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: 3rd 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

Source: 2016 ACS, 1-yr est.
• 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 ordinance
    • Walkability studies
    • Park & open space plans
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 Box at mcpc@mcpc.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

Identify Goals of Outreach

Outreach Strategy

Feedback

Plan Idea

Final Plan
Identify Goals of Outreach

- Branding
- What are you asking? Why? Who?
- Steering Committee
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

NWB 2040
3-Step Process

Plan
Idea

Identify Goals of Outreach

Outreach Strategy

Feedback

Final Plan

3-Step Outreach Process

Branding
Steering Committee

What are you asking? Why? Who?

Workshop
Survey
Community events
Informal v. Educational

Feedback informs future outreach
Were our questions answered?
Have we reached our audience?

Saturation Point
Outreach Strategy

- Plan
- Goals
- Stage in planning process
- Diversity

- Workshop
- Community events
- Survey
- Informational v. Educational
- Formal v. Informal
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 Lansdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan Community Survey!

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

The Lansdale 2040 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. Moreover, 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 Lansdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan Task Force, with support from the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

For more information contact: Mike Naccovich, AICP | mnaccovich@montcopa.org | 610-278-5236 or Brian J. Olszak | bholzak@montcopa.org | 610-278-5777 at Montgomery County Planning Commission.

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.

- Age: Which age group do you fall into? Check one.
  - 0-17
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65-74
  - Prefer not to say

- What is your race and/or ethnicity? Check all that apply.
  - African American/Black
  - Caucasian/White
  - Asian American
  - Latino
  - Other

- What is your gender/gender identity?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
  - None

- Do you speak a language other than English at home?
  - Yes
  - No

- If you speak a language other than English at home, what is the language?
  - Spanish
  - Korean
  - Arabic
  - Bengali
  - Gujarati
  - Other (please specify)
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

Plan Idea → Identify Goals of Outreach → Outreach Strategy → Feedback → Final Plan

3-Step Outreach Process

- Branding
- Steering Committee
- What are you asking? Why? Who?
- Workshop
- Survey
- Community events
- Informational v. Educational
- Formal v. Informal
- Feedback informs future outreach
- Were our questions answered?
- Have we reached our audience?
- Saturation Point
Feedback

- Were our questions answered?
- Have we reached our audience?
- Feedback informs future outreach
- Saturation Point
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.

% of Each Group with No Computer or No Internet

ACS 2016, 1-yr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than H.S. Ed.</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH Income &lt;$25,000</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 65+</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

- **LANSDALE2040**, Lansdale Borough Comprehensive Plan
AICP Code of Ethics

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

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

Source: ESRI
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
A Diversifying Community

Growth in the Non-White Population, Lansdale Borough

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or 2+ Races</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
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Census Data, 2000, 2010
## A Diversifying Community

### Major Asian Ethnicities, Lansdale Borough

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>757</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (except Taiwanese)</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian, Not Specified</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>46</td>
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</table>

### Major Latino Ethnicities, Lansdale Borough

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decennial Census, 2010
Manna on Main Street

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.”
Community Need Snapshot

**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

Code Enforcement

Doubling Up Housing
Diversity Committee

Bring all voices to the table

Bridge understanding & compassion

Build a welcoming community

Bring all voices to the table
Diversity Committee

Initial Role:

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

- Socio-economic
- Disability
- Religion/non-Religion
- Neighborhood
- Race & Ethnicity
- Gender & Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
Outreach Strategy

- Defined Target Populations
- Identified Tactics
- Monitoring & Adapting
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 con el plan comprensivo Lansdale 2040 guiará la futura. Su opinión es crítica para que podamos y los visitantes quieren que suceda en nuestra personas que trabajan en, y las personas que viven y los escuches en esta encuesta sólo con una dirección de correos de Lansdale que se

<table>
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<tr>
<th>কর্মতৎপর</th>
<th>চাকরি/চাহিদা</th>
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<tr>
<td>উন্নত/অগ্নিগ্রামী</td>
<td>প্রাণবন্ধ</td>
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<tr>
<td>আর্কিটেকচার</td>
<td>আধুনিক</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>কোলাহলমাত্র</td>
<td>জনাকীর্তি</td>
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Diversity, Equity & Inclusiveness

**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

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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