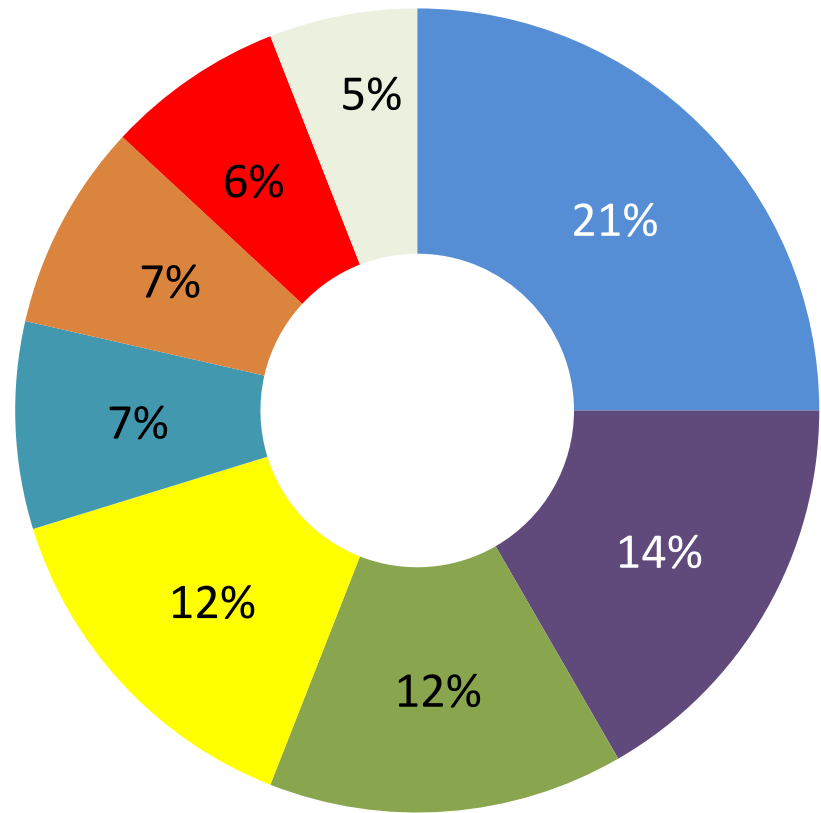
# A Diversifying Community

- Diversity Index: most diverse areas located in boroughs and contiguous areas
- Darker blue = more diverse



# A Diversifying Community

- Linguistic diversity in Lansdale has grown recently, particularly for Asians and Latinos
- North Penn School District: 19% of District students have a primary home language other than English



■ Bangla

■ Gujarati

■ Arabic

■ Vietnamese

■ Korean

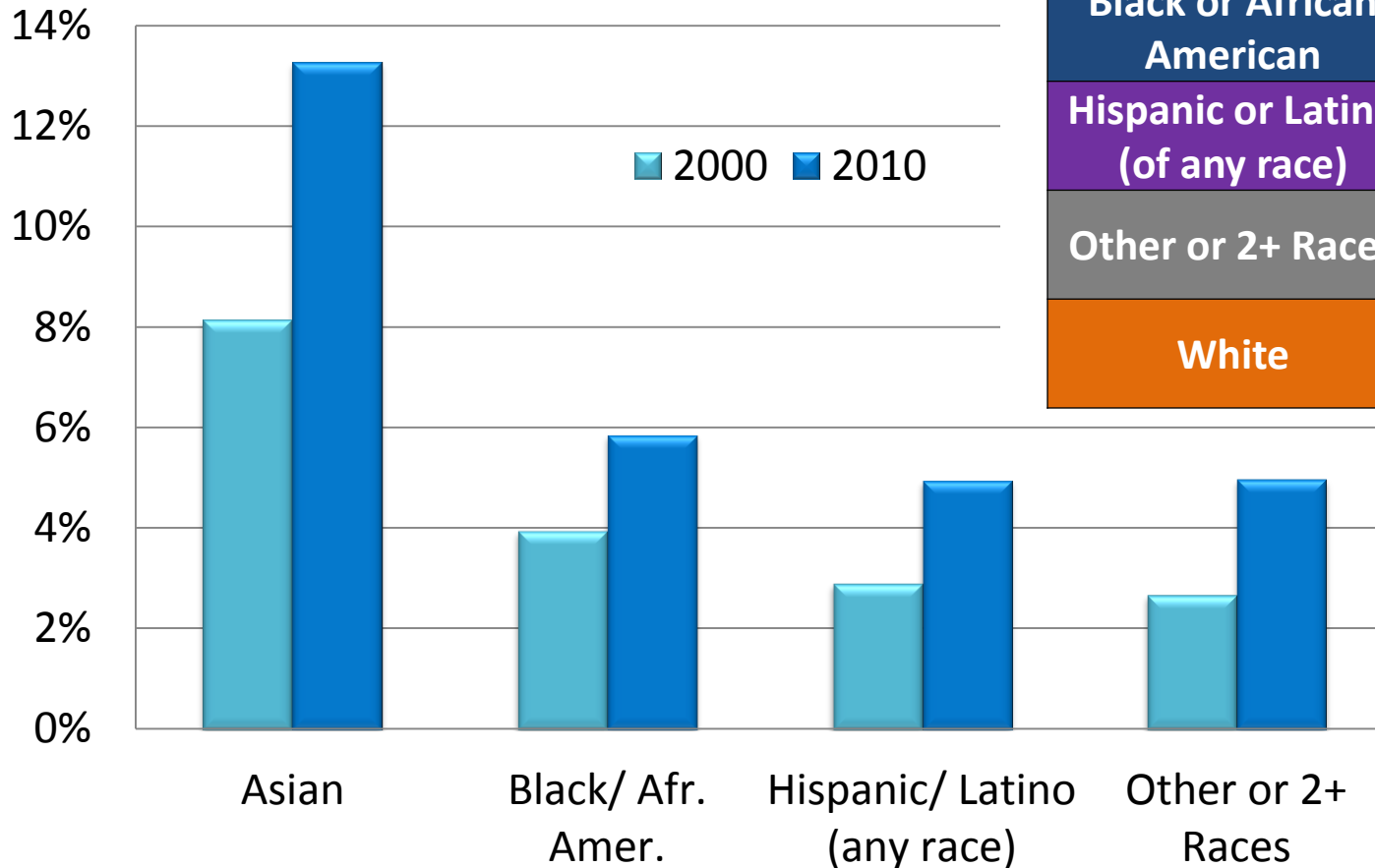
■ Spanish

■ Other Indian Dialects

■ Chinese

# A Diversifying Community

## Growth in the Non-White Population, Lansdale Borough



	2000	2010
Asian	8.1%	13.3%
Black or African American	3.9%	5.9%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2.9%	5.0%
Other or 2+ Races	2.7%	5.0%
White	85.4%	75.9%

# A Diversifying Community

## Major Asian Ethnicities,

Lansdale Borough

	2010
Asian Indian	757
Bangladeshi	524
Korean	260
Vietnamese	165
Chinese (except Taiwanese)	127
Cambodian	100
Other Asian, Not Specified	47
Filipino	46

## Major Latino Ethnicities

Lansdale Borough

	2010
Puerto Rican	253
Mexican	196



# Manna on Main Street

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Manna on Main Street is **committed to ending hunger** by providing food, fulfilling social service and education needs, and conducting community outreach. Through Manna's market and kitchen, emergency financial aid, counseling and referrals, and education opportunities, we serve those in need with the hope "that everyone might be fed."



Ending Hunger, Building Community, Transforming Lives

# Community Need Snapshot

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**Montgomery County, Pa.** 9.7% or 78,540 are food insecure; 6.6% of people live in poverty



**North Penn Region.** Avg 28% free/reduced price meal enrollment rate; 3 schools 50%+, North Penn School District

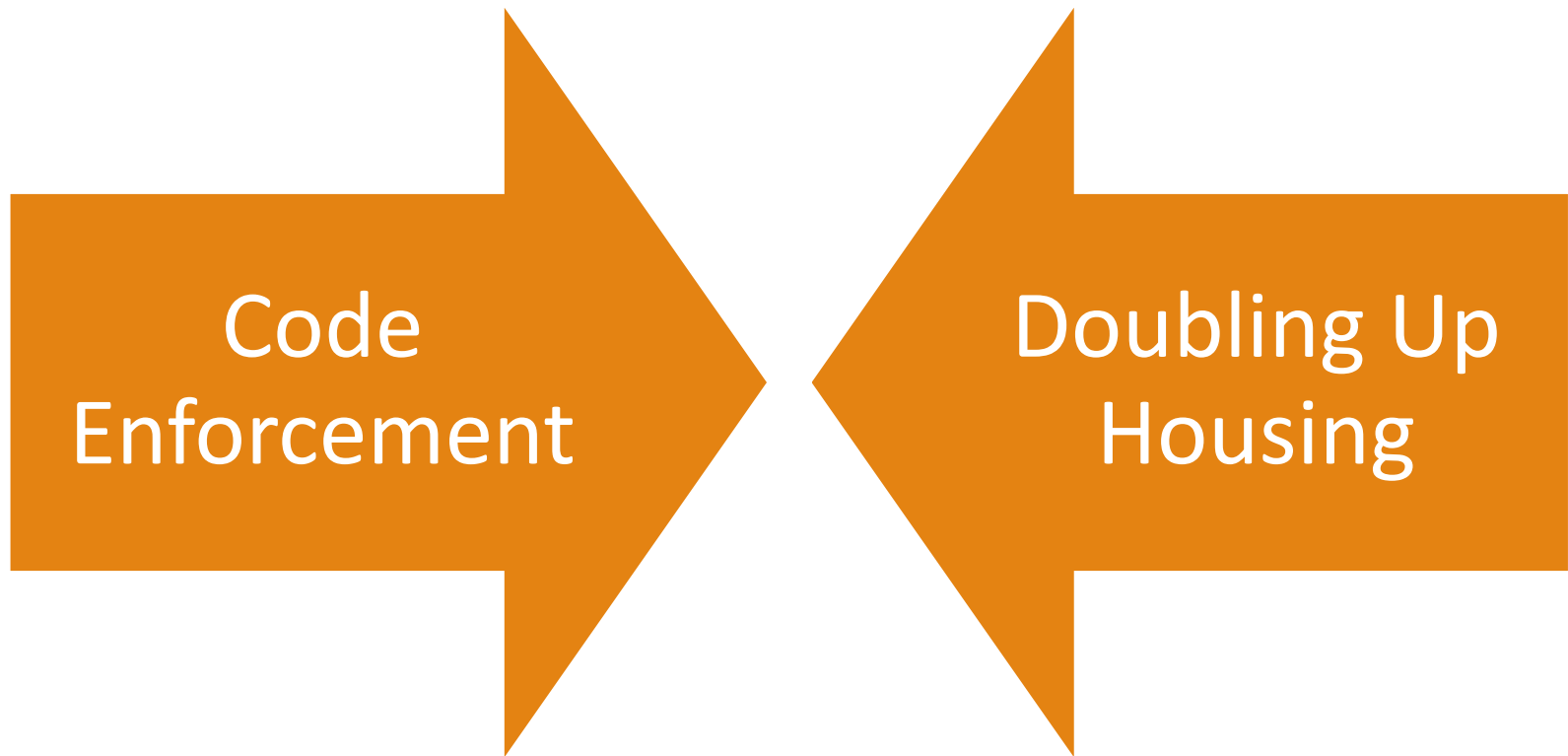


**Lansdale, Pa.** 9.6% people live in poverty

# Diversity Committee

## Misunderstanding at the Table

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# Diversity Committee

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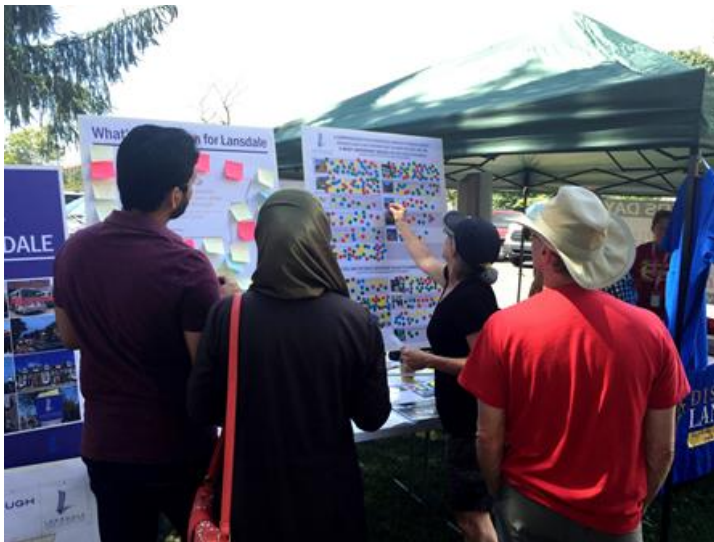


# Diversity Committee

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## Initial Role:

- Prepare “Diversity & Equity” chapter and recommendations
- Expand public participation for *LANSDALE2040* and future planning efforts



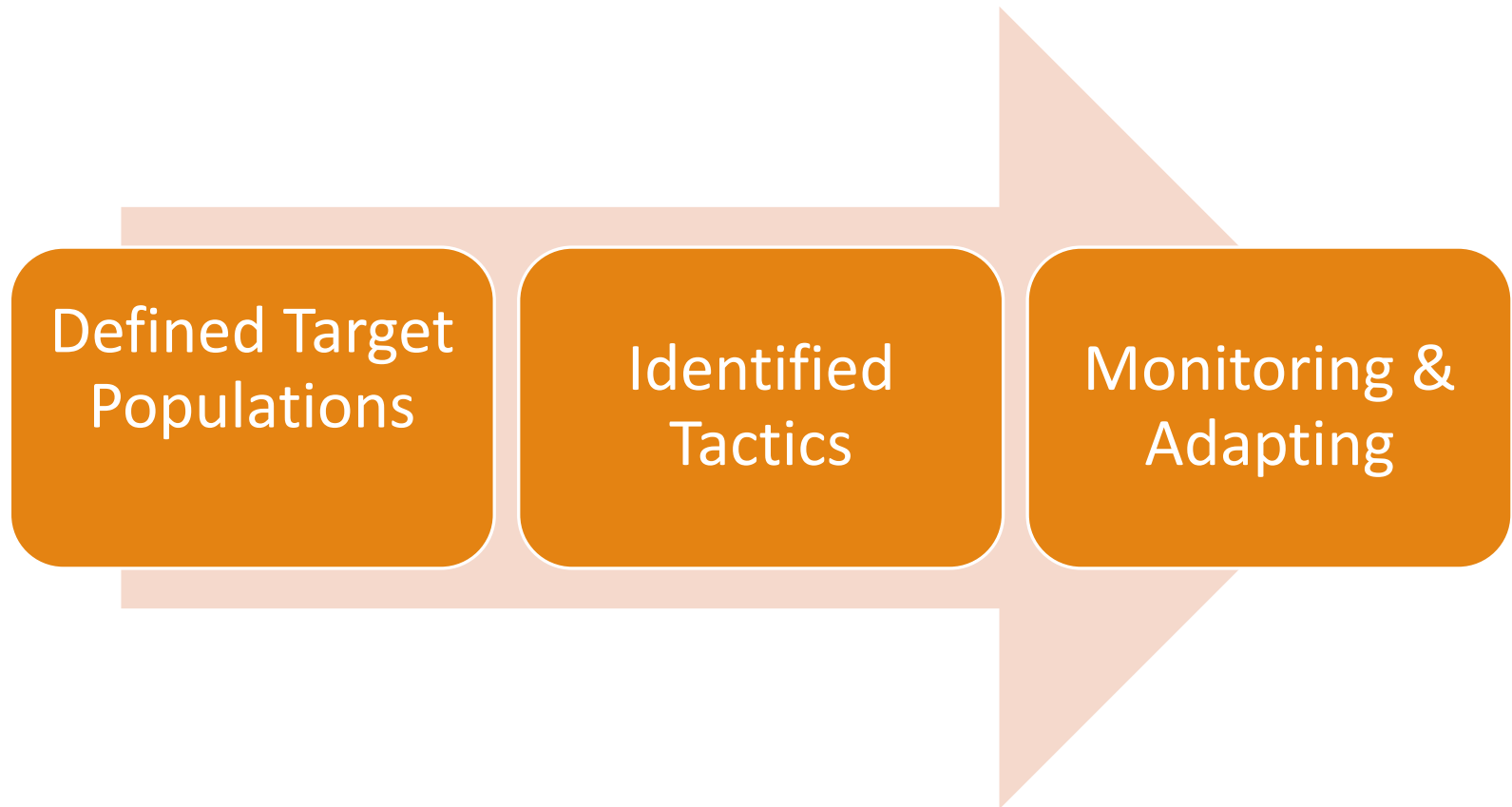
Consider:

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# Outreach Strategy

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# Outreach Tactics

## Committee Members

- Stakeholders & Amplifying Organizations
- Grassroots Survey Distribution. Target Shops & Business Centers

## Targeted Events (examples)

- International Spring Festival
- First Fridays Series



# Outreach Tactics

## Overall

- Survey Translation: Bangla & Spanish
- Physical & Online Survey

Lansdale Borough está actualizando su Plan comunitario. El plan comprensivo Lansdale 2040 guiará la futura dirección del futuro. Su opinión es crítica para que podamos mejorar la vida de las personas que viven y los visitantes quieren que suceda en nuestra comunidad. Las personas que trabajan en, y las personas que visitan, pero embargo, las preguntas en esta encuesta sólo se refieren a la dirección con una dirección de correos de Lansdale que

বরোর মানসম্মত জীবনের

(QL-1) কিউএল-১. লক্ষ্য: ভবিষ্যৎ ভবিষ্যতের ল্যান্সডেইলের জন্য বলে মনে করেন (তিনটি পছন্দ ক)

কর্মতৎপর	চাকরি/সেবা
উন্নত/অগ্রগামী	প্রাণবন্ত
আর্কিটেকচার	আধুনিক
কোলাহলময়/জলাকীর্ণ	বলম্বারি

# Outreach Successes

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Stakeholders

Amplifying &  
Trusted  
Organizations

Committee  
Connections

Invisible  
Diversity



# Diversity, Equity & Inclusiveness

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**Vision.** Lansdale Borough is a community that is committed to celebrating and nurturing its diversity.

**Goal.** *LANSDALE2040* Comprehensive Plan goals will reflect the diversity of our community, with strategic plans and policy development that strengthen the complete Lansdale community, no matter the age, race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, religion or nonreligion, sexual orientation, disability, residents/employees/visitors to the Borough, and residents of various neighborhoods. Embrace and champion the borough's diversity to build as strong and vibrant a community as possible.

# Diversity, Equity & Inclusiveness Lansdale Borough

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To expand outreach, the Diversity Committee has:

- Public event at International Spring Fest
- Distributed survey link → all households
- Translations: Spanish & Bangla
- Special survey distribution:
  - Seniors (residential and activity centers)
  - Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, & African-American business and religious leaders
  - Less affluent and multigenerational (social service center, YMCA)





## Diversity Committee

Develop a permanent task force to advise and steward efforts that embrace and promote diversity in the Lansdale community. This task force will partner with Borough staff to accomplish selected action areas, as well as respond and adapt to Borough needs that arise throughout the 2040 planning process.

Work to make  
borough  
committees as  
diverse as  
community

Make extensive  
public outreach  
routine

Capitalize on  
borough's  
diversity with  
themed festivals

Identify  
“bridges”--  
leaders of diverse  
groups and work  
with them to  
interconnect  
community

# Questions?



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