



Reflecting Raleigh

THE NEXT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Next Comprehensive Plan Engagement Strategy

City of Raleigh
Planning and Development
Office of Community Engagement

MARCH 2025

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Project Summary

Reflecting Raleigh sets out to deliver a multi-phase engagement strategy to create the city’s next Comprehensive Plan, which serves as the foundation for long-term growth, zoning, and development policies. This plan emphasizes sustainable and equitable growth while fostering inclusive community participation, building on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and subsequent updates. The new plan is projected for completion by 2027 and will guide Raleigh's future in alignment with its Vision Themes and Growth Framework.

The *Reflecting Raleigh* engagement strategy is built around four primary goals:

1. **Facilitate Inclusive Participation**
2. **Enhance Awareness and Understanding of Planning**
3. **Incorporate Community Feedback**
4. **Promote Effective Public Communication and Coordination**

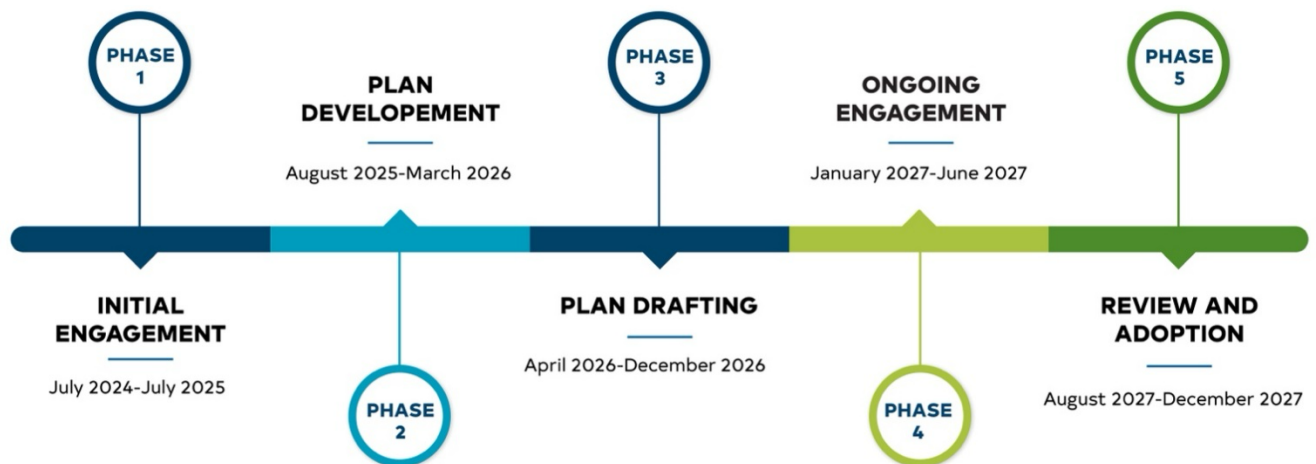
The engagement framework is informed by Raleigh’s Public Participation Playbook, leveraging the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation to guide public roles at each phase of the process. Engagement activities will be adapted to meet the unique needs of Raleigh’s diverse population and include Community Conversations, Citizen Assemblies, targeted outreach, and collaboration with local artists and organizations.

Data from past initiatives reveals gaps in representation, particularly among Hispanic and non-white populations, necessitating targeted efforts to improve inclusivity. Tools such as demographic tracking, event metrics, and digital analytics will help ensure robust and representative participation.

This phased approach will include:

- **Phase I: Community Conversations (2024-2025)** to gather input on key themes like affordable housing, mobility, and sustainable infrastructure.
- **Phases II-IV (2025-2027)** to develop, draft, and review the plan in collaboration with technical teams, Citizen Assemblies, and public workshops.
- **Phase V: Plan Adoption (2027)** through coordinated engagement and outreach.

The *Reflecting Raleigh* engagement strategy prioritizes equity, transparency, and collaboration, ensuring the Comprehensive Plan reflects the aspirations of all Raleigh residents. By addressing barriers and incorporating diverse perspectives, this effort aims to create a visionary framework for the city’s future.





Introduction

Project Overview

Raleigh’s Next Comprehensive Plan serves as the city’s long-term vision for the built environment and is required by state law to enforce zoning and development regulations. Originally adopted in 2009 and updated from 2014-2019, the plan includes policies that guide Raleigh’s growth in alignment with adopted Vision Themes, Growth Framework, and Tools such as the Future Land Use Map and Urban Form Map.

Reflecting Raleigh is the process of developing the Next Comprehensive Plan, which will include a focus on sustainable and equitable growth, policy development, and enhanced community engagement. This process will unfold over five phases, with completion of the plan anticipated in 2027.

Phase		Timeline
I.	Community Conversations	July 2024 – July 2025
II.	Plan Development	Aug. 2025 – Mar. 2026
III.	Plan To Draft	Apr. 2026 – Dec. 2026
IV.	Review & Engagement	Jan. 2027 – Jun. 2027
V.	Adoption	Jul. 2027 – Dec. 2027

The first phase of this multi-year process will include a series of Community Conversations centered around six core themes: Affordable Housing, Stormwater, Mobility, Trees, Neighborhood Change, and Sustainable Infrastructure & Services. City staff will supplement these larger events by tabling at other community events, meeting with neighborhood organizations, sharing information directly with community leaders to distribute more widely, and presenting to appointed and elected city leaders. Subsequent phases will include plan

development in collaboration with a technical team and a Citizen Assembly, plan drafting, plan review, and plan adoption.

Raleigh residents represent a diverse array of backgrounds, and it is imperative that the comprehensive plan reflect the city's cultural richness and be informed by a diversity of perspectives. This plan outlines an engagement framework to collect input from a truly representative sample of the community, one that reflects Raleigh.

Throughout the engagement process, we seek to:

- 1. Facilitate Inclusive Participation** - Ensure active involvement from all Raleigh residents, with a focus on historically underrepresented communities, to gather diverse perspectives and inform the Comprehensive Plan.
- 2. Enhance Community Awareness & Understanding** - Educate and inform the public about the Comprehensive Plan planning process and share data related to strategies for addressing key issues related to growth and development.
- 3. Meaningfully Incorporate Community Feedback** - Utilize resident input to shape the development of the new plan's vision, goals, and policies.
- 4. Promote Effective Communication & Coordination** - Foster trust between city officials, city staff, and community members by establishing clear channels of communication and implementing strategies for collaboration.

Engagement Planning Framework

This document provides the overarching framework for engagement throughout the multi-year process of developing the next comprehensive plan. Subsequent sections contextualize the engagement approach with historical and demographic data and outline engagement principals in order to achieve the broad goals listed above.

This document includes general activities for each of the five phases of the process and describes how each of the activities aligns with our engagement principals. It describes the general timing of activities within each phase, who will be responsible, what engagement tools will be applied, how engagement data will be used, and the communication strategy for each activity.

This document does not provide specific logistical information about each individual event. The project team will develop more detailed supplemental plans for each activity that fit within this framework.

IAP2 Spectrum of Participation

The Reflecting Raleigh engagement strategy aligns with the principals outlined in the City of Raleigh's [Public Participation Playbook](#), adopted in 2020, which follows the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation framework. The public's role in the decision-making process varies based on the nature of the project and will vary by phase and activity within this specific project as well.

The Spectrum of Participation is framework designed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) to guide the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role and the public

participation goal that will drive the engagement process¹. The tool outlines five levels which define the public’s role in any public participation process.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The engagement strategy for the next comprehensive plan uses this framework to define the public’s role and guide the design of engagement events throughout the comprehensive planning process.

The development of the next comprehensive plan is a long process, and the level of public influence may vary based on the audience and the specific phase of the project. This adaptive approach ensures that community feedback is effectively integrated, and that the engagement remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Project Context

Community Profile

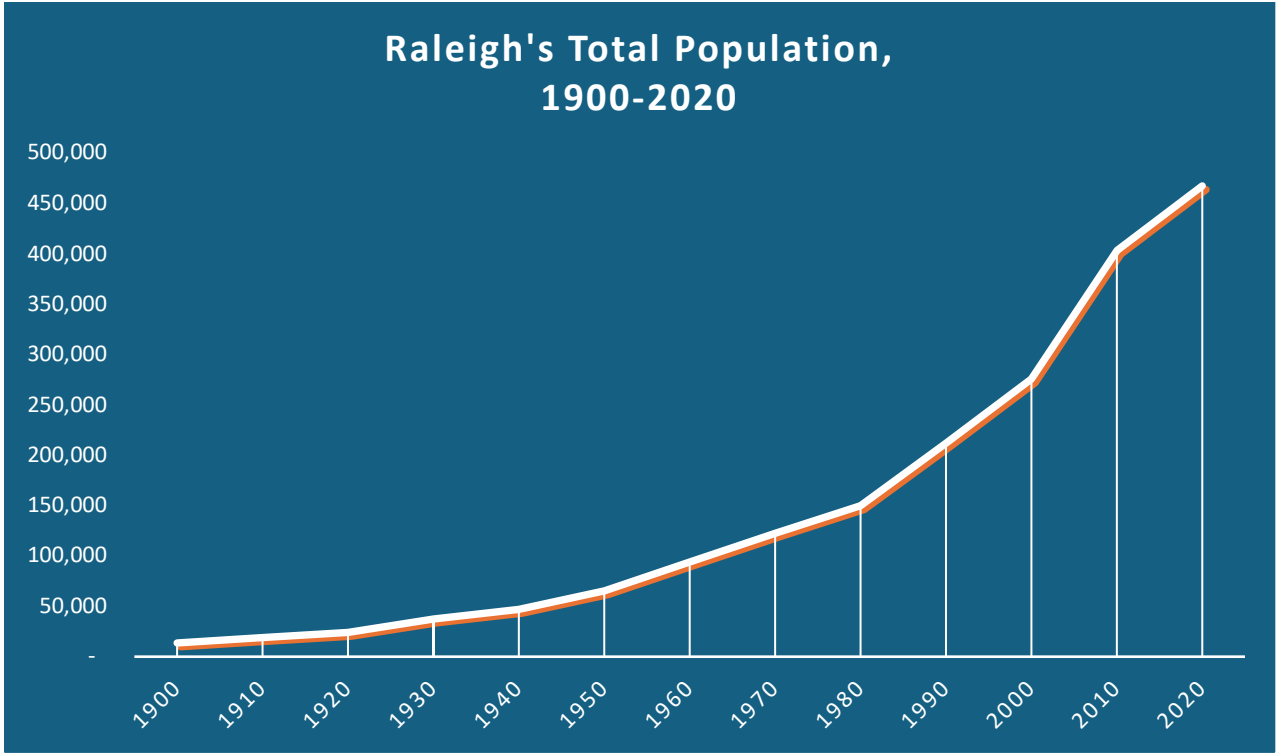
The City of Raleigh encompasses 180 square miles² and is home to 482,295 residents.³ Originally platted in 1972, Raleigh has grown steadily since 1900, averaging an annual 1.1 percent increase in population over the last 10 years.⁴

¹ <https://www.iap2.org/>

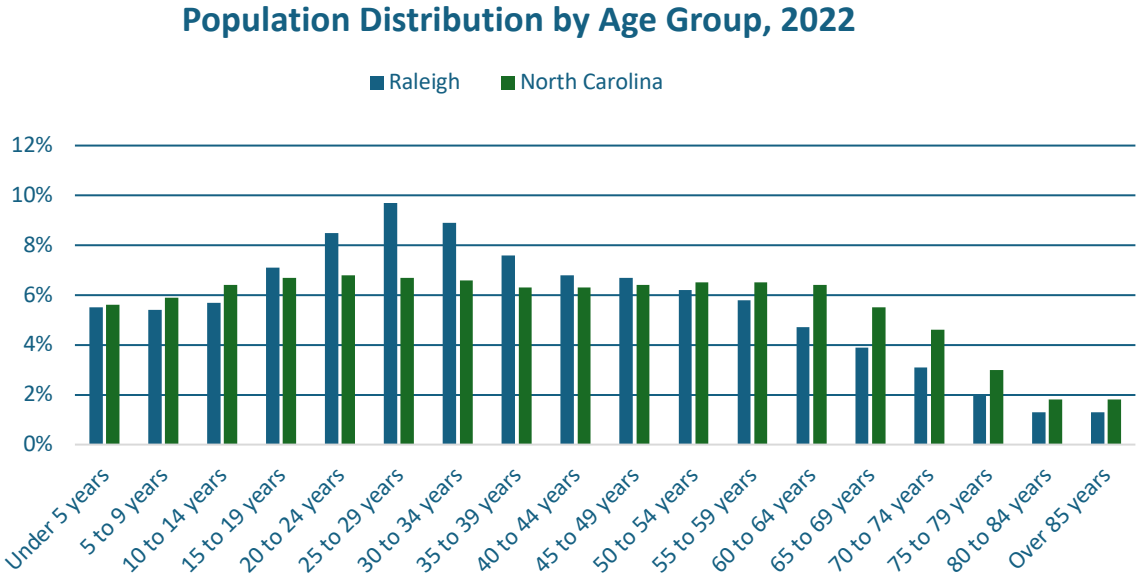
² Wake County, Total Acreage in Raleigh Planning Jurisdiction

³ U.S. Census, City and Town Population Totals: 2020-2023

⁴ U.S. Decennial Census, 1900-2020

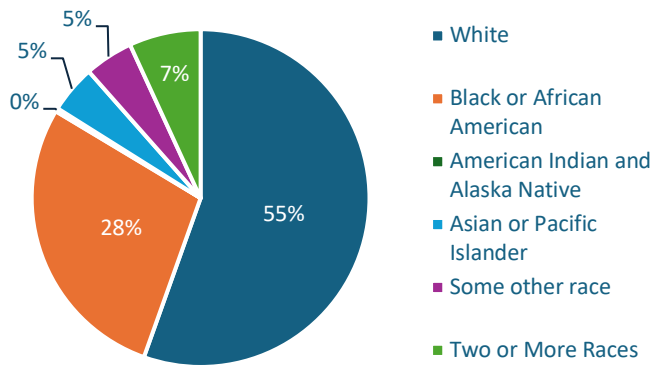


Raleigh’s population is diverse with respect to age, race, and ethnicity as shown in the charts below⁵.

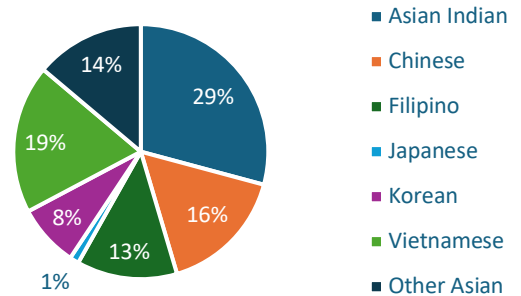


⁵ American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2022

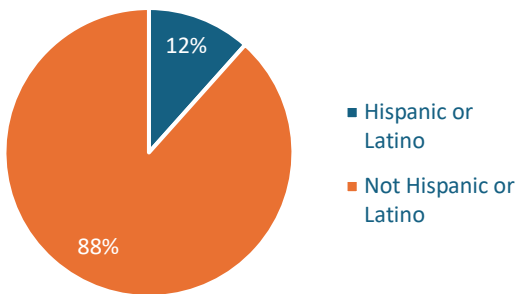
Raleigh's Population by Race, 2022



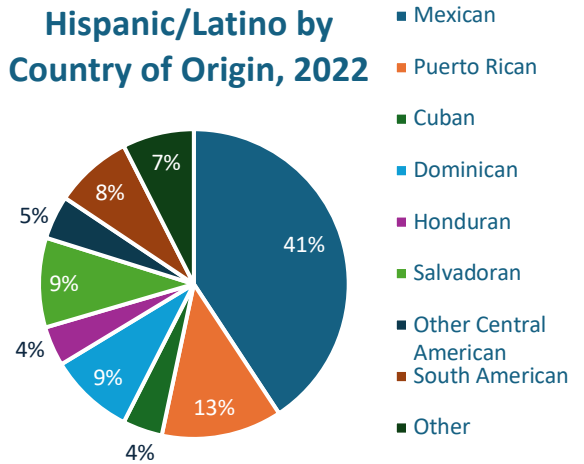
Raleigh's Asian Population by Country of Origin, 2022



Raleigh's Population by Ethnicity, 2022

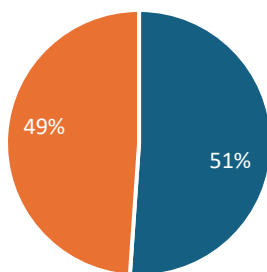


Hispanic/Latino by Country of Origin, 2022



Housing Tenure

■ Owner Occupied ■ Renter Occupied



Household tenure is relatively evenly split between householders who own their own homes compared with those who rent. Most Raleigh residents who own their home are

- White (71%)
- Non-Hispanic (69%)
- Between 45 and 54 years old (22%)
- and moved into their current house between 2010 and 2017 (34.3%).

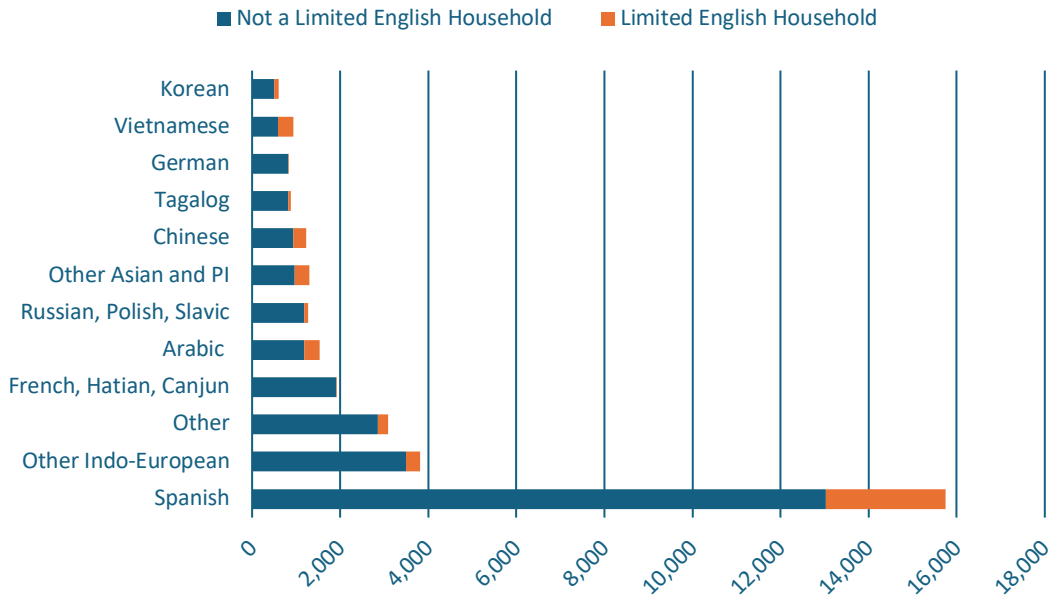
Most Raleigh residents who rent their home are

- White (49%)
- Non-Hispanic (46%)
- Under 35 years old (44%)
- and moved into their current home between 2018 and 2020 (42.6%).

94% of households have access to a vehicle, while 6% of households do not.

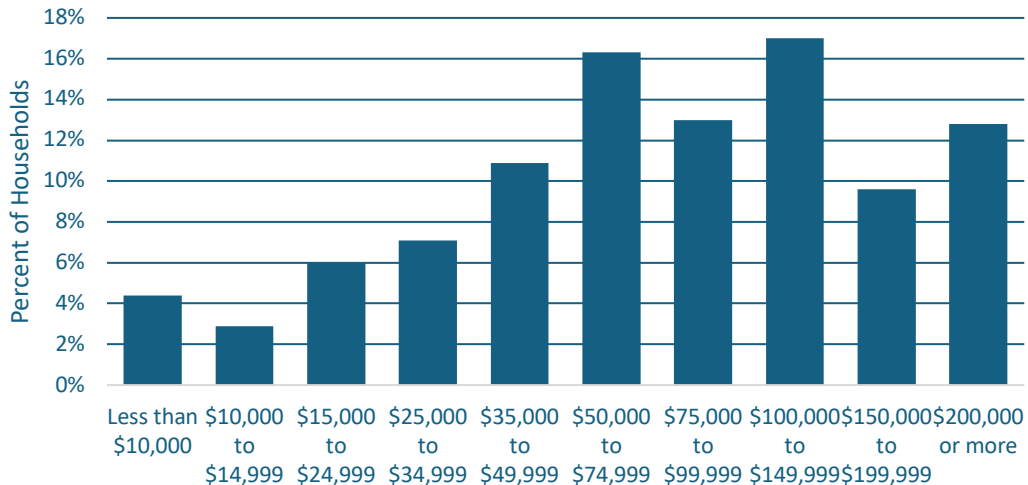
Based on the most recent data from 2022, 3% of households are reported to be linguistically isolated or have limited English proficiency (LEP), with the highest percentage of limited English households speaking Spanish (56% of LEP households), followed by Arabic and other Asian and Pacific Island languages (both 7%).

Language Spoken at Home, 2022



The median household income in Raleigh is \$78,631, but the distribution of household income is widely spread.

Annual Household Income, 2022



This information is important to report, because it sets the benchmarks for participation in the process of developing the next comprehensive plan. In order to facilitate inclusive participation, we must first understand

who needs to be included. This information also helps identify and overcome potential barriers to participation, described in greater detail in the sections below.

Participation in City Planning

Analysis of past engagement efforts in Raleigh’s city planning initiatives has consistently revealed a disparity in participation across different demographic groups. Data from prior engagement activities show that the majority of participants do not fully represent the city’s diverse population. For example, results from the Sidewalk Petition Survey indicate that white residents were significantly overrepresented, making up 81% of respondents despite constituting only 56% of Raleigh’s population. Conversely, Hispanic residents were notably underrepresented, comprising just 3% of respondents while representing 11% of the city’s population. Similarly, findings from the Downtown Mobility Survey conducted by the city’s Transportation Department demonstrate a comparable pattern of participation, where white residents were overrepresented, while other racial and ethnic groups were significantly underrepresented.

These disparities highlight a critical challenge in city planning efforts: the need for more equitable engagement strategies that actively seek to involve historically underrepresented populations. Traditionally, city planning engagement has relied on methods such as online surveys, public open houses, tabling at events, and digital communications, which may inadvertently exclude groups facing barriers to participation. Common obstacles include language barriers, limited access to technology, and transportation constraints, scheduling conflicts.

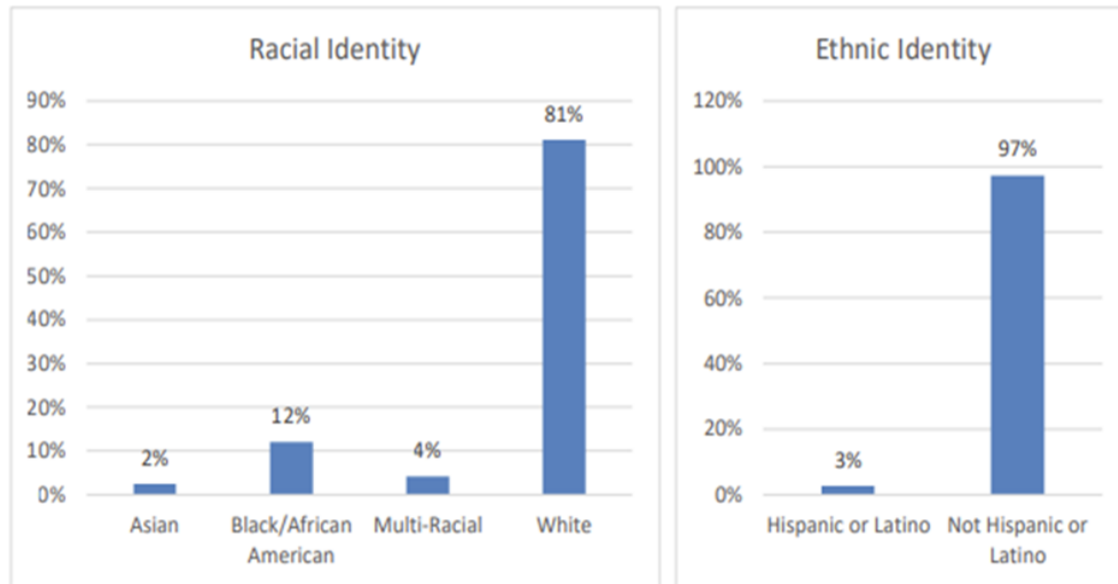
Additionally, previous engagement efforts have often been concentrated in areas with higher rates of homeownership and historically active civic participation, leaving out communities that have been historically marginalized in planning decisions. To address these disparities, the city’s engagement strategy for Reflecting aims to employ a more inclusive and representative approach. Equitable engagement is not just about increasing overall participation but about ensuring that underrepresented voices are intentionally sought out, valued, and incorporated into the planning process.

By prioritizing equitable engagement, Raleigh’s next comprehensive plan seeks to ensure that the city’s future growth reflects the needs, priorities, and perspectives of its entire population—not just those who have historically had a louder voice in the planning process. Through these expanded and targeted outreach efforts, the city aims to create a more representative and inclusive decision-making framework, fostering a sense of ownership and trust among all Raleigh residents

Sidewalk Petition Survey Results

The white population is overrepresented in the survey (81% of respondents vs. 56% of city residents). The Hispanic population is underrepresented in the survey (3% of respondents versus 11% of City residents).

Question 3: What is your racial identity? (Choose all that apply.) (331 responses/75% of respondents)



Below are the results of the Downtown Mobility Survey conducted by Transportation

Again, when compared to Raleigh’s population by race, we see that white population is overrepresented while other demographics are well underrepresented.

5. What is your racial identity?
(Select all that apply)

81%	White	492 ✓
8%	Prefer not to answer	51 ✓
5%	Black	28 ✓
4%	Hispanic/Latino/Latina	23 ✓
3%	Asian	18 ✓
2%	Other (feel free to self-identify in the comments)	12 ✓
0%	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3 ✓

Based on past rates of participation in these and other engagement initiatives across the city, it is likely that these demographics will continue to participate. This project will use the engagement methods described above but also supplement these methods with new approaches, in order to reach a more representative sample of the Raleigh community, with a priority focus on reaching historically underrepresented neighborhoods and demographics.

Engagement Strategy

Engagement Goals and Objectives

1. **Facilitate Inclusive Participation** - Ensure active involvement from all Raleigh residents, with a focus on historically underrepresented communities, to gather diverse perspectives and inform the Comprehensive Plan.
 - a. Remove barriers to participation by using childcare and translation services
 - b. Locate events in areas of the city with high proportion of underrepresented population
 - c. Use existing community social networks, community connectors, local community organizations
2. **Enhance Community Awareness & Understanding** - Educate and inform the public about the Comprehensive Plan planning process and share data related to strategies for addressing key issues related to growth and development.
 - a. Tailor the messaging for each engagement event to the corresponding audience
3. **Meaningfully Incorporate Community Feedback** - Utilize resident input to shape the development of the new plan's vision, goals, and policies.
4. **Promote Effective Communication & Coordination** - Foster trust between city officials, city staff, and community members by establishing clear channels of communication and implementing strategies for collaboration.

Facilitating Inclusive Participation

Creating an inclusive and equitable engagement process requires intentional strategies to ensure all residents—especially those from historically underrepresented communities—have meaningful opportunities to participate in city planning. While traditional engagement methods tend to attract the same demographics, facilitating inclusive participation means actively breaking down barriers and adopting approaches that prioritize accessibility, trust, and representation.

Expanding Outreach and Engagement Methods

To ensure a diverse and representative sample of participants, engagement efforts must go beyond conventional methods. This project will:

- Diversify outreach efforts by using a mix of digital, in-person, and grassroots strategies, including door-to-door canvassing, and social media outreach.
- Engage trusted community leaders to serve as liaisons between city officials and historically underrepresented groups, building trust and credibility.
- Host events in familiar, accessible spaces such as schools, churches, libraries, and community centers, where people naturally gather.

-
- Leverage local institutions like schools and faith-based organizations to spread information and encourage participation.
 - Offer multiple engagement formats including surveys, focus groups, pop-up events, and online forums to accommodate different preferences and availability.

Enhancing Accessibility and Accommodations

For engagement to be truly inclusive, it must be designed to accommodate the diverse needs of the community. This includes:

- Providing language interpretation services and multilingual materials to reach non-English-speaking residents.
- Ensuring physical accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including venues with ramps, elevators, and assistive listening devices.
- Making materials and discussions easy to understand by avoiding technical jargon and using plain language at a 7th-grade reading level.
- Offering childcare and meals at events to remove barriers for parents and caregivers.
- Scheduling events at times that work for a broad range of participants, avoiding work hours, school pick-up times, and religious holidays.

Building Trust and Long-Term Engagement

Sustained and meaningful participation requires trust, which must be actively cultivated through transparency, accountability, and relationship-building. To foster trust, engagement efforts will:

- Ensure that participation leads to real outcomes by keeping the community informed about how their input is used in decision-making.
- Follow up with participants to demonstrate that their voices are valued and to maintain long-term engagement.
- Create feedback loops that allow for continued dialogue and adjustment of engagement strategies based on community needs.
- Eliminate unnecessary barriers to participation, such as pre-registration requirements, to make events feel more welcoming and open.

By implementing these strategies, the city can create an engagement process that is not only representative but also empowering—ensuring that all residents, regardless of background, have a voice in shaping their community.

Barriers to Participation

Ensuring equitable engagement in city planning requires acknowledging and addressing the barriers that prevent many residents—particularly those from historically underrepresented communities—from participating. These barriers can take many forms, including logistical challenges, accessibility issues, trust gaps, and communication barriers. Addressing these obstacles is essential to fostering a more inclusive and representative planning process.

Logistical Barriers

Many residents face practical challenges that make participation difficult. To increase accessibility, engagement efforts should:

- Provide meals and childcare to support parents and caregivers who might otherwise be unable to attend.
- Offer language interpretation services for non-English speakers to ensure that all residents can fully engage in discussions.
- Host events in convenient locations, such as community centers, schools, or places where people already gather, to make attendance easier.
- Address transportation challenges by selecting venues near public transit, offering ride assistance, or providing virtual participation options.
- Be mindful of timing conflicts, including work schedules and religious holidays, to avoid unintentionally excluding specific communities.

Accessibility and Communication Barriers

The way information is presented can also create barriers to participation. To ensure engagement efforts are accessible and relatable, it is important to:

- Use clear and inclusive language, avoiding technical jargon that may be difficult to understand. Materials should be written at a 7th-grade reading level to maximize accessibility.
- Make event format welcoming and accessible, provide accommodations for people with disabilities, including sign language interpretation and mobility access.
- Ensure discussions and materials have cultural relevance, relating planning topics to people's lived experiences so they feel personally connected to the issues at hand.
- Offer a variety of engagement opportunities, including online and in-person options, to accommodate different preferences and needs.

Structural and Trust Barriers

- A lack of trust in government institutions and past experiences of exclusion can discourage residents from participating.
- To address these concerns:
 - Events should not require pre-registration, allowing for more spontaneous participation.
 - Outreach efforts should include door-to-door engagement and direct interaction with residents to ensure broad awareness.
 - Partnerships with trusted community leaders, faith-based organizations, and grassroots groups can help bridge trust gaps and encourage participation.
 - Information should be distributed through schools, PTAs, and teachers, leveraging existing networks to reach families more effectively.
- By proactively addressing these barriers, the city can create more inclusive spaces where all residents—regardless of background or circumstance—can have a voice in shaping their community.

Enhancing Awareness and Understanding

To enhance community awareness and understanding, it is crucial to educate the public about the Comprehensive Plan planning process and provide them with the necessary tools and knowledge to engage meaningfully. This process clear planning strategies, equitable outreach and education of residents on the topics covered in the planning process.

By implementing targeted outreach efforts and using inclusive educational strategies, the city can ensure that all residents—regardless of their background—are well-informed and able to contribute effectively to the planning process.

Incorporating Feedback

Incorporating meaningful community feedback is central to developing an effective Comprehensive Plan that reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of Raleigh’s residents. It is essential that the planning process is not only inclusive but also responsive to the input provided by the community. This ensures that the plan is shaped by the perspectives of those who will be most impacted by its implementation. By synthesizing community input with planning best practices, the city can create a plan that is both visionary and grounded in practical solutions.

Coordination and Communication

Tracking Engagement

Tracking engagement is a vital component of the planning process, as it helps measure the effectiveness of outreach efforts and ensures that the community’s participation is representative and inclusive. By collecting and analyzing data from various engagement platforms and activities, the city can assess the reach, impact, and diversity of its outreach efforts. This tracking will allow for the refinement of strategies to maximize participation and ensure that all voices are heard throughout the planning process.

Key Metrics for Tracking Engagement:

- 1. Event Attendance (In-Person and Virtual):**

Tracking the number of attendees at both in-person and virtual events will provide a clear picture of the level of community interest and participation. This includes recording the number of people who attend each event, allowing the planning team to evaluate which types of events attract the most participants and identify opportunities for improvement. Physical attendance and virtual engagement will be measured to ensure inclusivity across different preferences and accessibility needs.

- 2. Demographics of Event Attendees:**

Understanding the demographic makeup of event attendees is crucial for assessing whether the engagement efforts are reaching a diverse and representative sample of the community. This can be tracked through both registration data and voluntary demographic surveys at events. Collecting data on age, gender, ethnicity, and other relevant factors will ensure that historically underrepresented groups are engaged in the planning process.

- 3. Survey Participation:**

Surveys are essential for gathering community feedback and tracking survey participation helps gauge overall engagement levels. Survey participation data will be used to determine how many people are actively sharing their perspectives and which topics or issues are generating the most responses. This

will also include an assessment of how representative the survey respondents are of the broader community.

4. Demographics of Survey Participants:

Similar to event attendance tracking, it is important to capture the demographic breakdown of survey participants. This specific data will only be collected voluntarily, but will include age, gender, race, income level, and other relevant information. Monitoring this demographic data will help identify any gaps in participation and ensure that diverse voices are reflected.

5. Social Media Analytics:

Social media platforms serve as an important engagement tool and the most efficient media channel for sharing information. By tracking social media analytics on a quarterly basis, the city can measure the reach and interaction of posts. Key metrics to track include:

- **Demographic Information:** Social media analytics can provide insights into the age, gender, and geographic location of users interacting with posts. This helps assess whether the social media outreach is reaching diverse groups.
- **Engagement Strategies:** Analyzing the timing of posts (time of day, day of the week), as well as the use of images, framing, and content, can help determine the most effective strategies for increasing interaction. Comparing the performance of government posts with other communications can identify ways to improve outreach and engagement.

6. Website Analytics:

Website analytics will be collected on a quarterly basis to evaluate how people are interacting with the city's planning resources online. Metrics to track include:

- **Visitor Information:** Data on where visitors are coming from (such as geographic location via IP address) can help assess the reach of the city's online engagement. Understanding which areas are most engaged will help tailor future outreach efforts.
- **Device Usage:** Given that most people access websites via their phones, it is important to track how reliable this data is, considering the limitations of phone-based interactions. Analyzing user behavior can reveal which sections of the website are most popular and provide insights into content preferences.

7. GovDelivery Analytics:

GovDelivery is an important platform for disseminating information to the community via email and text alerts. Tracking analytics for GovDelivery will allow the city to monitor how effectively these communications are engaging the public. Key metrics to track include:

- **Engagement Strategies:** For social media promotion, tracking the timing of when messages are sent, the inclusion of images, framing, and content, will provide valuable engagement insights. Comparing these metrics with other government communications will help define success and refine outreach strategies.

8. Citizen Assembly Participants:

Citizen assemblies are where residents are invited to participate in structured decision-making or feedback sessions. The assembly is a powerful method for gathering input from a broad cross-section of the community.

9. Geographic Mapping of Engagement Locations:

Mapping the locations of community engagement events and tracking where participants are coming from can help identify where outreach efforts need to be strengthened. This geographic analysis

ensures that the city’s engagement efforts are not concentrated in one area but are spread across the entire community, especially in areas of the city that are underrepresented.

10. Partnership and Collaboration:

The success of community engagement efforts depends on collaboration with local organizations, departments, and trusted community leaders. Asking partner departments and organizations to share engagement opportunities through their channels will help expand the reach and visibility of the planning process. Tracking the effectiveness of these collaborations and the reach of shared content will allow the city to identify strong partnerships and areas for improvement.

Engagement Methods

This section describes the engagement goals and activities for each phase of the *Reflecting Raleigh* process. Staff will develop detailed communications plans for each phase or group of activities, such as the community conversations planned for Phase I and the Citizen Assembly planned to convene in Phase II.

Phase I: Engagement

Phase I will focus on gathering input from the community, ensuring that a diverse range of voices are heard early in the process.

1. Community Conversations

2. Community Events

a. Decision criteria

- i. Located in a neighborhood that has been historically under-represented or under-engaged
- ii. Leverage existing resources and connections; attend meetings/events where staff will already be attending or tabling
- iii. Acknowledge staffing constraints – no more than 3 events per week

3. Staff Engagement

- a. Meetings with department leadership
- b. Data sharing and collaboration on community inventory
- c. Community conversation planning
- d. Continued communication and coordination

4. Engagement with boards, commissions, and elected officials

5. Engagement with community leaders and organizations

Phase II: Plan Development

Phase II will focus on informing the public about key themes emerging from Phase I using storytelling to frame the process using internal and external working groups.

1. Citizen Assembly

2. Technical Teams

Phase III: Plan Drafting

Phase III will continue the work of informing and storytelling while drafting the plan, ensuring that the emerging recommendations are clearly communicated to the community.

- 1. Citizen Assembly**
- 2. Technical Teams**
- 3. Digital Communication**
 - Website updates
 - Social media
 - Online surveys
 - Monthly newsletter

Phase IV: Review & Engagement

Phase IV will re-engage the community to verify that the plan reflects the input received so far and refine it based on feedback.

- 1. Public workshops**
- 2. Community events**
- 3. Citizen Assembly**
- 4. Technical Teams**
- 5. Engagement with boards, commissions, and elected officials**
- 6. Engagement with community leaders and organizations**

Phase V: Plan Adoption

The final phase will focus on formal adoption of the plan, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned and that final adjustments reflect community needs.

- 1. Ask-a-Planner events**
- 2. Citizen Assembly**
- 3. Technical Teams**
- 4. Staff Engagement**
- 5. Engagement with boards, commissions, and elected officials**
- 6. Engagement with community leaders and organizations**

All Phases

- 1. Digital Communication**
 - a. Website (content, goals for communication & engagement)
 - b. Social media
 - c. Engage Raleigh Hub Site & Online surveys
 - d. Monthly newsletter
- 2. On-going coordination and communication with city staff**

Vetting this Plan

The Office of Community Engagement and the Office of Planning and Development have developed this strategy. The engagement goals, principals, methods, and metrics will be shared with City Council.

Project Timeline

