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CHAPTER TWO

Community Engagement

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▲ Carrboro Connects Pop-up Idea Booth in the Rogers Road neighborhood, June 2021

Carrboro Connects is built on a foundation of leading with racial equity and prioritizing climate action.

With this foundation at the core, the plan was steered by an engagement process that brought in as many people as possible from all parts of the community. We had a goal of ensuring that 100% of residents, organizations, businesses, and stakeholders were given an opportunity to participate in the plan. Carrboro Connects is about connecting with the community and with people of every age, race and background to ask the question: **what can WE create, together?**

“This plan should shape the future in a way that is consistent with the values we have as a community.”

- Stakeholder Idea



2 | community engagement

Carrboro Connects may be the Town's first-ever comprehensive plan but the Town has a strong history of planning and engagement. The entire planning process was built around a wide range of engagement tools focused on listening to new ideas, insights, and feedback from the community.

Town leaders felt strongly that this process was to be inclusive and representative of the entire community, including those who have never participated in the past or had to overcome barriers to participate. At every stage, efforts were made to reach new voices and broaden the scope of outreach. The process was not one-size-fits-all -- rather, a menu of engagement options and activities was developed to accommodate the range of peoples' preferences and resources. Despite the challenges of connecting with people during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Carrboro Connects team worked hard to directly reach over 1,300 individuals through over 3,500 touchpoints (defined as the total instances of engagement).

"We have a lot of priorities in town: climate change, our fight against systemic racism, a lot of important work at the local level. You all get to be part of that with the comprehensive plan."

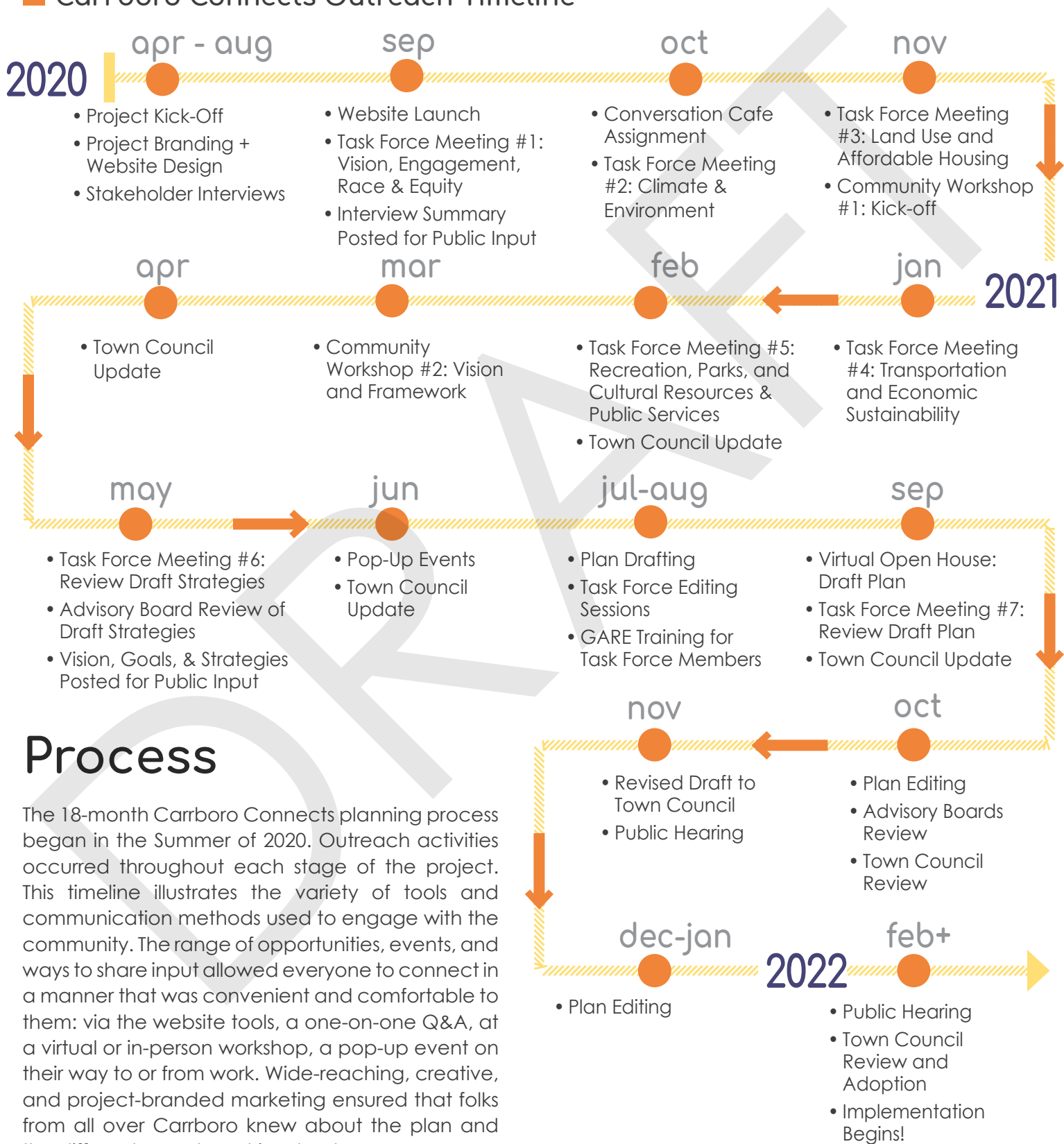
-Mayor Lydia Lavelle

"This plan will guide decisions that make our town more just, resilient, and sustainable. We ask that you reach into your networks, pull in more people, and let's make sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate."

-Mayor Pro Tempore Barbara Foushee



Carrboro Connects Outreach Timeline



Process

The 18-month Carrboro Connects planning process began in the Summer of 2020. Outreach activities occurred throughout each stage of the project. This timeline illustrates the variety of tools and communication methods used to engage with the community. The range of opportunities, events, and ways to share input allowed everyone to connect in a manner that was convenient and comfortable to them: via the website tools, a one-on-one Q&A, at a virtual or in-person workshop, a pop-up event on their way to or from work. Wide-reaching, creative, and project-branded marketing ensured that folks from all over Carrboro knew about the plan and the different ways to get involved.

Getting the Word Out

Marketing and promotion of the plan included Town press releases and social media posts, communicating with local nonprofits and neighborhood associations, materials posted at Town Information Centers, radio ads and announcements, branded T-shirts, video features from Town Council members, participation in the 4th of July parade, banners hung in prominent locations around Town, and handing out printed materials at food distribution events and other community gatherings. These ongoing efforts by the Town worked in tandem with marketing of the website, interactive idea-sharing tools, and word of mouth to get the word about that Carrboro was planning for its future and wanted residents to lead the charge.



▲ Carrboro's Town Information Centers are one way to increase access to information, resources, and civic processes by everyone, especially people of color and marginalized communities. These earned Carrboro a national communications Award of Excellence for the Most Creative Activity with Least Dollars Spent.



3,800+
total touchpoints

1,300+
total engaged

▲ The Carrboro Connects engagement process used a combination of engagement techniques, such as fun and creative marketing in both English and Spanish, social media posts via Town channels and partner organizations, radio announcements, postcard mailings, email, and paper handouts at events.

▲ "Touchpoints" are the total instances of engagement, while "engaged" refers to total individuals who participated

Carrboro Connects Task Force Stakeholder Interviews

A Comprehensive Plan Task Force, comprised of appointed representatives from the Town's advisory boards as well as 8 at-large members from the community who were appointed by the Town Council, served as the "eyes and ears" of the plan. This group of 29 individuals met over the course of the project to provide input on engagement efforts, identify issues and opportunities, and review and provide feedback on preliminary plan recommendations. The Task Force met officially seven times but also had additional editing sessions, a get-together at the pop-ups in June, and had GARE Trainings to develop and review the plan with a focus on race and equity.

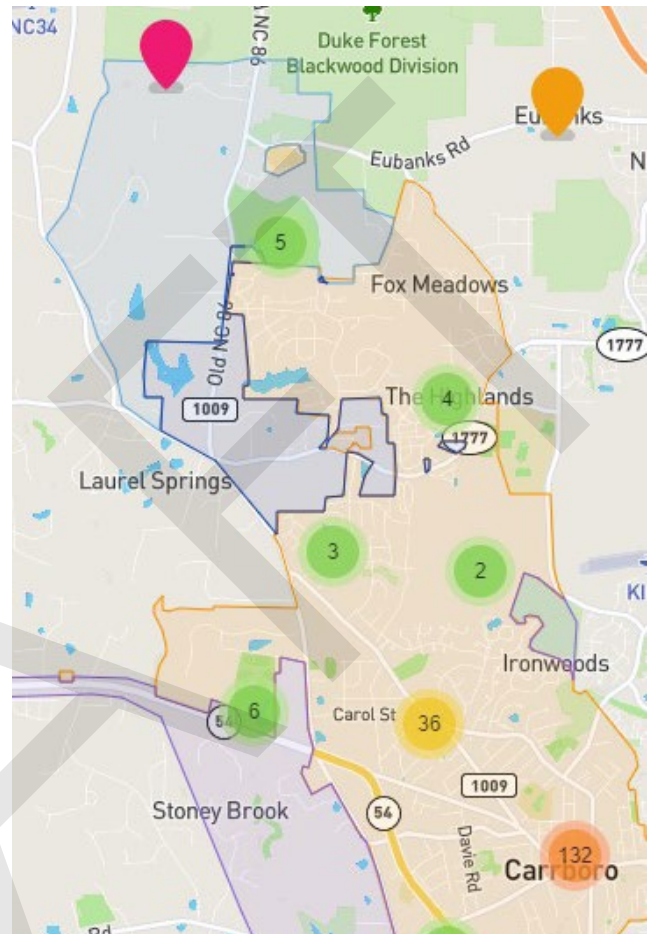
A series of 22 virtual meetings were held over the summer of 2020. In small groups of three to five individuals, the consultant team and Town staff interviewed over 60 residents, community leaders, and businesses representing a broad range of expertise and perspectives. The questions covered everything from what people loved about Carrboro, what are the Town's biggest challenges and opportunities, and what people would most like to get out of the plan once it is completed. Participants also shared ideas for additional folks to interview and get involved in Carrboro Connects, particularly those who may not already be involved in the Town.



The Carrboro Connects Task Force met consistently over the course of the project for three-hour working sessions via Zoom. In small breakout groups, the Task Force had in-depth discussions about plan topics, raising important questions for the project team and providing constructive edits that led to a more detailed, authentic plan. ▼

Project Website

The project website served as an essential virtual hub for Carrboro Connects. Interactive tools allowed website users to share on a virtual “ideas wall,” place comments on a map for place-specific thoughts, and view all project documents, meeting recordings, and summaries. The website also included a subscribe feature that allowed visitors to sign-up to receive project news via email, and a Google Translate button that converted the site into different languages. At every stage of the planning process, new users learned about Carrboro Connects, registered, read about the plan, and shared their ideas. Throughout the project, over 370 unique subscribers signed up via the project website.



1,700+ Unique Website Visitors

Ted
5 months ago

Regulate AirBnBs
This might be a good time to incorporate some consistent and info...

Share 1 ❤️


Andi
3 months ago

Bike lanes throughout town without disappearing just before busy intersections or new roundabout, or bike trail bypasses for busy areas.
Would be nice if kids or novices could bike throughout town witho...

Share 1 ❤️

ELA
10 months ago

Centrally located public Dog Park



Carrboro is missing a public dog park that can be accessed by foo...

Share 0 ❤️

D DavidD
7 months ago

This parking lot is never fully used – seems like a great opportunity for creating interesting streetscape or small businesses/housing?

Kristen
3 months ago

Prioritize Mass Transit
I would love if we could work with Chapel Hill to expand our mass...

Share 0 ❤️


Resident
a month ago

Balance high density and park
Every resident should be within a accessible 1/2 mile of a park. ...

Share 0 ❤️

Isa
2 months ago

A water play feature. A water pad. A spray ground. Downtown. None in Carrboro or Chapel Hill yet.



It would improve the town a lot. It's accessible to everyone and ...

S Steckley
7 months ago

This could be a great place for a community garden for the residents of South Carrboro. Two apartment complexes and three neighborhoods are here.

Resident
a month ago

Passive bike streets
Amend the land use ordinance to require any proposed cul-de-sac t...

Share 0 ❤️

Ellie Heffernan
3 months ago

Coordinate with other cities to make a more efficient Triangle-wide transit system
Many times, the buses, like CRX or 400, come infrequently. They a...

Share 0 ❤️

Kristen
3 months ago

Online Engagement

The website featured all project documents and information for visitors who just wanted to stop by and browse, as well as activities and multiple feedback tools for registered users.

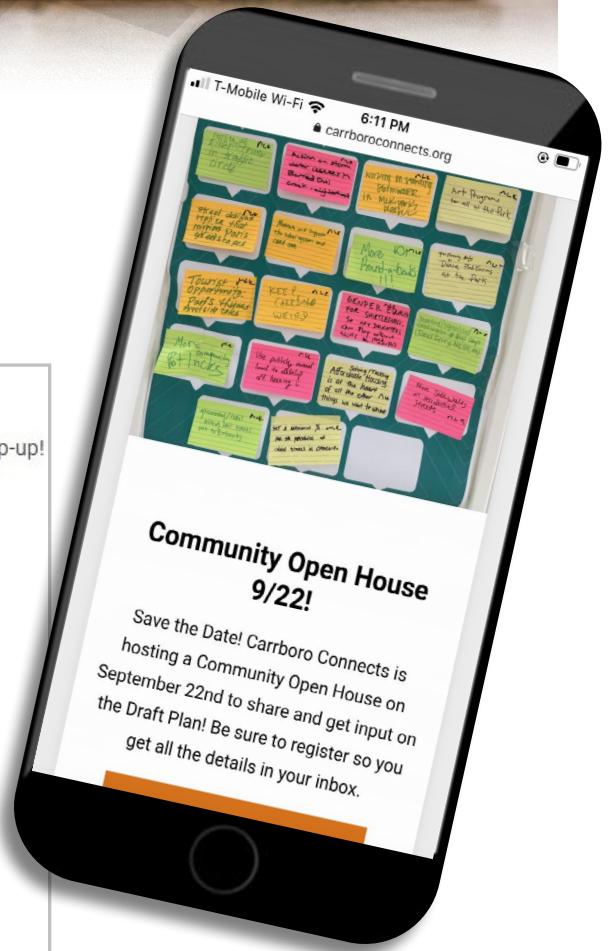
Quick Statistics:

Sep 2020 to Nov 2021

- 4,500+ Site Visits
- 370+ Site Registrations
- 400+ Ideas Shared
- 200+ Mapped Ideas



In addition to the in-person Around Carrboro Pop-Ups held in June 2021 (discussed on page 15), the website featured a Virtual Pop-Up for anyone who couldn't attend the events. Over 180 people visited the webpage which led to 36 new ideas shared, new website registrations, and new voices being included in the Carrboro Connects planning effort. ▼



Virtual Pop-Up

Click the images below to begin sharing input via our virtual idea booth and map booth pop-up!

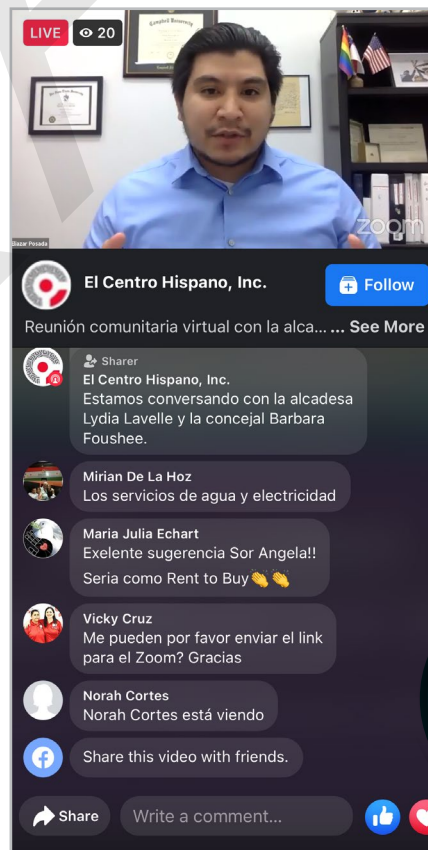


Creative, Virtual Outreach

From 2020-2021, during which most of this planning process unfolded, communities around the world shifted many work and social activities into a virtual space. Carrboro Connects had to do the same, and quickly realized some of the benefits of virtual communications: it may be easier for some to participate from home via phone or computer; there is no need to find transportation or childcare; folks can log on for as much time as they have; participation can be with cameras on or off, via the chat, or by listening; and you can have multi-lingual meetings using Zoom's interpretation tool with a live translator and breakout rooms in different languages.

Carrboro Connects' virtual/remote events included:

- 2 Community Workshops with Spanish translation and breakout groups, also featuring music, mindmapping, and local history
- 2 Facebook Live Events to reach specific populations: one held for Spanish speakers in partnership with El Centro Hispano, one held for Burmese- and Karen-speaking residents with the Refugee Community Partnership
- 7 Task Force Meetings and 2 Task Force Editorial Sessions
- Community submissions to the Carrboro People's Photo Album
- "Conversation Cafe" peer interviews
- Frequent meetings and updates to Town Council, Town Advisory Boards, Orange County Affordable Housing Commission, NAACP, and other local groups that provided input



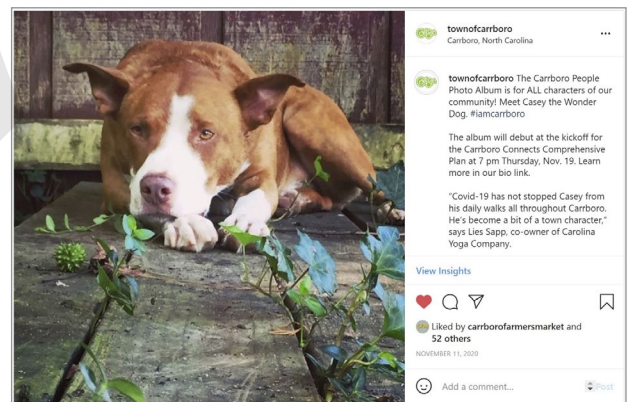
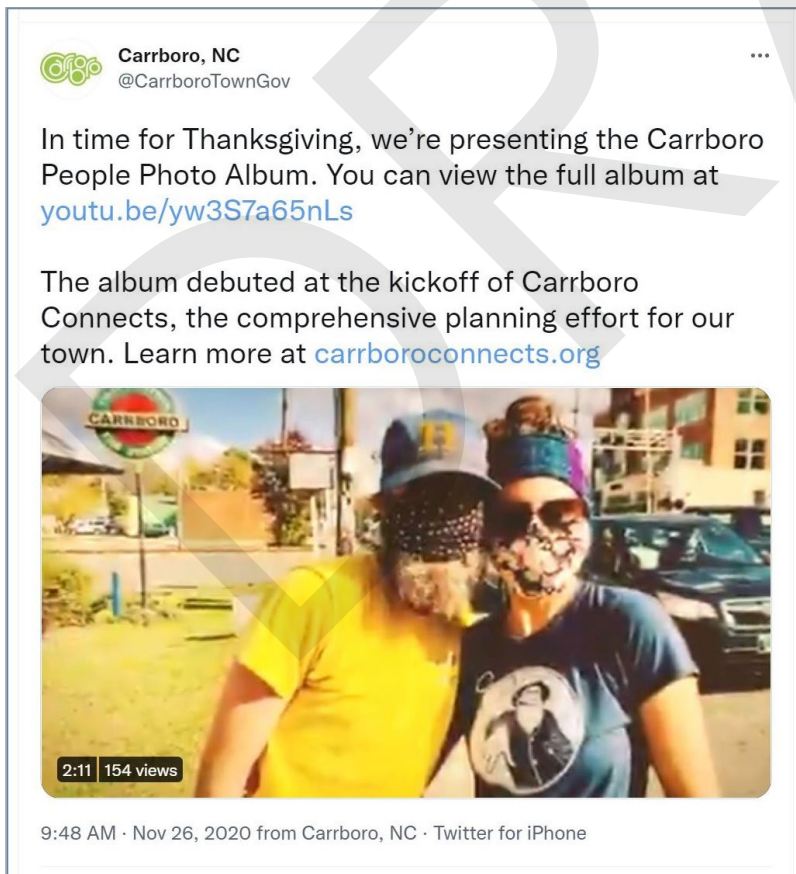
Facebook Live proved to be one effective way to reach communities who may not typically attend a townwide event, especially if it were only in English. Two events with El Centro Hispano and the Refugee Community Partnership allowed for a focus group-like discussion of the specific concerns and ideas from these communities.

Social Media & The Carrboro People Photo Album

The Carrboro People Photo Album encouraged participation at the first community meeting held a week before Thanksgiving. We asked anyone who wanted to be included to take a photo of themselves, their pod, or family pets. View the album at youtu.be/yw3S7a65nLs

More than 150 people attended the Nov. 19, 2020, community meeting when the Carrboro People Photo Album was presented. Engagement was also high leading up to the album premiere, as people shared photos and commented on those they recognized, and Town Communication and Engagement staff posted teasers to boost interest. This was a time during the pandemic when people longed for social interaction.

Raising awareness on social media about Carrboro Connects was a constant driver of public attention. About 100 posts across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and YouTube opened the door to people talking about the town's comprehensive plan. In November 2020, Carrboro Connects posts made the Top Three Most Engaging and Top Three Highest Reach Posts on both Town of Carrboro Instagram and Facebook.



Pop-Up Events

After one year of virtual engagement, the Carrboro Connects team was excited to finally connect in-person for pop-up events around town in June 2021. The pop-ups were an opportunity to reach new people who hadn't yet heard about the comprehensive plan, as well as check-in with old friends to get input on ideas that had been emerging in the planning process. Five pop-ups took place at strategic locations spread across Town. These locations were intentionally picked to capture a wide variety of people and meet them at places they may typically visit. All of the locations were widely disseminated to residents via social media, flyers, email lists and web newsletters.

5 Pop-Up Events

100+ Ideas Shared

130 Participants

AROUND CARRBORO POP-UPS
Thursday · Friday · Saturday · June 10 - 12, 2021

COMMUNITY · UNIDOS
Carrboro
CONNECTS

Thursday June 10	Friday June 11	Friday June 11	Saturday June 12	Saturday June 12
Carrboro Plaza	Rogers Road	South Green	Farmers Market	MLK Jr. Park
4 - 5:30 p.m. <i>NC 54 and W. Main Street</i>	4 - 5:30 p.m. <i>Bus stop in front of Faith Tabernacle Oasis of Love</i>	6:30 - 7:30 p.m. <i>501 S. Greensboro Street</i>	8:30 - 10:00 a.m. <i>Town Commons, 301 W. Main Street</i>	11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. <i>1120 Hillsborough Road</i>

Swing by to share input on our Town's very first Comprehensive Plan. Join your neighbors to talk about transportation, housing, jobs, and more!

Safety First: We will be practicing safe physical distancing and taking health precautions.

FREE POPSICLES

Carrboro Connects Virtual Pop-Up

Unable to attend in-person? Everyone is invited to take part in our virtual pop-up, open everyday rain or shine - visit website below or scan QR code. Questions: Contact Ben · bberolzheimer@townofcarrboro.org · (919) 918-7330

carrboroconnects.org/pop-ups

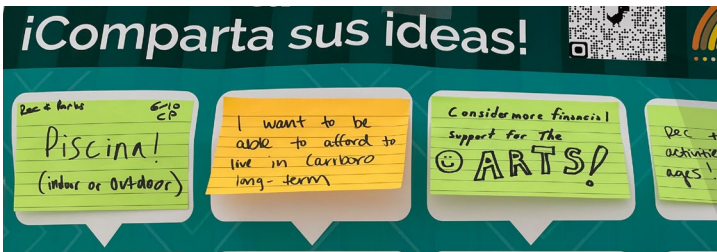
“Implementing this plan will require community members to come together and see how connecting on projects can collectively benefit all of us.”

-Soteria Shepperson,
Task Force Member

“How can the Town invest in resources that help build peoples’ skills while also meeting needs and improving our neighborhoods?”

-Quinton Harper,
Task Force Co-Chair

Pop-Up Photos



▲ Five Pop-Up Events were spaced out over Thursday - Saturday, at locations across town: Carrboro Plaza, Rogers Road, South Green, Farmers Market, and MLK Jr. Park

Community Open House

A community open house to review the Preliminary Draft Plan was held on September 22, 2021. While originally scheduled to gather in-person at the Town Commons, weather forced a last minute pivot to a virtual meeting. This 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 recommendations presented in the September Draft.

This November 16th Public Hearing Draft incorporates comments received from over 100 individuals (members of the public, Town Staff, and Town Council) received at the Open House, via the project website feedback form, and through emailed comments and marked up draft documents.

Extra Mile Engagement

Carrboro has set a high bar for civic engagement, incorporating public input into all Town decisions and processes. While this is true, it remains a challenge, in many communities, to reach beyond the usual suspects and hear from the full range of residents.

For this process to be successful, outreach efforts were intentionally designed to go the extra mile and reach out to all members of the Carrboro community, including groups that may have not been involved in the Town's activities in the past.

Towards this goal, a diverse Task Force was developed of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and of varied ages, interests, genders and economic backgrounds. The demographic makeup of the Carrboro Connects Task Force is reflective of the Townwide mix. For example, members were: 11% Asian/Pacific Islander (Town = 9%), 21% Black/African American (Town = 11%), 7% Hispanic/Latino (Town = 7%), and 61% White (Town = 68%). This was intentional, as it is important that the group guiding the planning process is demographically similar to the wider Carrboro community in order to serve as ambassadors for an inclusive plan.

The Task Force members served as plan ambassadors, inviting others from their networks to join in the process and interviewing new people, neighbors, and acquaintances to answer questions about Carrboro's future.

To reach new and diverse populations, workshops and materials were multi-lingual and pop-up event locations set in areas where we might engage with more BIPOC residents and workers.

Outreach activities took place in English and Spanish, and some materials and events also translated for the community from Burma (including part of the project logo's tagline, "Creating Community Together"). To engage different age groups and levels of ease/access to technology, outreach was done online, in-person, through printed outreach materials or by calling a Town phone number. Maps do not just include the Town boundary but show the full extent of Carrboro, which includes the Transition Areas and the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction. In interviews and conversations throughout, we have asked each person "who else can we reach out to?"

"The plan is about bringing all of us together, not just those of us here but all those who we can reach. Carrboro Connects is about those connections, the process, and making sure we can all be creative and collaborative and learn from each other."

*-Catherine Fray
Task Force Co-Chair*