

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE DELAWARE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DRAFT

## ***What is a public participation plan?***

The public participation plan for the Delaware County Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve two purposes.

First, it will help answer the most elemental question of responsive municipal leadership: “What do the varied constituents of Delaware County want their county to look like in five, ten, and twenty years?” The result of engaging the public will be a shared and inclusive vision and direction for the county that will guide and inform decisions by elected officials.

Second, by putting the planning process in many hands rather than the few, the process may overcome apathy, strengthen trust, and encourage on-going public engagement. The plan will incorporate existing local plans and, by taking a broader perspective, illustrate the inter-connectedness of the local plans to the County plan as well as to each other.

## ***Who are our stakeholders?***

The population of Delaware County, while for all intents and purposes is racially homogeneous, is surprisingly diverse. To create a wide consensus, it is necessary to be attentive to those audiences that may not typically be engaged.

Stakeholders in the planning process include:

### Residents

- Full-time residents
- Renters
- Youth 16-24/College students
- New homeowners
- Public assistance recipients
- Unemployed/underemployed
- Elderly
- Shut-in/Infirmed/Disabled
- Non-White/Non-English speakers

### Non-Residents

- Non-resident homeowners
- Non-resident land owners

- Non-resident workers at county-based employers
- Visitors/ Tourists

### Other

- Local leadership of corporate entities (ACCO, Amphenol, SUNY Delhi, others)
- Faith Community leaders
- Service groups (e.g., Lions, Rotary)
- Community action organizations (e.g., Delaware County Community Action Committee, Delaware Opportunities, MARK Project, Western Catskills Revitalization, Tri-Town Coalition on Substance Abuse Prevention)
- Non-profit organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Business groups (chambers, others.)
- Municipal officials
- Senior Clubs
- Fire Departments
- Veteran groups
- Youth organizations (e.g., Scouting, FFA, 4H)
- Schools
- Civic groups (e.g., Parent Teacher groups, library groups, garden clubs)

### ***How do we engage these stakeholders?***

Delaware County includes nineteen towns, eleven villages, portions of thirteen school and two BOCES districts, one residential college, and almost 1500 square miles. The geographic distances and topographic features between our communities contribute to psychological as well as physical barriers that need to be considered when selecting methods for public engagement.

The outreach effort should include **common branding and messaging**. This will bring a consistency to the outreach and increase the visibility to interested audiences. We also recommend **reviewing available best practices** to identify techniques and strategies that have been successful in similar counties. Additionally, **a well-constructed website** (again, with consistent branding elements) that is responsive to device being used and is updated is vital to maintain good communication and consistent information. A **quick-response (QR) code** on all printed material will facilitate public interaction. Whenever possible, all communication, printed or digital, should be **presented in both English and Spanish**.

**Consistent messaging and frequent communication**, from the announcement of project intent to plan completion and adoption, to the public is essential. Digital, local print, social media, and one-on-one conversations will be needed to ensure that the goals of public engagement are

achieved. The message is simple: “A comprehensive plan belongs to all of us. It does not belong to the Planning Department, the Board of Supervisors, or the County as an entity. The plan is our SHARED vision for our home.”

Suggested tools include:

### Public Meetings

- Multiple meetings in each town at multiple locations within the towns
- Meeting must be separate from other municipal meetings (town board, planning, etc.)
- Scheduled on weekends, evenings, and early mornings
- Include a local third-party group as host/sponsor along with a County Planning Board official

### Media outlets

Paid advertising as well as news releases are important ways to inform the public of the plan’s intention, initial effort, its progress, and results.

- Newspapers, including school-based papers
- Local radio (WDLA, WDHI, WIOX, WCDO)
- Local public access
- Community (free) newspapers (County Shopper, Catskill Shopper, My Shopper, Pennysaver)

### Civic Outreach

- Senior Clubs/Senior Meal sites
- Service organizations
- Faith communities/churches
- Fire departments
- Business associations/chambers
- Veteran groups
- School groups (local high schools/SUNY Delhi)
- Door-to-door solicitation
- Women groups
- Youth groups

### Mobile kiosks

These interactive, free-standing, multi-language devices can be used to solicit survey responses in many different settings, including:

- Grocery stores/supermarkets
- Visitor centers
- Centers of community activity (this will vary by community)
- Banks
- Recreation centers

- Bars/ restaurants

### Social Media

Such tools as Facebook can allow for direct messaging to the public, permit feedback, and expand the reach of the effort through user sharing. Here, too, a well-developed campaign with consistent graphics is needed. The campaign will need to include engagement goals for follows and shares, with appropriate funding for this purpose. Pushing posts to local Facebook groups is essential and needs to be someone's responsibility.

### Direct mail

- Postcards to local postal patrons announcing effort, local meetings, process, and results
- Announcement inserts with tax bills
- Mailing surveys, meeting announcements, website information, electronic survey available to non-resident homeowners and land owners.

### Outreach to Youth

Other tools will reach this audience, but we believe there may be a special emphasis given here. If we demonstrate that we are interested in their ideas, perhaps they will be interested in staying here.

- Develop a series of "Delaware County Civics" lessons (three minutes each) to be delivered online, community groups, other outlets. (School curriculum is so prescribed it may not be possible to work within schools. Working with youth groups; 4H, traveling sports leagues, art workshops, may work best)
- Offer community service credit
- Offer some tangible item of value for participating (gift cards, etc.)

### Outreach to visitors

Input from visitors to the county provide valuable insight into maintaining and developing an experience that will continue to attract tourists and their associated spending. We recommended using teams of canvassers at large events (county fair, local festivals, and attractions) with a *short survey* and clipboards. Survey cards (postage-paid) may also be placed in lodging establishments