



Public Participation Plan - Revised August 2022

Introduction

This Public Participation Plan outlines the overall approach for fostering community engagement throughout the New Braunfels Land Development Ordinance (LDO) Update project. This Plan is intended to coordinate and direct the allotted public engagement resources for collecting feedback at various project milestones.

At defined project milestones for seeking feedback, this Plan proposes to conduct as many feedback opportunities as possible using in-person methods. However, given the on-going uncertainty owing to the COVID pandemic, we remain open to relying more heavily on virtual opportunities for gathering input instead of, or in addition to, in-person engagement opportunities. Over the past two years, many projects have necessitated a hybrid approach, and we can coordinate with City staff as to which method or combination of methods is most appropriate as the time for each scheduled event draws near.

Organization

This Plan covers the following topics:

- General approach
- Key audiences
- Key messages
- Engagement activities

General Approach

Community engagement provides opportunities for relevant boards and commissions, community advocates, citizens, as well as City staff and elected officials to be involved in the LDO Update process. The Plan highlights ways that specific outreach activities bring diverse voices into the dialogue, with a targeted focus on dynamic tools and engaging stakeholders where they naturally convene. Our approach includes four major goals:

I. LEVERAGE LOCAL EXPERTISE

We will draw on local expertise from participants who contribute to conversations about necessary changes to the existing ordinances, and the desired results of the update process, based on their experience as practitioners and participants in the development process.

II. ENCOURAGE ROBUST COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

With input from New Braunfels staff on means for engagement, we will foster the broadest possible extent of community participation and input on the regulations update. Particular effort will be focused on engaging diverse voices, so that the project reflects feedback and input from community members who bring varying backgrounds and perspectives. Project engagement will incorporate virtual opportunities for participation, such as online surveys and virtual meetings, and to the extent possible, in-person meetings and events to gather input from a wide range of community members, boards, and interest groups.

III. ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE

We will create a transparent and connected conversation in which all participants can share ideas and learn about the diversity of opinions regarding development regulations held by stakeholders in New Braunfels.

IV. OFFER MEANINGFUL INPUT ON CHOICES

We will structure engagement activities and use engagement tools and resources to allow community participants to consider various options and respond with their preferred alternatives and priorities.

Key Audiences

While the LDO update affects most community members, the technical nature of a Land Development Ordinances update project tends to motivate participation from a subset of specialized stakeholders. At the same time, the LDO project is an opportunity to carry forward momentum gained during the Envision New Braunfels plan update process, keeping community members engaged and demonstrating how their plan priorities translate to regulations that can help implement the plan's goals. It can also increase the number of community members that understand how land development regulations influence development outcomes.

To gain a broad and balanced perspective on necessary updates to the regulations, key audiences noted below include both specialists and generalist stakeholders.

- New Braunfels residents
- Homeowner and neighborhood associations
- Citizen Advisory Committee
- Local businesses and commercial property owners and managers
- Developers and builders active in New Braunfels
- Elected and appointed City officials, including Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Historic Landmark Commission, and the City Council
- Staff from the Planning and Development Services Department, along with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), compromised of representatives from other departments who use and are impacted by the regulations

Key Messages

Community engagement will occur both formally and informally throughout the project. Informal engagement will include passive information sources such as the project website and staff responding to questions at non-project specific meetings or events. Formal project engagement activities are outlined in the “Engagement Activities” section below. It is important that information about the project is consistent across settings, platforms, and messengers. Clarion will work with City staff to establish key messages at milestones throughout the project, revisiting and updating the messages as necessary to respond to feedback received. While a code update is a technical exercise, key messages will be conveyed using accessible language and terminology, as succinctly as possible. Messages will cover:

- Project description and the need for updated regulations
- Anticipated project outcomes
- Project process and duration
- Purpose of current activities
- Opportunities for community input

Engagement Activities

This section of the Plan outlines specific engagement tools and activities proposed for the LDO update project. It represents a specific program and array of activities that can be completed with the budget allocated to engagement. However, this Plan is a living document: if the questions and alternatives identified in early tasks suggest that other activities would be more beneficial, Clarion is open to shifting resources from the proposed activities as the project progresses.

Throughout the project, as Clarion completes drafts of various installments, a staff draft will be provided to the City team for internal review. City staff are responsible for returning consolidated, reconciled comments. Clarion will then revise the materials accordingly. This Plan assumes one staff draft, one round of consultant revisions based on consolidated staff feedback, and one revised draft for public review and input. Clarion and City staff can determine the exact timing for turn-around on drafts based on an agreed calendar, but our general approach allows three weeks for staff review and feedback on initial staff draft installments, three weeks for Clarion to incorporate suggested staff edits into the public draft, and a further month for public review and returning comments on this draft.

Clarion will work with City staff to determine the most appropriate meeting format for the scheduled input sessions on the installment drafts. The schedule below assumes the format for these meetings will be in-person, but if face-to-face meetings are not possible, we will work to devise alternate strategies for collecting this input through virtual sessions, surveys, and other appropriate means. Meeting materials will be provided in advance to City staff, with adequate time for review and revision to occur in advance of any scheduled meetings.

The summary table of project engagement activities is provided below, with descriptions of the meeting purpose, roles, deliverables, and timing, as originally outlined in the consultant scope of work. Clarion will work with City staff on exact meeting dates, times, format, and content of materials for meetings.

Summary Table of Engagement Activities		
Engagement Activity	Purpose	Timeframe
Project Kickoff Meetings	Identify any issues to address in LDO update	November 2021

Summary Table of Engagement Activities

Engagement Activity	Purpose	Timeframe
Project Website Content and Updates	Education and transparency about project purpose, need, milestones, and deliverables; regularly updated information on how community members can participate in the LDO update process	Project duration
Social Media Announcements	Inform community of participation opportunities, project milestones, and engagement activities	Project duration
Conventional Media Announcements	Inform community of participation opportunities, project milestones, and engagement activities	Project duration
Public and Internal Meeting(s) with staff, TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and City Council	Present Code Assessment report and gather input on report conclusions and direction	April 2022
Public and Internal Meeting(s) with staff, TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and City Council	Review and gather input on draft LDO Installment 1 - Districts and Uses	October 2022
Public and Internal Meeting(s) with staff, TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and City Council	Review and gather input on draft LDO Installment 2 - Development Standards	January 2023
Public and Internal Meeting(s) with staff, TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and City Council	Review and gather input on draft LDO Installment 3 - Administration and Procedures	April 2023
Public and Internal Meeting(s) with staff, TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and City Council	Review and gather input on draft LDO Installment 4 - Signs and Historic Preservation	July 2023
Public and Internal Meeting(s) with staff, TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and City Council	Present Consolidated LDO Draft and results from regulations' testing scenarios	September 2023
Land Development Ordinances Adoption Process	Present final draft to City Council for adoption	November 2023

Project Website Content

A project website is a foundational component of engagement. The City has set up and will host and maintain the project website, which will include key messages about the project, information about how community members can participate throughout the process and any upcoming engagement opportunities, and access to all project documents. There is also an email address on the website to which community members can submit questions, comments, and feedback on the project; it will be actively monitored throughout the duration of the project. Content for the website will be developed by Clarion in consultation with City staff. The website will be updated at key project milestones, and as documents become available, to allow members of the public to learn about the current project status at their convenience.

City responsibilities	Clarion responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing project website Regular updates as warranted by project milestones, outreach events and deliverables 	Provision of content, including project overview and key messages, survey content, and electronic versions of deliverables suitable for posting online

Timing

Established following November 2021 kickoff, updated with each release of public draft installments

Project Surveys

Targeted surveys can be an effective means of gathering stakeholder feedback. Over the lifetime of the project, Clarion will seek direction from City staff on what groups should be surveyed and how best to reach them. Clarion can provide tailored survey content, designed to solicit expert input or, where necessary to elicit feedback from non-specialist audiences, by reframing technical Land Development Ordinance topics in terms that engage a more general audience. In addition to planning content and means of distribution, it will also be important to determine how many surveys will be distributed throughout the project, to avoid “survey fatigue” and progressively diminishing responses from recipients. Once developed, this strategy can be publicized to let staff, Board and Commission members, and New Braunfels residents know how many times their input will be solicited by means of surveys.

Shared responsibilities	
Devising overall strategy for survey distribution	
City responsibilities	Clarion responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of survey content• Determination of specialized recipient groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of survey content• Posting and monitoring responses• Distributing results
Timing	
Survey 1 distributed in November 2021 Additional surveys with each release of public draft installments	

Press and Social Media Content

Online Forum

Building on the City's success in conducting engagement for the Envision New Braunfels plan, we look forward to working with the City's Communications and Community Engagement Department to provide content for distribution via social and traditional media outlets. Clarion will provide timely information on key events and upcoming project milestones, to collect input on regulatory topics, to direct interested parties to sources of further information such as the project website, and to prompt followers with reminders about opportunities for public engagement. As with other Plan priorities, Clarion will work with City staff on an overall strategy for how to use social media throughout the lifetime of the project, and provide content in support of implementing this strategy.

Shared responsibilities	
Devising overall strategy for media outreach	
City responsibilities	Clarion responsibilities
Distribution of content through social and traditional media channels	Provision of content

Timing

Established with Task 1, on-going for project duration

Initial Stakeholder Outreach Meetings

An initial round of stakeholder meetings occurred in November 2021, and the results from those meetings will be incorporated into the conclusions and recommendations in the *Code Diagnostic Assessment Report*.

Public Meetings and Hearings

A series of public meetings and presentations is scheduled to occur at designated times throughout the project, with the timing and content tied to the deliverables provided at the respective project milestones. As indicated in the Summary of Engagement Activities table above, these meetings will occur in person – circumstances permitting – or virtually, if need be. Regardless of format, Clarion will use the findings from the meetings and extent of participation as an opportunity to review with City staff the effectiveness of public messaging and engagement efforts to date, and make changes to engagement strategies and methods if this appears necessary.

Planning Commission and City Council

The Clarion team anticipates meeting with the Planning Commission and the City Council several times over the duration of the project, to keep these bodies apprised of progress, and to engage them in selecting preferred options of regulatory approaches to address key concerns. When upcoming meetings are publicized, we will make clear that any member of the public is welcome to participate, as these are public meetings, not just for members of the Commission or Council.

During each of the series of public meetings, the Clarion team will prepare a presentation to update these officials and gather their input and feedback. The meetings can be formal presentations delivered at scheduled public hearings, or less formal opportunities for interaction, such as a combined Council and Commission joint work session. Clarion will work with City staff prior to the scheduled meetings to determine the best format and the preferred means of presenting the information and gathering feedback, while City staff take the lead in organizing meeting logistics.

Technical Advisory Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee, and Staff Team

During the same scheduled visits for meeting with public officials, Clarion will also have input meetings with Technical Advisory Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee, and City staff. The purpose of these meetings is the same as those occurring with public officials: to provide project updates and prompt discussion on the preferred options for regulatory approaches to address key concerns. When upcoming meetings are publicized, we will make clear that any member of the public is welcome to participate in the Citizen Advisory Committee meeting, not just members of the Committee. An additional important element with the TAC and staff engagement is to develop these members into champions of the new LDO, who can explain the proposed updates and advocate for their adoption. The Clarion team will coordinate with City in advance of the meetings to determine the best format and content, while City staff again manage invitations and logistical support for the meetings.

Additional Public Outreach

Open Houses and other Community Events

The project scope calls for four additional outreach opportunities targeted to the general public over the course of the project. As the project progresses, Clarion can coordinate with staff as to when these

events should occur, what topics they should focus on, how they can best engage community members with diverse perspectives or representing vulnerable populations, and what is the best meeting type for conducting the outreach. We can consider open houses that function as a “progress report” to the City’s residents, allowing for their feedback on LDO installments as they are released, or topic-specific meetings to address subjects of particular interest to certain groups in the community – as a possible example, to introduce and seek feedback on design standards for the City’s historic districts. If the City’s recent experience in conducting public engagement for the Envision New Braunfels effort produced any particularly effective means for gathering public input, we will be glad to collaborate on how to make such an effort work for a code project.

Shared responsibilities	
Determining meeting topics and most appropriate format	
City responsibilities	Clarion responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invitation to participants• Arranging meeting venues for in-person events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide meeting materials and presentations• Present or facilitate as appropriate
Timing	
To be determined as the project progresses, possibly coincident with scheduled meetings described in the “engagement activities” section of this Plan	