



# Draft Policies Engagement Summary

## Comprehensive Plan

**ENGAGE**Durham | Comprehensive Plan  
Our Future Together

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# Introduction

This document summarizes the process for engaging the community on draft Policies for Durham's new Comprehensive Plan. This summary provides content about who we engaged, how we engaged, and what we heard.

## Community Goals and Objectives Adoption

The Community Goals and Objectives were unanimously adopted by City Council on June 21, 2021 and the Board of County Commissioners on June 28, 2021. These goals guide how the plan is written and guide decisions on development proposed through zoning map change and annexation applications.

## Draft Place Type Map and Guide Engagement

Community engagement on a new draft Place Type Map and Place Type Guide happened between October 2021 and February 2022. This phase included an interactive Online map and survey, Community Meetings, and Engagement Ambassador sessions.

## Draft Policy Engagement

Community engagement on the new draft Policies happened between April and June 2022. This phase included engagement with Spanish-speaking, youth, and rural residents; engagement ambassadors; and broad community-wide engagement.

## Review Resident Input and Put Together Full Draft Plan

The next step is to review all the input from residents to inform revisions to the draft Policies. Once revised, a new version of the draft policies will be put together with the other plan components as a full Draft Plan to be shared out.

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# Timeline

This timeline below is an overview of the process so far for developing the Policies for Durham's new Comprehensive Plan.

**August 2021 –  
February 2022**

**March 2022**

**April 2022- July 2022**

**July 2022 –  
September 2022**

**October 2022**

*Convene Policy Working Groups to develop draft policies for engagement*

*Staff work to refine the draft policies for engagement. Policy working groups meet to review final drafts.*

*Engagement timeframe for the draft policies.*

*Revise draft Policies based on resident and staff input. Compile a list of action steps to work towards implementing the plan.*

*Prepare Revised Policies and action steps for final plan.*

# COVID-19 Context

The impacts of COVID-19, like in previous phases, made equitable engagement more challenging, particularly with the residents we try to reach through the Engagement Ambassador program and work with the Office on Youth. In this phase of engagement, some residents felt more comfortable attending in-person sessions, while others preferred a virtual option. Staff worked to accommodate these needs during this continually changing public health crisis.

In previous phases, residents reported that the on-going pandemic, and its many rippling effects, reduced the community's overall capacity to engage in creating a long-range document while there are so many immediate needs and concerns in the community.

# About the Draft Policies (1 of 2)

Policies are the written words and recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan that help Durham work towards the community's vision. They guide how future development should happen, help local leaders make decisions, and give guidance on what the Planning Department and other departments and agencies should be working on.

Once adopted, the policies will be used to guide decision made by elected officials on whether to approve certain kinds of new development. For example, if a property owner wants to change what they are allowed to build on their property, that change must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and approved by either the City Council or the County Commissioners. Many of the policies describe what the community *wants* to see and does *not* want to see in new development. These policies will be used by City Council and County Commissioners to guide decisions on whether a proposed development matched what the policies are saying and should be approved; or if the proposed development conflicts with the policies and should be denied or changed.

# About the Draft Policies (2 of 2)

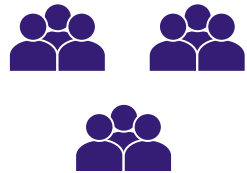
The Policies also act as instructions for what the Planning Department should be working on in the coming years. Each year, the Planning Department commits to a Work Program, which is basically a list of activities, assignments, and special projects to be carried out in the coming year by planning staff. Once the comprehensive plan is adopted, the policies will guide what the Planning Department should do to implement the plan. This might include updating the rules for development or identifying areas of the community where further studies are needed to provide more guidance for how development should occur.

The Planning Department is just one part of local government, and the Policies in the Plan will also be used by other departments and organizations to guide their work. For example, policies could guide decisions about where to extend water and sewer lines or add new bus routes and sidewalks. They will guide where to plan for new schools. The policies can also guide the creation of new programs, incentives, or budget requests to help create the kind of community that residents want in Durham.

# Engagement Numbers Overview

Approximately 660 residents provided input on the Draft Policies.

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS



- 63** Spanish-Speaking Participants
- 34** Youth Participants
- 300** Rural Participants
- 15** Ask a Planner Participants

## ENGAGEMENT AMBASSADORS



- 101** surveys received from resident attendees in
- 61** Engagement Ambassador sessions
- 4** Engagement Ambassador sessions

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT



- 175** surveys received
- 4,396** online views



# Process to Draft Policies (1 of 2)

Policy Working Groups, made up of staff and residents, began meeting in August of 2021. These groups included:

- City and County staff to offer technical guidance;
- Residents and Planning Commission members as participants and co-facilitators to provide a real-world context;
- Changed By Youth Ambassadors to add a Youth perspective for this future-oriented plan;
- Neighborhood Improvement Services and Office on Youth support to help create a safe space for discussion.

Six policy working groups, including one group that convened in Spanish, were formed and met regularly through March of 2022.

# Process to Draft Policies (2 of 2)

The Policy Working Groups used the Goals and Objectives and resident input to brainstorm and write draft policies. Planning staff helped the Policy Working Groups write policy statements for the groups to review and refine.

With each draft policy we asked ourselves:

- Does this policy statement help us achieve the Community Goals and Objectives?
- How is equity considered?
- How can we act on this policy?

The process of wordsmithing these policy statements included a look across all 200+ policies to find areas of overlap, overarching themes, and gaps. This work resulted in 227 draft policies. Planning Staff organized the draft policies into ten categories, to help residents navigate the amount of content. The draft policies were shared with the community for input beginning in April 2022.

# Engagement on the Draft Policies (1 of 2)

Public engagement on the draft Comprehensive Plan policies began on April 27, 2022 and continued through June 30, 2022. Planning staff used multiple methods to engage different residents in the community, including those who have been left out of planning processes in the past.

Community-wide engagement methods included online education materials and a survey, as well as a combination of in-person and virtual "Ask-a-Planner" sessions where residents could discuss the draft policies with planning staff.

Focused engagement included partnership with the Office on Youth to better reach youth and Spanish-speaking residents, work with Aidil Ortiz and the Engagement Ambassadors Program, and specific rural engagement sessions.

# Engagement on the Draft Policies (2 of 2)

All methods of engagement focused on the following questions for residents to inform revisions to the draft policies:

- How well do the policies on this topic meet the needs and priorities of those in your community?
- How should the policies change to better meet those needs?
- How well do the policies address a problem you've seen in your community?
- How would you change the wording of the policies to be more clear or to reduce the chances of unintended consequences?
- What policies are missing from the list?

# Engagement Method: Community-wide engagement

Staff created an online survey as the primary method for collecting community-wide feedback on the draft policies. Given the large number of policies, the survey was designed so that residents could review any number of policies and submit feedback on the topics they selected. The online survey was available in both English and Spanish, as well as in paper format. To provide context, staff developed a recorded video and written materials detailing how the policies were developed and how they might be used once adopted.

Planning Staff also scheduled five "Ask a Planner" sessions during May and June. These sessions provided an opportunity for residents to discuss the draft policies with staff and answer questions as they reviewed the policies. The five sessions included a mix of virtual and in-person options, and English and Spanish interpretation were available for each session.

# Engagement Method: Engagement Ambassadors

Building on experience from previous rounds, Planning Staff again partnered with Aidil Ortiz to develop and implement an Engagement Ambassador strategy for the draft policies. Several Ambassadors had been members of the Policy Working Groups and so had direct perspectives on the process to develop the policies. Staff worked with Aidil and the Ambassadors to develop a series of questions, methods, and materials to enable them to engage their communities on the draft policies. As with previous rounds, both paper and digital materials were made available to help Ambassadors to hold small group discussion on the draft policies or to direct their contacts to fill out a survey.

Aidil Ortiz and Staff, with support from several Policy Working Group members, held four supplemental facilitated sessions to provide a structured space for Ambassadors and their communities to learn about the policies and provide feedback. Each of the four sessions focused on specific topic area of the policies.

# Engagement Method: Youth Engagement

Planning staff partnered with the Office on Youth (OOY) and their Changed by Youth Ambassadors to design youth engagement opportunities during this engagement phase. This work built on existing connections the OOOY has developed and worked to build new relationships through Durham Public Schools.

Planning and the OOOY hosted one virtual session and one in-person session specifically for young people. Both sessions began by having young people envision their future in Durham as introduction to small group discussion on policies to shape that future. Young people helped to design and lead these sessions, with Planning OOOY staff in support roles, creating spaces run by and for young people. Intentional efforts were made to reduce barriers to and incentivize youth participation including providing food, stipends, and transportation to the in-person event.

# Engagement Method: Spanish Speaking Engagement

Planning Staff and the OOOY also worked together to design engagement opportunities specifically for Spanish-speaking residents. This work relied on making connections with Spanish-speaking residents and working with existing groups.

Sembrando Raices is a community garden group based at Club Boulevard Elementary that meets weekly. In collaboration with their leadership, staff facilitated a discussion on the draft policies with families that attended the meeting. The session was held outdoors, in Spanish, near the garden, and food was provided.

LUMA is a Latinx engagement consultant and Community Partner with Neighborhood Improvement Services. Staff worked with LUMA to design and hold two virtual meetings in Spanish to discuss the draft policies. LUMA worked to recruit residents who are renters, homeowners, and mobile home residents, with the intention of getting a diverse set of perspectives on housing issues.



# Engagement Method: Rural Engagement

Planning staff heard from some residents that we need to do a better job of providing opportunities for rural community members to hear information on this new plan and to provide input - particularly for folks who may not have access to the online information and input opportunity.

Staff worked with Oak Grove, Bahama, and Rougemont Ruritan Clubs to schedule two rural engagement sessions, one each in North and East Durham. Additionally, staff was invited to address the Redwood Ruritan club at their regular June meeting. In total, approximately 300 rural residents attended one of the three meetings. As a follow-up to these three meetings, staff published a [FAQ](#) to address questions and concerns heard at all three meetings.

# Who We Engaged (1 of 2)

In our engagement efforts we ask demographics questions to see who we are hearing from and to ensure we're working towards input that represents the full diversity of Durham. For this round of engagement, we intentionally designed engagement efforts to reach residents who we haven't reached as well in previous rounds. Specifically, we worked hard this round to reach youth, Spanish-speaking, and rural residents.

The following page includes a high-level summary of who we heard from this round. As we developed engagement strategies specifically to reach certain groups, we have high-level summaries of the demographics of those groups on [page 21](#).

# Who We Engaged (2 of 2)

As with previous rounds, we reached different audiences based on the engagement method, particularly regarding race, level of formal education, and home address.

Residents who participated in the online engagement platform and who were not Engagement Ambassadors tended to be white, with more formal education. Those participating in the Engagement Ambassador program tended to identify as Black, with a greater variety of educational backgrounds.

We specifically designed engagement methods to reach youth, Spanish-speaking, and rural residents, and were therefore more successful in hearing from younger residents, Spanish-speaking residents, and residents who live in Northern and Eastern Durham County.

# What Residents Said

Residents had the option to review all 227 draft Policies, but most reviewed a section of policies related to topics of their interest. Through each engagement method on the Policies, residents indicated which topic area of policies they reviewed, and shared their thoughts, feelings, concerns, and suggestions for how to improve the policies. Here are the number of total responses planning staff received by topic area. Note that a response often included multiple discrete comments:

Housing **(243)**

Neighborhoods **(204)**

Environment and Public Spaces **(261)**

Transportation **(209)**

Community Relationships **(133)**

Growth Management and Infrastructure **(166)**

Jobs **(104)**

Education **(125)**

Place Types **(33)**

Administrative **(8)**

# Demographic Overview (1 of 3)

In many of the focused engagement methods for this phase, Planning staff worked directly to reach specific demographic groups in our community. Therefore, we did not use standardized demographic questions in all methods of engagement. This Demographic Overview information summarized a few key demographics for each engagement method, based on the demographic information available.

## Community-Wide Online Engagement

The site received 161 surveys with numerous individual comments. 62% of respondents identified their race as White/Caucasian, 4% as Black/African American, 1% as Asian or Asian American, 1% as Middle Eastern or Arab American, 3% as "Self-Identify", and 23% preferred not to answer.

# Demographic Overview (2 of 2)

## Engagement Ambassador Engagement

Staff received 101 demographic surveys from Engagement Ambassadors or their contacts. 75% of respondents identified their race as Black/African-American, 10% as White/Caucasian, 10% preferred not to answer, 2% as "Native Black Indigenous", 2% as "Ancestors from Holland, Scandanavia", and 2% as "Self-Identify."

## Youth Engagement

34 residents between the ages of 16 and 24. 76% of youth residents identified as Black/African American, 17% as Hispanic/Latinx, 3% as Middle Eastern/North African/White, and 3% as White/Caucasian. 59% of youth residents described their gender as Woman, 30% as Man, 6% as "Nonbinary and Transgender", 3% as Agender, and 3% preferred not to answer.

# Demographic Overview (3 of 3)

## Spanish-Speaking Engagement

63 Spanish-speaking residents participated in specific Spanish language engagement sessions. All sessions were held in Spanish. Participants in these sessions included families, residents with a combined household income of less than \$40,000 per year, mobile home residents and Latinx community leaders.

## Rural Engagement

Approximately 300 residents attended one of three public meetings held in Oak Grove, Redwood, and Bahama. Planning Staff received 33 demographic surveys total from those three meetings. Of the 33 responses, 54% identified as White/Caucasian, 3% as Black/African American, 3% as Indigenous/Native American, and 40% preferred not to answer.

# Appendix

For transparency, all the input received in this phase of engagement has been publicized. Input received included comments submitted directly through the online platform, including from Engagement Ambassadors, transcribed comments from in-person meetings, emails received from residents and organizations, and written communication from City/County staff and advisory bodies like Planning Commission.

To review the spreadsheet version of all comments received during this phase of engagement, please visit this link.

To learn more about the Policy Working Groups that developed the draft policies, visit this website: <https://engagedurham.com/168/Policy-Working-Groups>.



# Thank you!

Thank you to all the residents who have participated and shared their voices in this process so far. Also, thank you to everyone who has helped make this engagement happen, including:

- The Office on Youth and Changed by Youth Ambassadors
- The Policy Working Groups
- The ENGAGEDurham Outreach Team
- The Engagement Ambassadors and Aidil Ortiz
- LUMA and Sembrando Raices

