Chapter 1

Community

Empower community members and city leadership to collaborate and take action.

Danville aspires to lead through collaborative governance, engaging its community to leverage diverse perspectives, expertise, and experience to collectively shape decisions and foster empowerment for inclusive and effective development. Collaborative governance and community empowerment create a more transparent, democratic, and effective system that encourages active engagement, fosters trust, and ultimately leads to more responsive and equitable policies and initiatives.

PLAN Danville

Community Policies

CO.1: **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**
CULTIVATE STRONG LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR EVERYONE, PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT, NEW IDEAS, AND LIFELONG LEARNING.

CO.1.1 Community Leadership
Empower and support a shared leadership model with local activists and community councils that effectively and equitably builds people's capacity to organize and improve the city and their neighborhoods.

CO.1.2 Youth Leadership
Expand youth leadership and engagement to have an active role in the shaping of Danville's future.

CO.1.2 City Leadership
Ensure clear communication between city departments, Planning Commission, City Council, and community members about actions and expectations.

CO.2: **COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**
EMPOWER COMMUNITIES BY FOSTERING COLLABORATION, PARTICIPATION, AND OWNERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.

CO.2.1 Neighborhood Action Planning
Support neighborhood planning processes.

CO.2.2 Stewardship
Continue to support volunteerism and stewardship as a means of co-creating and maintaining city spaces.

CO.3: **INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE**
PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNANCE PRACTICES THAT PRIORITIZE ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND EQUITY IN DECISION-MAKING.

CO.3.1 Eliminate Barriers
Continue to eliminate barriers that prevent children, youth, young adults, seniors, and traditionally marginalized communities from participating in civic opportunities.

CO.3.2 Go to the People
Prioritize engagement methods that meet community members where they are, making it easier for them to participate in the process.

CO.3.3 Expand Capacity
Expand staff capacity through strategic hiring and partnerships.

CO.3.4 Responsible Prioritization
Prioritize communities with the greatest need using the PLAN Danville Scorecard.

PLAN Danville

Aligning with Public Feedback

Danville residents consistently and very clearly expressed their feelings of being excluded from decision-making. Residents feel that in the past they have been engaged in a manner that was not authentic, with the intent of creating "just another plan" without any significant eye toward real lasting change. As a means of addressing this issue, during public input it was clear that one of the key remedies to this issue is purposeful inclusion of residents throughout Danville in governance. This concept of community empowerment is reflected clearly in three of the cross-cutting community engagement themes: Bolstering Unity and Respect, Education and Youth Development, and Community Engagement and Collaboration.

CO.1 Leadership Development

To address the history of residents feeling excluded from decision making, it is critical to support and uplift local neighborhood leaders and activists, as well as city staff and officials on how authentic community engagement can better the community. This includes supporting development of neighborhood leaders, youth leadership development, and improving communication channels between city departments and residents, as well as communication between departments.

CO.2 Community Empowerment

While there are some physical changes and development activities in neighborhoods that require city hall involvement, there are many other activities that residents can undertake themselves that can be transformative. The plan recommends creating action plans for neighborhoods that provide opportunities for residents to invest in their neighborhoods through volunteerism and small projects that enhance quality of life and build civic pride.

CO.3 Inclusive Governance

To address the community's strong feelings of being excluded from decision-making, the city must prioritize inclusion of residents and stakeholders meaningfully in the decision-making process. The plan recommends recognizing and attempting to remove barriers that prevent people from participating, conducting public meetings and providing opportunities for residents to provide feedback within their neighborhoods, and prioritizing those communities that are most vulnerable for inclusion within governance decisions that impact them disproportionately.

CO.1
Leadership Development

Cultivate strong leadership and education programs for everyone, promoting involvement, new ideas, and lifelong learning.

Strong cities have strong leaders and foster the next generation of leadership. Danville seeks to support and grow the leaders of tomorrow through clear communication, training, and support.

Desired Outcomes

- Creation of youth ambassadors
- Increase in inter-departmental communication meetings and inter-departmental projects

The regional Health Collaborative defines civic health as communities that have...

Engaged Residents

Encourage residents to play a more active role in shaping decisions. Residents work to solve problems rather than waiting for government to solve their problems.

Inclusive Leadership

Cultivate and support leaders from all backgrounds and diverse perspectives.

Collaborative Institutions

Effectively collaborate across local non-profit organizations, developers, quasi-government institutions, regional government, and local government.

Willingness to Address Diversity and Equity

Address diversity and equity and move towards better outcomes for all.

Authentic Communication

Support credible, valuable information moving between residents, institutions and other stakeholders.

Culture of Engagement

Effectively engage the residents most affected by particular problems create stronger and more relevant programs, policies, and efforts. That is the Community Participation Plan!

Shared Vision and Values

Create shared visions and values from which aligned strategies emerge. That is PLAN Danville!

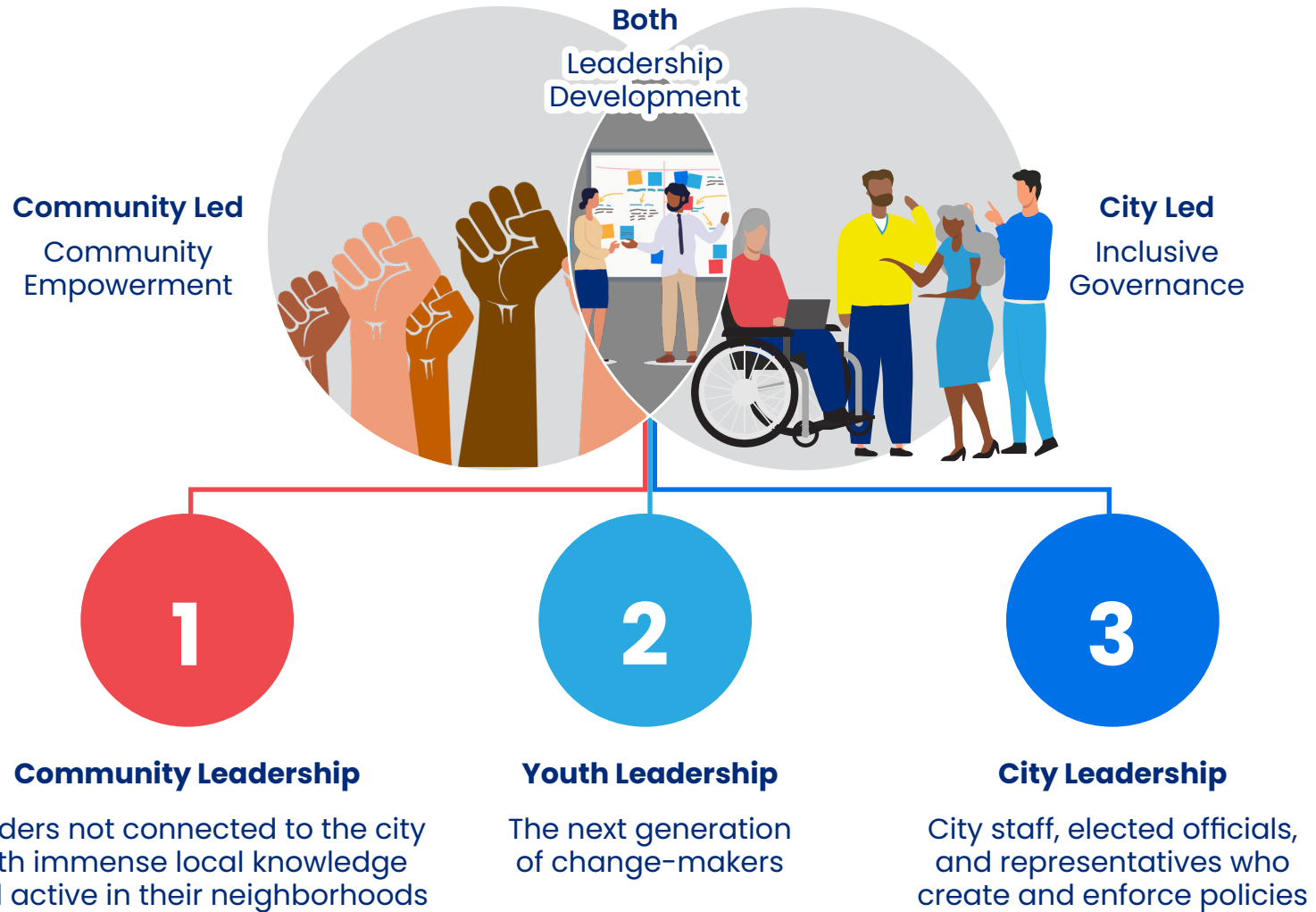**Source:** 2024, Adapted from the Health Collaborative

Leadership is the basis of a healthy community, and both the city and community members play a major role in it.

Both
Leadership Development

Community Led
Community Empowerment

City Led
Inclusive Governance

1

Community Leadership

Leaders not connected to the city with immense local knowledge and active in their neighborhoods

2

Youth Leadership

The next generation of change-makers

3

City Leadership

City staff, elected officials, and representatives who create and enforce policies

Goal 1. Community
Policy CO.1 Leadership Development

Distrust is a valid feeling.

In a day and age of divisive politics and inconsistent digital information, many community members have understandable distrust. This becomes more prominent when people's identities intersect different races, genders, sexual orientations, and even generations. Many people have historically been removed or deliberately excluded from politics throughout America's history, leading to expected weariness of local government.

Trust takes time and consistency to build.

Not only is it important that current leadership and staff are well informed and ready to take action, but also the next generation of leaders are prepared. By preparing youth to take leadership positions and training junior staff to take on more senior roles, there is a more consistent and well-prepared team helping guide and support Danville's neighborhoods.

Only 22% of Americans say they trust the government to do what is right all or most of the time.

Source: 2024, Pew Research Center Study on Public Trust in Government from 1958–2024

22%
of Americans trust the government
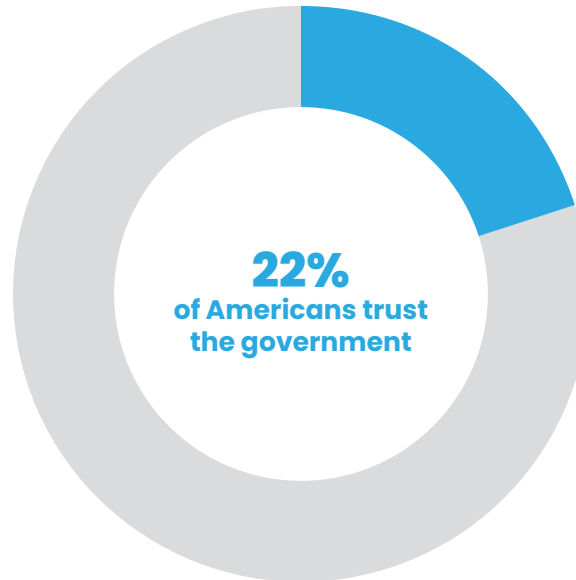
65% of Americans say most political candidates run for office to serve their own personal interests.

Source: 2022, Pew Research Center Study on Public Trust in Government

65%
of Americans belive candidates serve their own personal interests

Goal 1. Community
Policy CO.1 Leadership Development
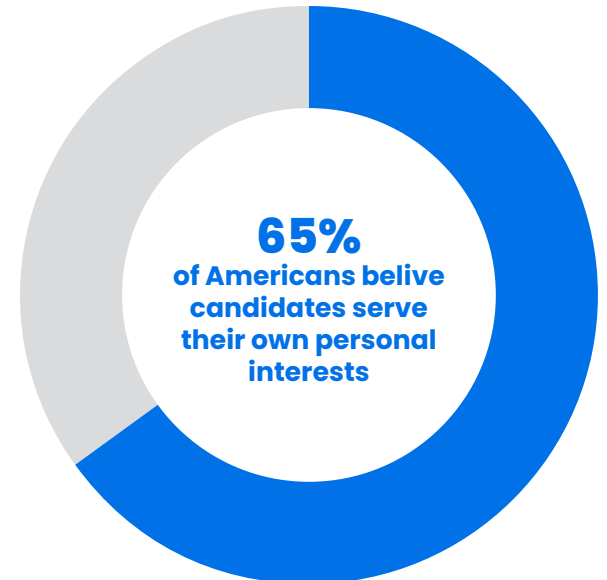
RECOMMENDATION

CO.1.1
Community Leadership

Empower and support a shared leadership model with local activists and community councils that effectively and equitably builds people's capacity to organize and improve the city and their neighborhoods.

ACTIONS

1. Coordinate with the Investing in Danville project to evaluate how capital funding or alternative funding sources could be used to finance neighborhood-led action plans.

2. Host twice annual meetings between city departments and relevant stakeholders, non-profits, and community development organizations to discuss which key action items the city can plan a role in implementing versus which actions these partners can spearhead.

3. Continue to enhance neighborhood stewardship of parks to increase positive identification with neighborhood parks.

RECOMMENDATION

CO.1.2
Youth Leadership

Expand youth leadership and engagement to have an active role in the shaping of Danville's future.

ACTIONS

1. Recruit youth ambassadors for city commissions to encourage civic participation and include future generations in the planning and implementation of decisions which will impact them throughout their lives.

2. Grow and retain young talent by creating an annual youth leadership summit with Danville high school, college, and university students to support mentorship opportunities, advertise available programs and support, and engage youth to receive feedback about current city initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

CO.1.3
City Leadership

Ensure clear communication between city departments, Planning Commission, City Council, and community members about actions and expectations.

ACTIONS

1. Continue hosting regular inter-departmental coordination meetings.

2. Set collaborative priorities annually through a joint Planning Commission and City Council meeting about implementing PLAN Danville.

3. Consider a shared public portal on projects and initiatives which can be used by both staff and the public, similar to Engage PGH.

Goal 1. Community
Policy CO.1 Leadership Development

CO.2
Community Empowerment

Empower communities by fostering collaboration, participation, and ownership in decision-making processes.

Nobody knows what Danville's neighborhoods need better than the residents themselves. Empowering residents, creating clear channels of communication between them and city staff, and showing flowthrough are all key to community empowerment.

Desired Outcomes

- Maintain number of stewards
- Increase number of partner organizations
- Increase in number of neighborhoods with Neighborhood Action Plans

Goal 1. Community
Policy CO.2 Community Empowerment

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RECOMMENDATION

CO.2.1
Neighborhood Action Planning

Support neighborhood planning processes.

ACTIONS

1. Promote the Neighborhood Action Planning Guide in the appendix, which includes clear steps for city-coordinated implementation items such as zoning recommendations and capital improvements.

2. Seek funding for Neighborhood Action Plans in priority neighborhoods to support the work of existing organizations in this space, such as the Dan River Foundation (DRF).

3. Host quarterly meetings with the DRF Community Councils to support the implementation of community actions.

RECOMMENDATION

CO.2.2
Stewardship

Continue to support volunteerism and stewardship as a means of co-creating and maintaining city spaces.

Goal 1. Community
Policy CO.2 Community Empowerment

How to Conduct a Neighborhood Action Plan

PLAN Danville provides a citywide vision for future change and development in the community. In some instances, a more detailed approach will be needed to ensure appropriate attention and care is given to areas that have specific cultural, historic, social, economic, or physical factors which impact the challenges and opportunities faced by community members.

Neighborhood-specific plans will provide the opportunity to dive into these details and tailor recommendations that best suit the needs of neighborhood community members, whether they are residents, business owners or visitors.

See the Neighborhood Action Plan Toolkit appendix to learn more.

1 | Select Leadership
Create a Leadership Committee to guide the process.

2 | Connect with City Planning
Inform the city of the community's intention and chat about technical support.

3 | Check Funding Opportunities
Check on any available city funding or outside technical assistance grants.

6 | Formulate Goals
Define what the city wants to achieve in the future.

5 | Identify Challenges and Opportunities
These will prioritize what actions the city and neighborhood should take on.

4 | Collect Data
Do research to understand the existing conditions of the area.

7 | Prioritize Key Actions
These actions will help achieve the goals of the plan.

8 | Share
Share the draft plan with the wider community, city staff, and other stakeholders.

9 | Act
Begin to put these actions into practice with the support of the city and other partners.

Learn from Leaders

Neighborhood Planning

Almagro & Schoolfield

Following the success of the 2023 Schoolfield Neighborhood Plan by the City of Danville and the 2018 Dan River Foundation Neighborhood Plans, the city realized they would benefit from a standard process that helps staff align neighborhood plans with the priorities and actions of PLAN Danville.

In addition to PLAN Danville, the city simultaneously created a neighborhood action toolkit to lead future plans and applied it in the Almagro Neighborhood.

See more about the Almagro Neighborhood Plan and the Neighborhood Action Planning Toolkit in the appendix.

CO.3
Inclusive Governance

Promote inclusive and transparent governance practices that prioritize accountability, accessibility, and equity in decision-making.

Desired Outcomes

- Implementation of the Vulnerability Assessment Checklist
- Successful hires
- Updated Citizen Participation Plan

Goal 1. Community
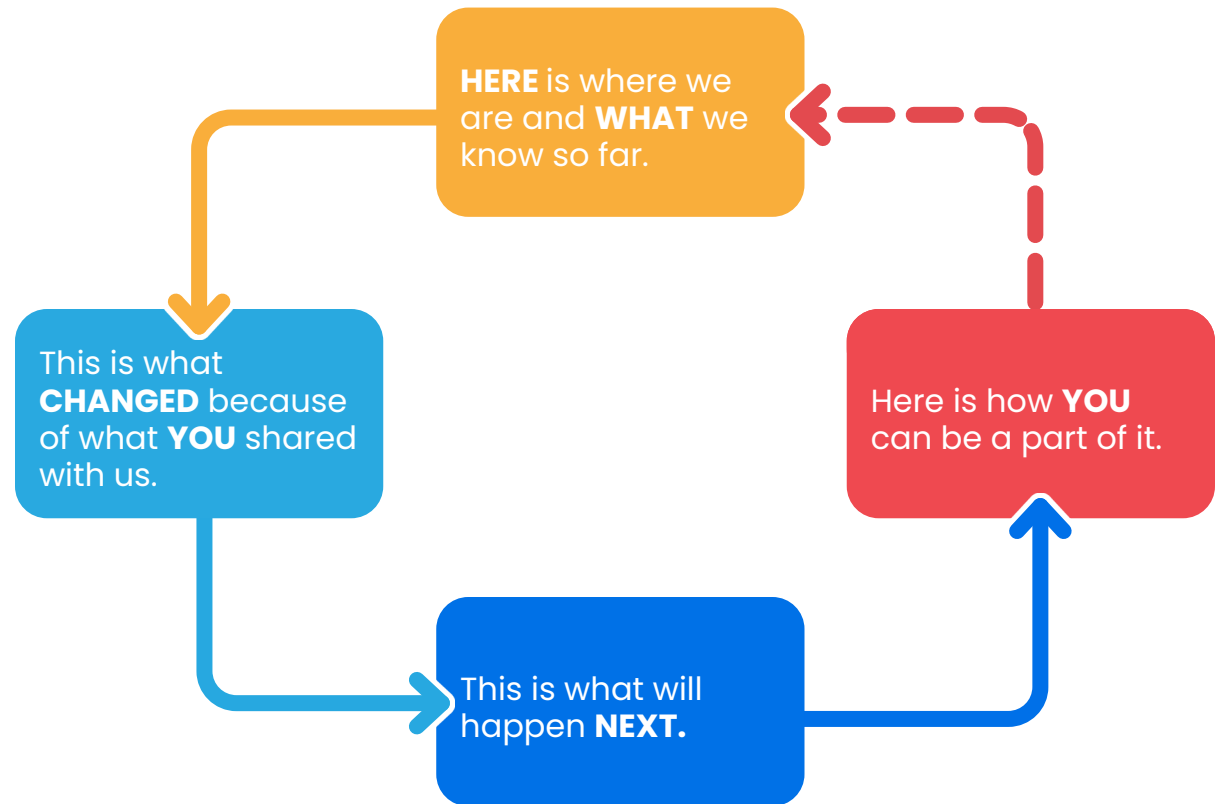Policy CO.3 Inclusive Governance

The city is hard at work. This has advantages and disadvantages.

With so much happening, clear and regular communications are vital. This requires a full feedback loop and specialized engagement depending on the project.

Areas that have not been engaged historically or have been historically marginalized require more in person and regular events such as "road shows" or community conversations.

On the other end, some communities might feel "engagement burn out" from being over involved and instead require clear, concise summaries of findings and immediate ways to share feedback.

Engagement Feedback Loop

HERE is where we are and **WHAT** we know so far.

This is what **CHANGED** because of what **YOU** shared with us.

Here is how **YOU** can be a part of it.

This is what will happen **NEXT.**

Danville is listening, collaborating and communicating.

Citizen Participation Plan

Danville regularly updates and posts its Citizen Participation Plan. This document clearly outlines the methods city staff use to communicate with community members about any public projects or plans that are happening in their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Planning

In addition to the extensive engagement around Danville's citywide plans, the city is also engaging in neighborhood plans to have more detailed conversations with community members.

Civic Index

Starting in 2023, the Health Collaborative created the Civic Health Work Group to evaluate how the region can enhance Civic Health and measure success using a Civic Index.

Heart the Park

Since the development of the Neighborhood Park Projects in 2021, the Danville Department of Parks and Recreation has collaborated with different neighborhoods each year to create resident-led park designs. By rotating these parks, it maximizes the frequency of updated plans and regular collaboration with city staff.

Emergency Services Outreach

Danville's Police, Fire, and Social Services all have regular programming that puts staff in communications with community members about their concerns and needs. See Chapter 4. Infrastructure

> "There is so much happening, [city projects] all kinda blend together. It almost feels repetitive, and then we get exhausted and it gets easier to check out of the process all together."
>
> *– 2024 PLAN Danville Premiere Participant*

RECOMMENDATION

CO.3.1
Eliminate Barriers

Continue to eliminate barriers that prevent children, youth, young adults, seniors, and traditionally marginalized communities from participating in civic opportunities.

ACTIONS

1. Provide multiple avenues for feedback on major future city investments and development including in person sessions, public hearings, and online polls or surveys.

2. Identify and document effective programs that are currently being offered by the city or county.

3. Include demographic questions and track location-specific engagement to better understand which community members and groups are not represented in the engagement process and fill those gaps using alternative engagment techniques.

4. Ensure that all communication channels are accessible to residents with disabilities, make efforts to address the digital divide and ensure equitable access.

RECOMMENDATION

CO.3.2
Go to the People

Prioritize engagement methods that meet community members where they are, making it easier for them to participate in the process.

ACTIONS

1. Continue to host semi-annual pop-ups to promote city services and resources in collaboration with local organizations, non-profits, and faith-based organizations to meet community members where they are.

RECOMMENDATION

CO.3.3
Expand Capacity

Expand staff capacity through strategic hiring and partnerships.

ACTIONS

1. Pursue funding to hire a grant writer and a grant coordinator to assist with pursuing funding and implement grant programming to make the goals and actions of PLAN Danville happen.

2. Identify community liaisons from established organizations to both filter requests and concerns from residents as well as promote city initiatives and programs.

RECOMMENDATION

CO.3.4
Responsible Prioritization

Prioritize communities with the greatest need using the PLAN Danville Scorecard (see Chapter 9. Implementation).

Goal 1. Community
Policy CO.3 Inclusive Governance

How to Use Community Engagement Tools

The best engagement practices use multiple tools. Some special ones work better for specific audiences, which Danville keeps in mind when creating engagement plans for projects.

Community Hasn't Been Engaged Before

Make events deep conversations and opportunities to chat one on one.

- Community conversations
- Roaming tables
- Road shows
- Project storefronts

Community Is Experiencing Engagement Fatigue

Make events fun and easy to join.

- Open houses
- Block parties
- Online surveys
- Websites
- One pagers
- Quick facts

The Team Hasn't Heard from Certain Community Groups

Create specialized events around those groups to be sure you hear from them.

- Working sessions with experts
- Small business roundtables
- Youth engagement at schools or after school centers
- Senior engagement at senior housing and care facilities

" It would be nice to know why certain things are happening and others aren't.

- 2024 PLAN Danville Premiere Participant

Learn more about how projects and proposals will be prioritized in Chapter 9. Implementation