

Neighborhood Plan Guide

Public Comments and Staff Notes, Recommended Changes – Version 2/11/2020

The table below summarizes comments received from the general public during the November 12 to December 12, 2019 public comment period. Staff notes including the changes made to the Guide are included where applicable.

Ref.	Comment	Staff Notes
1	"Overall needs more visualizations, and potentially ones that can be used as ""clip-art"" of neighborhoods doing a plan. "	Thank you for your comment. The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide as well as design a paper version of the Guide and this comment will be provided to the consultant.
2	Will a communication toolkit be a part of this? Templates, forms, guides, suggest language, etc.?	Templates, best practices, and examples for the tasks & deliverables will be provided in the Resources chapter of the Guide.
3	What happened to the mayors P4? are they now policies, programs, partners, projects?	P4 is referenced on pages 8, 30, and 58. P4 does differ from policies, programs, partners, and projects - those are examined on pages 5 and 46-48. The Guide integrates p4 throughout to ensure neighborhood plans are consistent with this framework.
4	On Pg 11 add floodplain to infrastructure (required)	Good point. Added "Floodplain (if applicable)" as a required topic in Infrastructure on Neighborhood Plan Topics page 14.
5	Need a toolkit to implement these items see comments above	The Resources chapter is a guide/toolkit and will continually be added to and updated.
6	Too many words and not enough info graphics .	The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide as well as design a paper version of the Guide and this comment will be provided to the consultant. Infographics will be a part of their work.
7	What are the City's Equity indicators?	Added language in text on page 9 (Role of Data) and then in the Other City Plans resource.

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8	How will this guide be updated to stay current with City Policies? Yearly?	We've made efforts to avoid copy and pasting policies into the the guide itself wherever possible, and instead reference the plans themselves where the policies live. In an online version, we would directly link to the documents themselves, so that as these other documents change or are updated (e.g., the Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Plan) people are being sent to the right information. Where the guide refers to these documents, we will continue to review and update these as necessary.
9	Who was involved in the creation of this guide? RCO's focus groups?	The Neighborhood Plan Guide was developed based on neighborhood planning processes in Uptown, Hazelwood, Manchester-Chateau, and Homewood, as well as prior community-led efforts and national best practices. Partner agencies reviewed an early draft of the document and made substantial changes. A focus group of community organizations who were involved in the first four neighborhood planning processes also refined the document along with comments from the Planning Commission. A month-long public comment period followed to gather additional input.
10	The Dept of City Planning essentially goes into neighborhoods and tries to get communities to rally around initiatives that the department or government has already defined as important. It would be nice if neighborhoods could instead set their own initiatives. Why box communities into what the city first sets as priorities? It's backwards.	The Guide creates a process to achieve just what you're proposing, to source new projects, programs, and policies from Pittsburgh communities. Where the Guide uses previous plans and policies as frameworks, these prior efforts also included significant public engagement in their creation.
11	Individual community members won't have much say in this process. Will be taken over by big players in city instead.	We understand that concern and we believe we have structured a planning process that does allow multiple ways for all voices to be heard including a representative Steering Committee, Action Teams, and general public engagement consistent with the Public Engagement Guide.
12	Recommend very cogent summaries that any resident of any education level can understand	Like most professionals that engage the public, we aim for an 8th grade reading level, but we can always do better. One of our solutions is that we are working with a communications firm to come up with a way to deliver the materials in ways that maximize understanding and access. They will review all content for tone and accessibility.

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13	It's too long, especially for this point in the process (i.e., making considered comment on it). It seems to be written more for planning experts than for the average resident, and I say that as someone whose attended hundreds of meetings in the past 20 years and read hundreds of reports on community projects. At the very least, I'll bet it could be cut down to 40 pages.	The Guide is 21 pages with the rest of the document being Resources provided as a toolkit to help those conducting planning processes. The content is primarily meant for planning professionals, but we would like for it to be accessible to the public so there is a general understanding of the planning process. The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide and one goal of that work is to develop a website that is accessible to a larger audience.
14	It's a shame that topics like air, TOD, community uses in the right-of-way, etc. are all considered optional topics. Naturally, there is only so much authority the City has to mandate some of these things, but I worry that communities will more often choose to not prioritize or include these things in their planning efforts. With these topics being so closely related to many of the required ones, it seems like contradicting policies, programs, and projects may result from the planning process and lead to implementations that don't benefit the community at large. If there's a way to frame these 'optional' topics differently through what you refer to these topics as or through how you make recommendations throughout this document about them to provide more instructions/clarity for community groups, that may be a huge benefit to these organizations.	This is a hard one. The role of data is important to highlighting which topics are important or impactful to an area. In the Visualize phase, we do recommend looking at data sets to establish which optional topics are worked on during the planning process.
15	Provide samples of more recently completed plans (locally or beyond) that serve as good best practices and demonstrate indicators/plan content; avoid words like 'optional' as this sends a message that it isn't important or a priority, especially for lower capacity/resource organizations.	Great idea and will be part of the website and web content that is provided in the Resources section. The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide as well as design a paper version of the Guide and this comment will be provided to the consultant.
16	The planning process section and suggested metric section would be great to have in a more interactive and engaging online platform rather than static text so the public and community groups can tap into this to answer questions, find inspiration, and learn more about this in a fun way.	City Planning is in the process of developing this interactive data system currently. We expect it to be rolled out in 2020.

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17	The neighborhoods need basic maintenance like help with sidewalk maintenance and uniform street tree planting. Our broken sidewalks, mismatched and missing street trees, and inconsistency in following city codes for sidewalk width requirements make our neighborhoods look aged, unnavigable, and undesirable. Help us modernize and enhance our streetscapes!	We agree and have incorporated these into multiple parts of the guide.
18	Lets emphasize city properties and maintenace. Dont start new programs and developments with large portions of the city looking unmaintained and broke.	This is an important citywide topic and we have included it as an optional topic in the neighborhood plan guide because not all neighborhoods have this issue.
19	Describe more about how the neighborhood planning effort is meant to align to any current or future comprehensive planning efforts. Specifically, as urban systems such as mobility, water, require solutions across neighborhood boundaries	Good point. This is in there, but could be highlighted early in the document. As much as possible, this Guide has been carefully crafted to reference and utilize other frameworks and policy documents including the Comprehensive Plan. The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide and this comment will be provided to the consultant.
20	Add more about food in the guide and role of food as a key foundational systems for neighborhood health, community and resource use.	We have "Community/Urban Agriculture" as an optional topic in the Infrastructure Chapter and access to healthy and affordable fresh food under Public Health. Remove "Community/" on page 11.
21	"Define "neighborhood". Give examples of how this guide did or did not be used in Hazelwood, Man/Chateau, Homewood, etc. Explain how this relates to political boundaries (City, Districts) and/or "communities" as these words are used in various contexts in the guide.	It seems that the issue here is that the Guide uses "neighborhood" as a generally agreed to concept of a place, but not the City designated (smaller) areas. Sentence added to page 4 under Neighborhood Plan Guide in context.
22	Can you list the RCOs?	The RCO program is an on-going program and the existing RCOs can be found on the map here: https://gis.pittsburghpa.gov/rco/ .
23	Make table of contents hyperlinked	The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide as well as design a paper version of the Guide. There will be hyperlinks incorporated into the final design.

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24	The guide describes a neighborhood plans as “a strategy for the future of a community”. This is misleading, as perhaps it should have a definition that talks about the built and natural environments (physical). Perhaps we should grab EcoDistricts language here or other definitions that discuss place and performance.	Good point. Sentence added to page 4 under Neighborhood Plan Guide in context.
25	We would challenge that neighborhood plans take 2 years. This guide should organize around quicker planning timeframes and remain flexible.	This is based on our review of best practices nationwide. Our own experience in Pittsburgh has shown that it does take 2 years to cover all of these topics, but we do remain flexible.
26	Consider using the word Strategies for “policies, programs, projects”. Vision, Goals, Strategies...	This has been part of our program since the beginning and is consistent with larger citywide policy efforts both here and in peer cities.
27	Consider ‘action plan’ or “Implementation Roadmap (which is used later in doc) to describe who is going to what, when? Partnerships would fit there.	Good point. The roadmap language has been integrated into the Guide. EcoDistrict Protocol phases have been added to the Planning Process snapshot on page 16 to highlight this alignment. Additionally, the EcoDistrict and P4 frameworks have been added to the table in Resource 4.
28	Goals graphic describes only long-term outcomes. Suggest short, medium and long-term goals and look for quick(er) wins. I believe you’re describing 10 years as “long-term”. Clarify.	Good point. The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide as well as design a paper version of the Guide and this comment will be provided to the consultant. The phrase "long-term" in urban planning typically refers to plans with a large and complicated set of proposals that will take many years to achieve. Some long-range plans are 20-year plans, but there is no explicit lower or upper limit on this phrase in the field.
29	“ its’ ” is used throughout. Typo.	All "its'" have been corrected.
30	The guide references a Neighborhood Planning Program. Describe what this is.	This language has been clarified and the web version of the Guide will be able to clarify the Neighborhood Plan Program and its components using a number of design features in addition to the text.
31	The guide describes “City Planning” on p. 6. Could remove this or combine with others.	The Guide is primarily meant for planning professionals, but we would like the general public who will also read this document to have an understanding of the planning field.

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32	The guide references city-wide goals. These are listed back on p. 24. Perhaps reference earlier.	Citywide goals are regularly added to and therefore we have opted to link to them instead of repeating them in the document. This way the document can send people to the up-to-date goals and not reference outdated ones.
33	The role of data, data indicators and tracking is not clearly outlined. Clarify what data the city has, what data you are expecting the neighborhood planning teams (consultants) to utilize, data visualization (Tableau-like tools), use of GIS and how the city is defining indicators in his guide.	Good suggestion. Language added to pages 8 and 9.
34	This guide needs much more about the neighborhood plans should address our climate emergency and shocks/stressors identified in the ONEPGH effort. Wed recommend to list these risks and describe the role of the planning process to address these risks.	We agree these are important and that's why we reference them, but we have opted not to paste the content directly into this document. We added language about integrating these documents in the Organize phase (page 17) and the Formalize stage (page 23).
35	"When referencing EcoDistricts, suggest you use one of the following. EcoDistricts protocol EcoDistricts Organization (EDO)	Good suggestion. This language has been clarified.
36	Are you requiring an EcoDistricts Accredited professional on teams doing neighborhood planning	EcoDistricts Accredited professionals are not required.
37	What tools is the City providing to consultant teams wrt EcoDistricts, SDGs, goal tracking, etc? Is there a tool-kit that sits next to this guide? Perhaps some of the resources can be turned into 'tools'.	We think this is already adequately provided by the guide and resources. Specifically, the guide incorporates EcoDistricts Protocol and UN SDGs, then the resources show how these align with the topics in the guide and what indicators can be used. Finally, City Planning will public a data portal tool in 2020 that will provide a data baseline consistent with the EcoDistricts Protocol, p4 Initiative, and UN SDGs.
38	Why are the neighborhood planning topics not aligned to the EcoDistricts imperatives and/or priorities? Or the SDGs? Seems like they should be directly aligned	They are aligned with these other frameworks, but you're right that we can be more specific about that. EcoDistrict Protocol phases have been added to the Planning Process snapshot on page 16 to highlight this alignment. Additionally, the EcoDistrict and P4 frameworks have been added to the table in Resource 4.

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39	Why is the process outlined not aligned with the EcoDistricts protocol processes? Which one should be used when they conflict?	EcoDistrict Protocol phases have been added to the Planning Process snapshot on page 16 to highlight this alignment. Additionally, the EcoDistrict and P4 frameworks have been added to the table in Resource 4. We don't believe there are conflicts between the Guide and these frameworks, but should there be any, the Neighborhood Plan Guide will be the standard for adoption.
40	Process time-lines should be suggestive and perhaps overlap. These can overlap a bit in timeline.	Good point. Language has been added to page 16 indicating that overlap can occur.
41	Should the 'example goals' and "example indicators" be starting points for all plans? Should these be mapped to EcoDistricts protocol?	That is the intent. While the example goals and indicators were created in part based on the EcoDistricts Protocol, we have made this more explicit by adding references to the topic areas in the Protocol.
42	Clarify if neighborhood plans needs to formally align to the p4 Pittsburgh framework?	Neighborhood plans that will be adopted by the Planning Commission must meet the Neighborhood Plan Guide standards. These are consistent with p4, but a review explicitly against p4 is not intended.
43	Example indicators could be more helpful if more detailed/specific	We are unable to get more specific at this time, but a separate project at City Planning is establishing a data portal system that will be available for project teams to utilize.
44	variety of institutions mentioned should be more detailed, explained.	We believe this is in reference to the Steering Committee stakeholder resource. Staff will review to see if more detail can be added.
45	The process seems voluntary instead of mandatory. Clarify intent of how flexible this is.	Good point. Language has been added to page 9 under the Value of Formal Adoption section.
46	What are the exact steps and criteria upon which projects and plans are to be judged?	Good point. The tasks and deliverables provided in each phase are the steps that plans will be evaluated on. We will develop a template for DCP & the Steering Committee to use to checkoff the tasks and deliverables listed in the phases and include that as a Resource on the web version of the NPG.

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47	which specific resources of data are be used in evaluation projects?	Not clear what this refers to, but data is integrated throughout the planning process, particularly in the Action Teams and tracking progress post-adoption. A separate project at DCP is developing the data framework that will serve as the baseline for all neighborhood plans.
48	Should this document clearly indicate expected approval processes ?	The text does refer to the Planning Commission approvals process. We will develop a tool for DCP to use from the tasks checkboxes in the phasing and include as a Resource on the web version of the NPG.
49	Perhaps more description on how agencies can interact in the planning process.	Good point. Language has been added to pages 27-30 Action Teams in Resource 3 to explain agency interaction. Hopefully the design of the digital guide will make the document easier to navigate and make the connections between the resources & the process explicit.
50	Zoning and IPOD are mentioned on pages 1-2 but not explained at all. This could be confusing for people unfamiliar with the topic.	Zoning Code is referenced throughout the document both as a regulatory system, division and review process, and also as a potential outcome/project of plans. The online Guide will be able to link these references to additional resources.
51	The process and time frames listed on page 13 are unclear as to whether these are rigid time frames and whether the phases can overlap at all.	Good point. Language has been added to page 16 indicating overlap can occur.
52	Resource 3, "Assembling a Steering Committee, Action Teams, and Technical Advisory Groups", would benefit from additional clarity regarding the difference between the Steering Cmte and Action Teams. Also, the ATs being described as inclusive but small seems a contradiction.	Good point. Language has been added to Resource 3 on pages 27-30.
53	Related to the previous comment: "The Steering Committee and the Action Teams will craft most of the content for the plan starting with a vision statement, goals, and then policies, programs, projects, and partnerships." -- This statement is confusing in how conflates the roles of these groups. This should clearly define SC as setting vision/goals and ATs as developing Ps.	Good point. Language has been added to Resource 3 on pages 27-30.

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54	This document would benefit from some more accessible language and additional clarity about roles, timing, and decision-making.	Agreed. We are having a non-planning reviewer edit for jargon and confusing concepts that require further description and/or links to additional information.
55	I'd call out equity more-explicitly - It should provide people with strategies for including equity within the planning process. Most of the equity references in the plan are related to vague values or tied to indicators. This is probably the biggest opportunity to strengthen the document.	Agreed. Language has been added to page 11 under City Goals and then again in Resource 3 Steering Committees and Action Teams on pages 27-30.
56	It seems to be written as a guide for people that are already invested in community planning processes. I think it would be helpful to review the draft from the perspective of someone that is engaging with a community planning process for the first time. I'd also suggest conducting user tests in addition to collecting feedback through this survey.	Thank you for the suggestions. The Guide is primarily meant for planning professionals, but we would like it to be accessible to the public so there is a general understanding of the planning process. The city has contracted with a local graphic design firm to create a web-based interactive site of the Guide and one goal of that work is to develop a website that is accessible to a larger audience.
57	Could you refer to the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center as a source for data about the City, and also it would be good to coordinate with I&P and the Regional Data Center on the data that you suggest people use as neighborhood indicators. People will be frustrated if the data you suggest they use is not available.	Good point. References to these data sources have been added to page 4. A separate project at DCP is developing the data framework that will serve as the baseline for all neighborhood plans and we will share this comment with them.
58	Have a limit on strategies in the implementation table. Too many strategies limit the ability to make it effective.	Staff hesitate to set limits on the number of strategies, however, there is text about being practical when developing projects, programs, and partnerships in the Plan Framework Section.
59-67	Eight comments were received where commenter did not give permission to publish or use their comment.	N/A