

Community Outreach in a Diverse Community



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The AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct contains Principles to Which We Aspire, in particular:

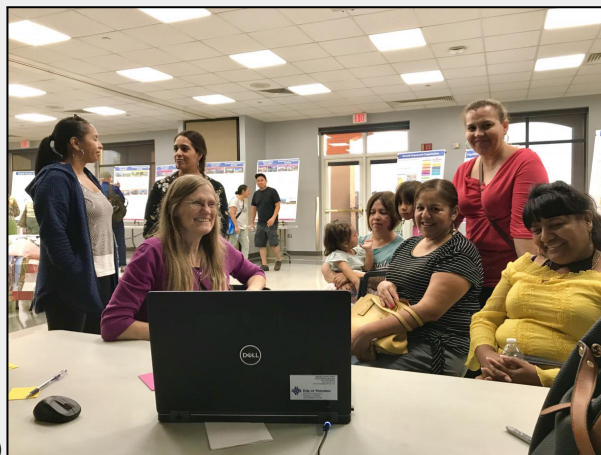
- 1. e) We shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence.*



Involving the community meaningfully in planning decisions is one of the cornerstones of good planning. This becomes challenging when you are planning for a diverse community. Conventional community engagement techniques may be unsuitable for all community members, particularly for those groups with different cultural backgrounds whose primary language is not English. (Above: One of many booths set up outside stores; and Left: A booth at Movies in the Park.)

Encapsulate a wide breadth of responses through effective community engagement was an important goal for the City of Thornton's recent Comprehensive Plan update. There was also a strong desire to actively engage two community groups that are traditionally hard to reach and previously unsuccessfully included – the city's Hispanic/Latino community and teenagers. It should be noted that Hispanic/Latino community make up more than half of the population in the southern portion of the city and a third of the city as a whole.

Thornton partnered with a locally based firm, Cultivando, which specializes in outreach with the Hispanic/Latino community for this project. Cultivando has extensive experience in Adams County using unique and effective engagement techniques. Approaching people personally and creating a comfortable response environment is important. To do this, Cultivando used "promotoras", community members who receive specialized training, traditionally to provide basic health education but in this case to obtain input on broader community needs and desires. The promotoras facilitated gathering surveys from Hispanic/Latino community members, many of whom speak Spanish as their primary language. Other special outreach methods included one-on-one home visits, small group gatherings, Movies in the Park canvassing, and setting up kiosks around the city to gather input. In addition, all key project material, flyers, meeting notices, the "Community Vision Document" and the final Comprehensive Plan document itself, have been or plan to be translated into Spanish - (e.g. [Future Land Use Map in English & Spanish](#)).



((Right: Engaging with the Latino community.)

In their efforts to engage teenagers, city staff coordinated with local school districts and attended classes at different high schools using an “idea card” exercise. Students were also invited to focus group meetings. Bringing the message about the Thornton Comprehensive Plan update to students in a formalized setting and interacting with them directly to collect their ideas, hopes, and desires for Thornton’s future enabled them to participate directly in the public engagement process. Connecting with the Thornton high school students had the added benefit of students better understanding the functions of local government and their role as citizens of the Thornton community.

Input from these two targeted groups helped shape the Comprehensive Plan update document. While many themes were not original, new topics emerged, such as a desire for an equitable and inclusive Thornton. Overall this all-inclusive outreach allowed a solid foundation for the Comprehensive Plan and the assurance that the plan will reflect the whole community’s values. (Below: Youth at a focus group meeting.)

