

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

From the outset of this project, the Platte County Commission stressed that the vision and goals needed to be the result of significant public participation, thereby creating support for the resulting plan. To that end, the county created an effective and energetic public involvement campaign that relied on innovative and traditional methods of informing, gathering, and using citizen input.

Focus Groups

This planning process is based on the work of the focus groups – their input provided the county with the first draft of strategic goals to pursue over the next two decades. The focus groups comprised community leaders constituting a variety of Platte County interests. Joining residents on the focus groups were representatives from the education sector, municipal governments, business owners, the Economic Development Council, KCI Airport, the Mid-America Regional Council, and the Missouri Department of Transportation.



Eight focus groups were formed to address the following policy areas:

- Community services
- Economic development and tourism
- Environment
- Growth and planning
- Parks and recreation
- Partnership and collaboration
- Public safety and emergency preparedness
- Transportation and infrastructure

Residents had a number of avenues to express their interest in serving on a focus group. County staff members took names of anyone interested, and the project Web site included an expression of interest form for potential focus group members. The membership of each group was composed of volunteers who sought the opportunity to help shape future goals.

Each focus group convened twice, which meant that 16 different focus group meetings were conducted. At the first meeting, focus group members discussed questions posed to them by the CPT, completed a visioning exercise, and brainstormed potential goals. During the second meeting, focus group members honed in on a vision statement and prioritized draft goals.

“I believe what appears to be working very well are the many dedicated people - like many of our current Platte County leaders - and other Platte County staff and other volunteers who are involved in our community and care about its future.”

Web Site Visitor - 06/11/07

The preliminary visions and goals crafted in the focus groups were given to the CPT, which further refined them with the assistance of additional public input.

Although eight focus groups were convened, the Steering Committee combined the “community services” and “partnership and collaboration” groups into a single focus area now known as Community Partnerships and Collaboration.



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Community Survey

The county surveyed residents about their views of county government services and the topics that were raised by the focus groups and the CPT. ETC Institute wrote and conducted the community survey in November and December 2007.

"The survey has yielded many positive items."

Open House Participant - 04/22/08

Survey questions were based on the preliminary visions and goals crafted by the focus groups and the CPT. Members of the Steering Committee were involved in writing the survey, which provided information about the level of support various initiatives and programs in the community.

Results of the survey are included in the Appendix section (see page 80). The survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,500 Platte County households. Follow-up phone calls were made to non-responding survey recipients seven days after the initial mailing. The county received 409 responses, which resulted in a survey with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 5.0%. This means that, if asked, 95 out of 100 residents would answer the survey questions in line with the results.

Comment Cards

CPT members, the county's elected and appointed officials, and the consultant all distributed hundreds of comment cards, titled "Postcards to the Future," throughout the community. These cards sought general comments and gathered viewpoints on a variety of topics; the county received 63 responses.

"Thank you for making the planning process so accessible to the citizens."

Open House Participant - 04/22/08

The comment card feedback was summarized and presented to CPT members in early 2008, in time for the CPT to use the input in finalizing Platte Profile's visions and goals.

Public Meetings

Public meetings are an effective way to gather citizen input. The process included two public meetings that provided the county with important community feedback about the project.

The first public meeting was held on October 24, 2007, at the County Commission chambers in Platte City. The meeting was an open house with the preliminary visions and goals presented to residents at seven different stations. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions of the county's elected officials, county staff, and the consulting team. Ninety individuals signed in at the greeting table, so it is likely that more than 100 residents participated in the open house. Thirty-six comment sheets were submitted.



A second public meeting was held on April 22, 2008; like the first meeting, it was an open house at the County Commission chambers. Seven stations, one for each of Platte Profile's focus areas, were staffed with county and Olsson employees to answer questions. Participants could submit general comments about the project. In total, 31 individuals participated, and 14 attendees submitted comment sheets.

Web Site

The county hosted a project Web site that was used to track the status of the planning process. The project Web site gave residents a convenient way to provide input and stay informed throughout the process. Using the Internet maximized the participation and communication between the county and residents. Key planning components, updates, meeting summaries, and draft documents were posted on the site to keep residents involved in the project's progress. A link to the project site was included on the Platte County Web site, which directed users to the project site.

A major component of the site was a feedback-gathering mechanism that allowed site visitors to submit their thoughts and ideas about the County. The site's feedback form asked specific questions, which are included below, but let users submit any information they desired. It also gathered geographical data about users' places of residence.

Web Site Questions

- What makes Platte County special?
- How can we protect, promote, and enhance the community?
- What major issues will the county need to be prepared to face in the next 5-20 years?
- What is working best now in the county?
- What areas need more attention?

Thousands of residents, business owners, and other interested parties visited the Web site during the project, and several dozen used the site's feedback form to convey their views about the future of the community.

Press Releases

Advertisements and information in the media can be a great way to disseminate information about public events and initiatives, and the county issued numerous press releases about Platte Profile. Press releases were sent to various news organizations throughout the Platte County area after major project milestones.

The press releases detailing Platte Profile can be found starting on page 235 of the Appendix section.

"The difference between a community and just a bunch of houses is bringing people together for the enrichment of their lives and for the purpose of getting to know one another so that you can be there to help out in times of need. I have that in my Platte County home"

Web Site Visitor - 09/07/07



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Fliers

The county developed fliers explaining the project and the planning process and distributed them in strategic locations throughout Platte County. The fliers proved to be helpful in sharing information about the project, and they were yet another way to publicize the public meetings.



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