

City of El Paso

Public Participation & Environmental Justice Plan

Title VI / Nondiscrimination Program

12/16/2014

Introduction

The City of El Paso (City) believes that planning must be done with the public's advice and consent. Decisions made at the City affect the future of all those who live and work in the region. The City of El Paso is committed to understanding the diverse needs and concerns of the public. We hear the voices of our citizens through public participation. The public participation plan describes our efforts to reach different audiences that are interested and affected by our programs and activities.

The City's public participation plan goals are to:

- Provide City departments with a framework to develop meaningful public participation.
- Provide opportunity for interested parties to identify environmental concerns and regional priorities;
- Encourage public participation opportunities in a wide and varied audience, including traditionally underserved groups;
- Publicize public participation opportunities and activities throughout the development of City projects and programs;
- Obtain meaningful public input and participation to inform the planning and decision-makers; and
- Inform and educate stakeholders and interested parties.

Making Public Participation Meaningful

The purpose of public participation is to inform the public as to the nature and significance of City proposed action (e.g., issuing a permit, approving a project, approving a fee change) and to allow them the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns regarding that action. In turn, it is the understandable expectation of the public that the agency will fairly consider their comments and make adjustments to the proposed action if appropriate. The overarching goal therefore is to gain the public's confidence in the process which can best be achieved by eliciting their input in a manner that is truly meaningful and genuine. Below are some guidelines for Departments to use to insure meaningful public participation:

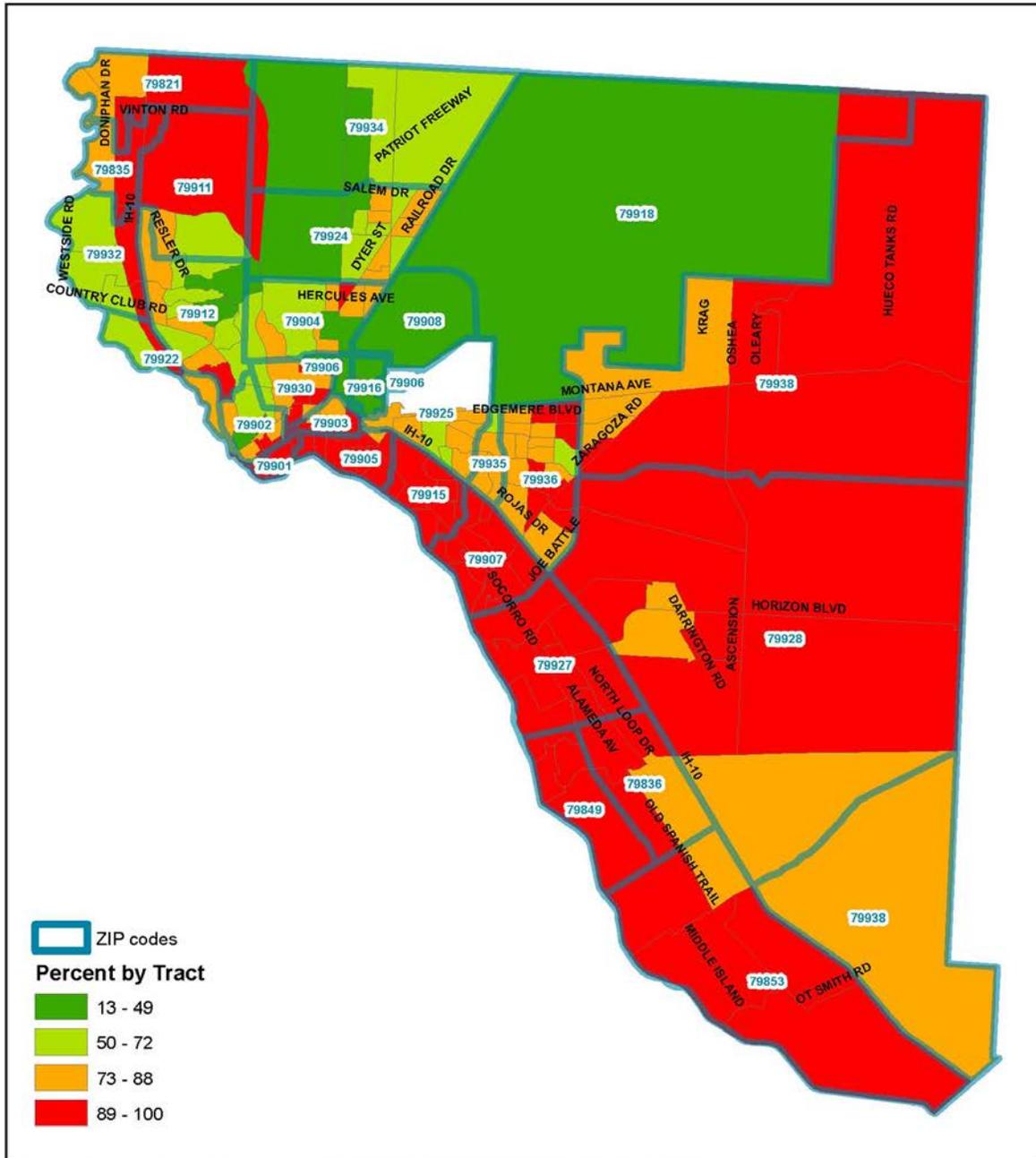
- Continuous outreach is needed to build relationships and establish trust between residents, community groups, and the Department.
- Outreach needs to empower the people. Communication should be "two-way" in that the Department not only offers an outlet for the public to learn and comment, but offers valuable responses and feedback to the local community.

- Outreach needs to occur early in the process. Traditional methods used to inform the public and receive input through formal public comment periods often do not allow adequate time for agencies, companies, and the public to collaborate and develop innovative solutions to difficult environmental problems.
- Departments should avoid employing methods that will have a negative impact on the trust relationship.
- Departments should take advantage of the diversity of the agency staff. Utilize qualified staff when communicating with the public to make residents feel more comfortable and help establish trust.
- There needs to be a strong sense of accountability within the Department to its own policy and implementation strategies.
- Educate staff on Environmental Justice and effective Outreach

DEMOGRAPHICS

The City of El Paso is cognizant of the demographics in our county. 2013 U.S. Census estimates indicate that Hispanics make up 81.1% of El Paso's total population. Because of this, departments generate vital documents in both English and Spanish. See [Graph 1](#) for the distribution of Hispanic or Latino persons in the El Paso County. Departments with federal program areas will be required to track demographic data of their program participants.

Hispanic or Latino



The features represented on this map are in the Texas State Plane Coordinate system, Central Zone, NAD 83, units feet, using the Lambert Conformal Conic projection.

This map was generated using ArcGIS by the City Development Department - Planning Division for the City of El Paso, Texas, 811 Texas, 1st Floor, 79901 (915)212-1595

This map is designed for illustrative purposes only. The features depicted here are approximate and more site-specific studies may be required to draw accurate conclusions. Enlargements of this map to scales greater than its original can induce errors and may lead to misinterpretations of the data. The City Development Department Planning Division makes no claim to its accuracy or completeness.

Demographic data generated from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2012, 5 year estimates.

0 1.75 3.5 7 10.5 14 Miles



Graph 1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2012

Environmental Justice

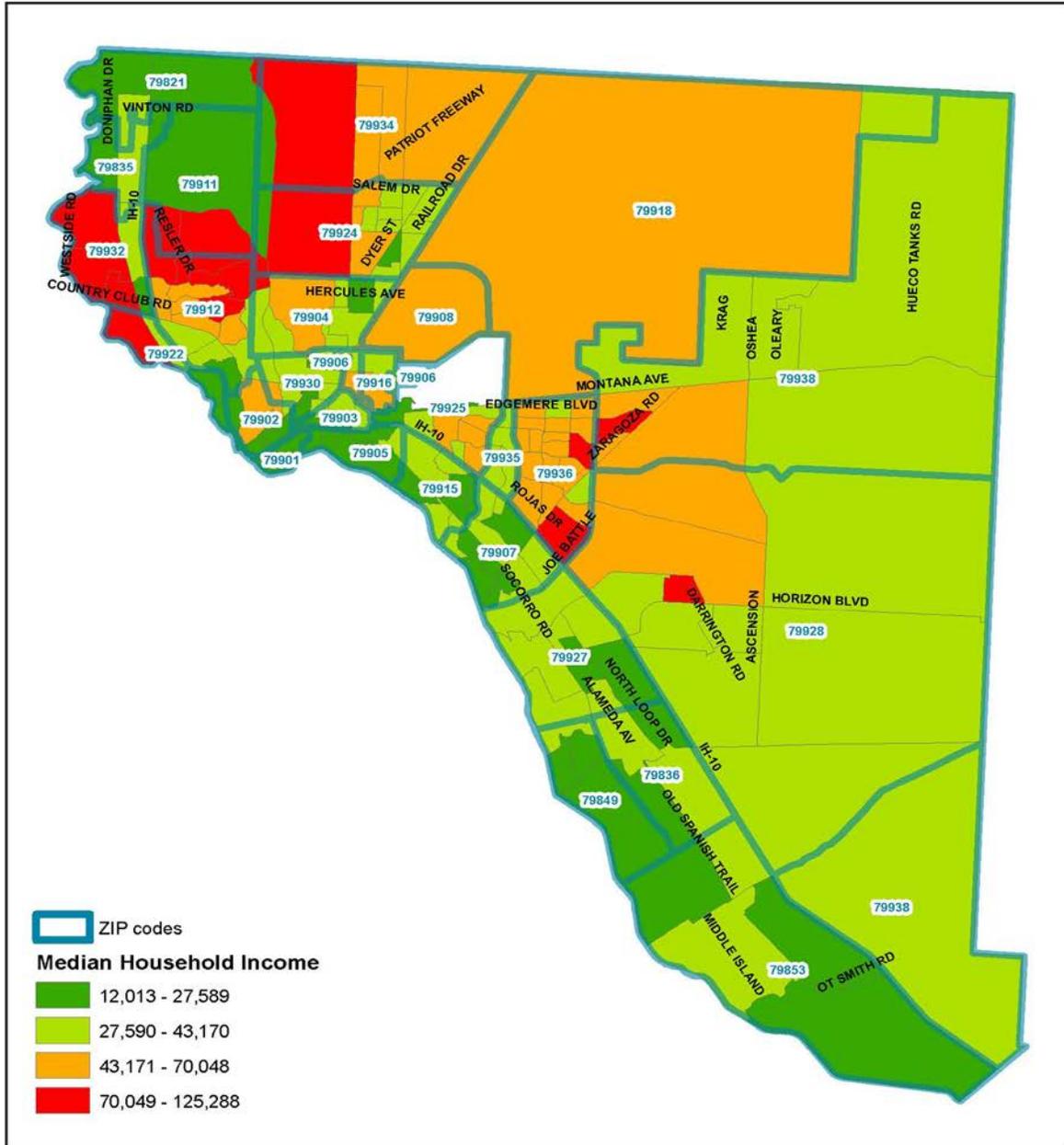
In 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." □ Executive Order 12898 requires that achieving EJ must be part of each federal agency's mission. Agency programs, policies and activities can lead to health and environmental effects that disproportionately impact minority and low-income populations. [Graph 2](#) indicates the distribution of household income throughout the City of El Paso.

Environmental justice is the fair treatment of all people and providing for meaningful public involvement in government decision-making. To be effective, an environmental justice plan must incorporate comprehensive measures for including the public in legal and policy decisions related to environmental issues. This public participation plan addresses the need to include the public in all issues impacting stakeholders.

Departments will be asked to consider the following when considering a project / program:

1. Consider the accumulation of the environmental hazards in the impact area
2. Document the decisions made and the analysis of the impact on the community
3. Determine if the impact disproportionately burdens or benefits a community
4. Document other consideration such as mitigation and environmental assessments that supports the decision.
5. Identify and engage with the affected communities using principles from this public participation plan.

Median Household Income

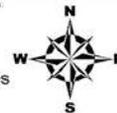


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Demographic data generated from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2012, 5 year estimates.



Graph 2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2012

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

To ensure a rich and diverse public participation process, impacted parties must be informed and educated on programs, projects planned, and projects underway. The following strategies are utilized by the City to ensure that interested parties receive timely information in a variety of formats. Each department will determine the best form of communication for their programs.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The methods of gathering and implementing public participation for a planning process may differ widely, depending on the type and scope of a project or program.

Partnerships with Community Based Organizations

Community-based organizations provide the opportunity to connect with specific audiences and are an integral part of identifying and reaching out to underrepresented groups. The city can reach out to specific organizations to provide these groups with project information and encourage them to become involved.

Community-based organizations are groups that serve a broad range of community interests. Organizations include senior centers; civic groups; business organizations; community development corporations, churches and other faith-based organizations; service clubs; schools that provide English as a second language programs; service providers for youths, families, and persons with disabilities; and many others.

WEBSITES

All City Departments have extensive websites that provide for two-way communication. Continuously updated information is provided about programs and projects and where necessary is provided in English and Spanish.



Citizens may also contact the City departments through the website in a section entitled “Leave your Comments” or “Contact Us”. The following is a screen shot of one example:

CITY OF EL PASO
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Where Health Knows No Borders

CONTACT US **5115 EL PASO DRIVE - EL PASO, TX 79905**

Tell us what you think about our web site, our city, or anything else that comes to mind. We welcome all of your comments and suggestions.

What does your comment concern?

Praise

Suggestion

Problem

Complaint

What about us do you want to comment on?

Services Other:

Enter your comments/questions in the space provided below:

Tell us how to get in touch with you:

Name:

Your Email Address:

Your Telephone #:

kehrs Physics

reCAPTCHA reCAPTCHA reCAPTCHA

[Privacy & Terms](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Departments should maintain a stakeholder list with contact information for organizations and individuals. Electronic newsletters quickly and easily disseminate information to contact lists. The City publishes a variety of newsletters that can be accessed via the website or a citizen can sign up to receive via email. Citizens can register via the same website.

MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

A comprehensive regional media campaign can be used when outreach is needed to the broader community. A media campaign might include press releases, public service announcements, press conferences with community leaders, feature articles, or interviews, depending on the nature of the project and the resources available. To ensure media exposure, the city could buy advertisements but should do so strategically to keep costs low. Keeping a consistent media message across all channels requires generating and distributing talking points to project team members and/or the City's Communication and Public Affairs Division of the City Manager's Office.

SCHEDULED COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The need for scheduled community meetings during the life of the project or program will vary. A construction project for example could have scheduled meetings during project development, design, at construction start, and at various times during construction. Departments will make the determination based on the needs of the community.

Selection of Meeting Places

When determining locations and schedules for public meetings, the City will:

- Schedule meetings at times and locations that is convenient and accessible for minority and Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities;
- Employ different meeting sizes and formats including town hall type meeting formats;
- Coordinate with community organizations, educational institutions, and other organizations to implement public engagement strategies that reach out specifically to members of affected minority and/or LEP communities
- Consider radio, television, or newspaper ads as well as podcasts that serve LEP populations.
- Provide opportunities for public participation through means other than written communication, such as one-on-one interviews or use of audio or video recording devices to capture oral comments.

- Meetings are conducted in locations that are always ADA accessible and convenient to public transit, when possible.
- Sign language interpreters or other auxiliary aid requests can be accommodated if requested in advance.

Visualization Techniques

Where appropriate, visualization techniques will be employed throughout the City’s public participation activities, to aid the public in understanding proposed plans. Examples of visualization techniques include sketches, drawings, artist renderings, physical models and maps, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, GIS based scenario planning tools, and computer simulation

DIRECT NOTIFICATION

The use of door to door delivery of information should be used when required by City Ordinance or depending on the nature of the program, project, or activity and the resources available.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media and social networking websites include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs. It is important to choose the social media and networking platforms that have the best chance of reaching the intended audience. The following is one example of how social media can be used to reach those impacted by a construction project:



CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Citizens may be present during any of the City's meetings; a list of scheduled meeting agendas, times, and locations can be accessed at <http://home.elpasotexas.gov/meetings.php>.

The City Council offers the public an opportunity to bring topics and issues to Council's attention. Each regular City Council meeting the Council reserves 30 minutes at the beginning for public concerns. A citizen can sign up to speak and request an interpreter if desired. Interpreter services will be furnished at no cost as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

To sign up for the "Call to the Public" or to speak on items that are posted on the City Council agenda, a citizen can go the City Clerk's website for the appropriate forms.

STATE AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The City of El Paso receives funding through various state and federal agencies with their own public participation plans. Their process for ensuring public participation allows for additional vetting of City projects funded with federal awards.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The MPO website site notes that their Public Participation Program is to "serve as a program guide for the public participation process of the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization." The complete MPO Public Participation Program can be accessed at: www.elpasompo.org/ppp/

TxDOT

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) website states "public hearings and meetings allow you to participate in the transportation planning process and help you better understand the road, rail and aviation projects that affect your community." Further details about the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) public participation process can be found at: <http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/get-involved.html>

USE OF PUBLIC COMMENT

All public input should be derived from as diverse a range of sources as possible. As appropriate and whenever possible, public comments should be used to revise work scopes, plans and programs.

City staff is responsible for responding to comments in a timely manner and/or for forwarding these comments to policy makers considering action.

EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Departments should use the information obtained through its public outreach efforts to review the effectiveness and progress of its programs. In turn, the public participation plan should be updated periodically to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and executive orders for Environmental Justice and individuals that are Limited English Proficient. The Title VI Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating any plan updates.