



Carrboro Connects – Virtual Open House

Wednesday, September 22, 2021 - Remote Meeting via Zoom

View the meeting recording at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqjMcukAONg>

CARRBORO CONNECTS: COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE RECAP

The show must go on! For the sake of safety, weather forecasts required the Carrboro Connects Comprehensive Plan team to switch to a virtual format for the Community Open House on Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2021. While originally scheduled to gather with the community at the Town Commons, the change didn't stop a group of 60 individuals (in addition to the project team, Town Staff, Town Council, and Task Force members) from joining together virtually for discussion and feedback on the recently released Preliminary Draft Plan that lays out a vision and a set of goals, strategies and projects for the next 20+ years in Carrboro.

The Plan is centered on an overarching foundational framework of racial equity and climate action. It outlines seven topics (Affordable Housing; Climate Action & Environment; Transportation, Green Infrastructure, Energy & Water; Economic Sustainability; Recreation, Parks & Cultural Resources; Land Use; and Public Services).

The Town is seeking input on the Plan from the entire community. If you have not done so, please review the preliminary draft at carrboroconnects.org/prelim-draft-plan and provide your feedback. The plan will undergo a round of revisions based on public feedback in October and then will be presented for public review at a Town Council public hearing set for Nov. 16, 2021.

OPEN HOUSE WELCOME

Inspired • grateful • happy • informed • hopeful • impressed • energized • included • motivated

"Makes me happy to see community members engaged"

These were some of the feelings expressed by participants of the Carrboro Connects Open House.

After 15 months of work, using a variety of tools to reach out to all of Carrboro, this was the first chance for residents to see the full scope of a preliminary draft plan.

The draft is based on outreach conducted to date, and led by the Carrboro Connects Task Force, a group that was assembled early on in the process that has served as the eyes, ears, and community leaders to help frame a truly comprehensive document.

WHY CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NOW?

Patricia McGuire, Planning Director, spoke about the parallels between going through a comprehensive planning process in our current crisis—the ongoing pandemic—and the Vision 2020 planning process which took place following the 9/11 attacks. In both situations, when the present feels uncertain, planning for the future has been a chance for all of Carrboro to meet the challenges facing it as a community.

“As occurred in 2001 and in 2020, these planning processes have given us the occasion to consider how life is now, and the unimaginable uncertainty that we can face – and decide how we want it to be in the future.”

PLAN FOUNDATIONS: RACE AND EQUITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

Teresa Lockamy of the consultant team highlighted the two foundational elements of Carrboro Connects: Race and Equity and Climate Action.

The Race and Equity vision statement for the Town of Carrboro begins with:

“The Town of Carrboro envisions being a community where race does not determine outcomes and all have equitable opportunities and resources.”

All Town staff have participated in training through the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). Staff then provided the training to Task Force members so that there would be a common lens to ensure that the comprehensive plan advances the Town's vision for race and equity.

Equally important is a foundation built on the Town's leading efforts to take climate action. Key components of the recently updated Community Climate Action Plan and Energy and Climate Action Plan are included in this preliminary draft comprehensive plan. This includes the goals to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions by both the Town and the community by 80% below 2010 levels by the year 2030.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Francie Sallinger of the project team shared updates on the engagement process thus far. A menu of techniques has been used to reach the community while working within the confines of the pandemic.

This has included: in-person pop up events this past June, seven task force meetings, 2 (now 3) interactive and bilingual online community workshops, over 60 stakeholder interviews, carrboroconnects.org, a website that has been viewed over 4,500 times, and two Facebook Live events (one for Spanish speakers and one for the community from Burma). To get the word out about

all of these opportunities the Town and planning team have posted in social media, email blasts, a Town-wide mailing, communication with nonprofits and neighborhood groups, posts at Town Information Centers, radio ads, branded t-shirts, banners hung around town, printed handouts at food distribution events, and more.

Each time the planning team has interacted with someone who has participated in the process, it is called a “touchpoint.” The team estimates there have been at least 3,500 touchpoints – or total instances of engagement – and over 1,300 total unique individuals have been involved. The team is grateful to all who have participated thus far, but wants those numbers to grow even more in the remainder of this process, especially for those who we haven't heard from yet!

BREAK OUT DISCUSSIONS

Scott Goldstein of the planning team then introduced how to access and use the plan. He provided an overview of the plan elements. Before asking participants to self-select their breakout groups, Scott shared the questions that would be the focus of discussion for each topic:

- What projects do you think would make the most positive impact?
- Are there possible partners who could help lead these projects?
- How can these projects advance race and equity and climate action goals?

Highlights of public comments at the breakout sessions included:

Climate Action and Environment Discussion/Feedback

- Expand on tree canopy impact on decreasing urban heat island
- Prioritize residential assistance programs, e.g. RainReady
- Increase conversations about micro-grids
- Nuanced conversation about density – and how that can enhance environmental protection

Transportation and Infrastructure Discussion/Feedback

- Prioritize Safe Routes to Schools - use Powell Bill Funds on Bike & Ped projects
- Unbundle parking from new developments, especially affordable buildings
- Distributed EV infrastructure, not just in central locations

Affordable Housing Discussion/Feedback

- Rental assistance, not just subsidy, but language support and process
- Bilingual information on rights for tenants.
- Alternative solutions like land trusts and co-ops – these solutions support our values
- Focus on people under 30% AMI

- Expand the use of housing choice vouchers
- Tiny homes would not have a big impact on affordable housing (research has found that it is not a long-term solution)
- Increase multi-family housing construction (most has been single-family recently)
- Absence of recommendation to change how we tax property (would need to change state legislation)
- Want to see budget and how to pay for this

Economic Sustainability Discussion/Feedback

- How to help locally owned and BIPOC businesses:
 - Skills and entrepreneurship
 - Support BIPOC businesses with grant programs
 - Address the disconnect between job openings and ability to fill those jobs
 - Support 3.2 – cultural market / entrepreneurial skills
- Barriers to employment:
 - Information – ability to share info on training programs
 - Encourage start-ups and work at home
 - Connect workers and local employers

Recreation, Parks and Cultural Resources

- Cross-cutting connections are important when it comes to parks: transportation, climate action strategies
- Would likely be strong community support for a pool or splash pad
- Important to preserve existing green space and look for ways to repurpose for parks
- Revisit the idea of a trail along the railroad right of way

Land Use

- Expand housing opportunities, such as workforce housing
- Integrate green space to help mitigate heat island effects
- Implementation chapter should be descriptive enough to have practical action steps

Public Services & Communications

- IT and planning departments need to collaborate to improve transparency
- Expand broadband across Town

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to share comments on Preliminary Draft Plan at CarrboroConnects.org
- Task Force and Advisory Boards Review
- October: Town Council Work Session
- November 16: Public Hearing
- January – March: Continuation of public hearing and adoption of plan

*To view the meeting, please [email Trish McGuire at pmcguire@townofcarrboro.org](mailto:pmcguire@townofcarrboro.org) or call 919-918-7324 to receive an invitation to view the meeting. If you wish to make public comment, at the time of public comment, the staff person will be able to allow speakers to remotely enter the meeting one by one to comment. Please send any written statement or materials to the email provided above. Requests to remotely attend the meeting shall be made within 24 hours of the meeting start time, and should specify if the requester wishes to make any comments. Any materials will be forwarded to task force members.