

Informed and Involved Community Engagement

OBJECTIVE: We need communication and engagement processes that are accessible, transparent, equitable, ongoing, and representative of community input that lead to equitable outcomes. Engagement efforts need to prioritize and be designed specifically to address the needs and concerns of those who are most likely to be adversely impacted by public or private initiatives.

BACKGROUND: Many residents, particularly in Black and Hispanic/Latino communities, have a deep-seated distrust of the City and the County. Historically they have not had access to information, have received misleading information, have been actively harmed by City- and County-initiated projects like urban renewal, and have not seen their need reflected in decisions made after engagement happens. Local officials and government staff have not had success consistently identifying and removing barriers to participation and coordinating engagement activities with other departments and agencies. These barriers can include: ADA accessibility, language accessibility, information that is understandable to residents, compensation for participation, clear information about opportunities to influence decisions and outcomes, and different methods to reach people who may not have digital access to information and engagement.

We want engagement to be honest, relevant, efficient, and effective; information to be clear, accurate and timely; and for resident perspectives to have a meaningful impact on outcomes. We want residents—including youth and seniors—from underrepresented communities involved in, and compensated for, planning and carrying out community engagement.

Quotes from Durham Residents

“We need community forums with public officials designed to express the needs and desires of the underserved communities of Durham. They cannot sit in their offices and in board meetings, and know what is on our minds. They need to talk TO us. They have talked ABOUT us long enough.”

“Need to ensure decision-making is convenient, transparent, equitable, representative of community input.”

“Holding officials accountable only happens when those most affected have a voice. This crisis with McDougald had highlighted the challenges of parceling off sections of a community and not seeing them as contributors. We should not make that mistake again.”

“Stop having people volunteer to do things, give input, for free. Don't ask for our input and service on committees for free.”

“Our word won't make a difference. Government doesn't listen to us.”

“access to necessary resources for families not receiving the help and support they need because of language barrier, transportation, etc.”