



Town of Bethlehem Zoning & Subdivision Update

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

JUNE 13, 2023

Introduction

>> ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Town of Bethlehem Zoning and Subdivision Update intends to codify policies and recommendations from the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan (2022) and ensure the Town’s land use regulations are aligned with key smart growth development principles. A Zoning and Subdivision Update will assist the Town Board, the Planning Board, and Town Department of Economic Development and Planning in further defining the appropriate regulatory approach for achieving the development goals outlined in the 2022 Comprehensive Plan. The code updates will address and guide new development and redevelopment within the Town in an environmentally sustainable manner while also meeting the service demands that come with community growth.

>> COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY OVERVIEW

This Community Engagement Strategy (CES) is intended to:

- Identify overall messaging plan for the project and process;
- Establish protocols for coordination between the Town of Bethlehem, the Consultant Team, and the Planning Board, as well as local partners and stakeholders;
- Provide an overview of planned public outreach efforts and events, including team roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes; and
- Outline key methods and channels of communication.

By presenting a comprehensive strategy for communication and outreach, the Town can ensure a coordinated approach that not only increases public awareness of the zoning code update, but also supports diverse, meaningful engagement and participation opportunities throughout the process.

The primary goal of public outreach for this project is to ensure that the final code revisions reflect the true vision and values of the Town of Bethlehem community. The Town seeks to provide opportunities for the public to take part in the broader conversation around land use regulations by learning and working with others, not just providing input on the development of zoning and subdivision updates.

>> COMPONENTS OF THE CES

The key engagement and communication components identified in this document include:

- Project Administration and Committees
- Stakeholders
- Public Outreach Events
- Communication Methods
- Anticipated Schedule

The details of each component are provided on the following pages.

**THE CES IS NOT
A CHECKLIST.
RATHER, A GUIDING
FRAMEWORK THAT
MAY BE ADAPTED AS
THE CODE UPDATE
PROCESS UNFOLDS.**

Project Administration

>> The administration of the project will be done by a team of staff from the Town, NYS Department of State (DOS), and Consultant Team personnel. The administration team will be responsible for overseeing project progress, providing feedback on preliminary materials and deliverables, and ensuring proper execution of administrative project needs.



AS NEEDED



IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL

PARTICIPATION

Attendees include key Town, DOS, and Consultant Team personnel (see table below). Additional representatives from Bergmann, subconsultants, the Town, or DOS may also be invited to participate where necessary and appropriate to address specific topics of discussion. These meetings are not open to the public.

ORGANIZATION	NAME	ROLE	CONTACT INFORMATION
Town of Bethlehem	Robert Leslie	Director of Planning	rleslie@townofbethlehem.org (518) 439-4955 ext. 1157
Town of Bethlehem	Leslie Lombardo	Deputy Town Planner	llombardo@townofbethlehem.org (518) 439-4955 x1156
Town of Bethlehem	Nate Owens	Senior Planner	nowens@townofbethlehem.org (518) 439-4955 x1155
NYS DOS	Lisa Melville	Watersheds Program Manager / Grant Administrator	Lisa.Melville@dos.ny.gov
Bergmann	Molly Gaudio	Project Manager	mgaudio@bergmannpc.com (585) 498-7971
Bergmann	John Steinmetz	Planning Principal	jsteinmetz@bergmannpc.com (585) 498-7945
Bergmann	Liz Podowski-King	Landscape Architect / Planner	lpodowskiking@bergmannpc.com (585) 417-3487

NOTIFICATION

Members of the administration team will receive notification regarding the date, time, agenda, and any necessary preparation for these meetings by Bergmann in advance of the meeting.

Project Committee

>> PLANNING BOARD

The Town of Bethlehem Planning Board will play the key role of the advisory committee for the project. The Planning Board will be involved in all aspects of the planning process, including but not limited to guiding the public outreach process, reviewing deliverables, providing key insights and direction during the development of code updates, and participating in public engagement efforts. Members will also serve as spokespeople for the project throughout the planning process.



MONTHLY
FIRST OR THIRD TUESDAY
OF THE MONTH AS NEEDED
@ 7 PM



IN-PERSON
Town Hall
Auditorium

445 DELAWARE AVE, DELMAR, NY 12054

PARTICIPATION

The Planning Board membership is listed below. Additional representatives from Bergmann, project subconsultants, Town Administration, Stakeholders, or other Town Departments may also be invited to participate depending on the topic of discussion.

Brian Gyory
Chair

Gianna Aiezza
Board Member

Scott Lewendon
Board Member

Radworth Anderson
Board Member

Patricia Beeler
Board Member

All Planning Board meetings are open to the public and are regularly scheduled for the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month beginning at 6PM. The Consultant Team will attend meetings as needed, to align with key project milestones for a total of 11 meetings. Meetings with the Consultant Team will begin at 7PM and will focus on project specific agenda items. Time for public comments and questions will be provided at the end of all project meetings. The Consultant Team will provide a summary of the meeting discussion.

NOTIFICATION

Planning Board meetings will be regularly scheduled and noticed in accordance with Town policy. When meetings with the Consultant Team are planned, a project specific agenda will be included on meeting notices. Members of the Planning Board will receive information on any necessary preparation for these meetings in advance. A member of the Consultant Team will send notification via email. Meeting agendas and minutes may be found on the Town's website at: <https://www.townofbethlehem.org/940/Zoning-Update>

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals and small groups with a specific interest in or ability to serve the project, and/or who may be directly impacted by the outcomes of this effort. Communication and collaboration with stakeholders will help identify needs and opportunities, expand awareness of the project, and ensure regulations are implementable while achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Key topics of interest for stakeholder conversations follow the code recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan, including conservation subdivisions, increased housing choice and affordability, natural resource protection and green infrastructure, clean energy provisions, mixing of land uses, and regulations to support existing agricultural uses.

PARTICIPATION

Identified stakeholder groups for this project include large landowners, developers, community organizations, business owners, and Town review board and code enforcement personnel. The Consultant Team will participate in up to six (6) meetings, which may be held with single groups or combined. Town Staff may host additional meetings as desired. A list of stakeholders identified by group may be provided upon request at zoningupdate@townofbethlehem.org.

NOTIFICATION

The Consultant Team and Town staff will coordinate outreach to individual stakeholders to set meeting dates, times, and formats.

FORMAT

The format of stakeholder outreach will vary based on the size and preference of the group. In some cases it may make sense to engage multiple stakeholder groups at one time depending on topic area and interest. Meetings may be held in person, via telephone, or video conference and may include, but are not limited to, the following formats: One-on-one Interviews; Small Group or Focus Group Meetings; and Virtual Office Hours.

SCHEDULE

Stakeholder meetings will generally be held in two rounds. This does not limit, however, opportunities for engagement that may come up outside these planned time frames over the course of the project.

- **Round 1.** The first round of stakeholder outreach will be held at the start of the process to gather information on key issues and opportunities related to the Town's land use regulations and development process.
- **Round 2.** The second round of stakeholder meetings will be held towards the end of the project. The purpose of this is to review and discuss draft code provisions for further refinement.

RESULTS

Feedback from the stakeholder meetings will be compiled and summarized by the Consultant team. All meeting summaries will be provided to the Town and Planning Board for their review and consideration.

Public Outreach Events

The following public events are designed to facilitate the largest level of engagement throughout the process. This will help verify that the code updates are reflective of the community’s priorities and goals and that the public has a strong understanding of the overall proposed regulatory framework. The approach to each event will be tailored to the project needs at that time and together will help to achieve the following objectives:

- Inform the community about the project and the planning process;
- Educate the community about zoning, land use regulations, and smart growth principles;
- Build consensus and understanding across the community for proposed code elements; and
- Gather feedback on the draft zoning code and subdivision regulations.

>> PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings are intended for a broader audience, focused on providing project information and gathering local knowledge and values to support the development of the code updates at key points in the process.

PARTICIPATION

All members of the public are invited to attend and participate in these events. The Consultant Team will be the lead coordinator and facilitator of events; however, it is anticipated Town Staff and Planning Board members will also attend and participate. The Consultant Team will prepare all necessary presentation, facilitation, and engagement materials for each workshop.

NOTIFICATION

Public Workshops will be advertised at least three weeks ahead of time using the media and communication channels identified as part of the Advertising Toolkit on page 10. Formal public notices, where required, will be the responsibility of the Town.

FORMAT & SCHEDULE

The Consultant Team will facilitate two (2) Public Workshops and one (1) public hearing. Each workshop will incorporate innovative approaches and non-traditional meeting formats to foster a collaborative, enjoyable, and engaging environment. This may include open houses with interactive boards, brainstorming activities, and breakout groups.

The anticipated focus, format, and scheduling of each workshop are outlined on the following page. It is anticipated that Town Staff will assist in securing venues for in-person events.



ONLINE ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

After each workshop an online tool, such as a survey or forum, will be launched. This increases participation by allowing the public to tap into the process as it fits their schedule, rather than a one-time event.

Tools will be accessible via the website and open for 2-4 weeks.

The Consultant Team will create and manage each tool and provide a summary of results upon closing.

- Public Workshop #1.** The first workshop will act as a public kick-off for the project and provide an introduction to the project, planning process and timeline, zoning, and smart growth principles as they relate to land use regulations. The first public workshop will give members of the public the opportunity to be involved in the project from the beginning and encourage them to stay engaged throughout the process. The first online engagement tool will launch at this time. Engagement activities will include the following topics: land uses, natural resources, clean energy, and a visual preference survey to inform development within character areas. Paper copies of the visual preference survey will be available at Town Hall.



MAY 2023
 May 31st
 6 PM



IN-PERSON
 Town Hall
 445 DELAWARE AVE, DELMAR, NY 12054

- Public Open House.** The public open house will occur towards the end of the project when a draft code provisions has been compiled. Members of the public will have the opportunity to review the draft documents, explore sections in detail, and provide direct feedback to the project team. There will be several Planning Board meetings before the open house where the public will have an opportunity to provide comments on the zoning update.



FEBRUARY 2024
 DATE/TIME
 TBD



IN-PERSON
 TBD

- Public Hearing.** Once the draft zoning code update has been compiled and has gone before members of the public and stakeholders for review, edits will be made. The final document will then be presented to the Town Board at a formal public hearing.



APRIL 2024
 DATE/TIME
 TBD



IN-PERSON
 Town Hall

RESULTS

Feedback from the Public Workshops will be compiled and summarized by the Consultant Team and provided to the Town and Planning Board for their review and consideration. All meeting presentations and facilitation materials will also be provided.

The information collected from each event will be utilized as a reference to direct the next stages of the project process and code revision development.

>> ADDITIONAL PUBLIC OUTREACH

Additional public outreach efforts are intended to reach populations frequently underrepresented, such as minorities, immigrants, refugees, populations with limited English proficiency, disabled persons, and low-income residents. All public outreach efforts can be tailored to ensure efforts reach all populations, to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate in all stages of the Zoning Code and Subdivision update.

FORMAT

The Consultant Team will work with the Town's Assessor and other staff to identify residents that may have limited English proficiency, or may otherwise experience barriers to accessing project information and engagement opportunities. The following methods may be used to reach these historically underrepresented populations.

- **Translation and Interpretation.** Spanish language and American Sign Language interpreters may be available upon request at all public meetings and events. Requests can be submitted to the email provided on the project website or in person at Town Hall. Meeting materials may be translated to Spanish or other languages as needed. It will be the responsibility of the Town to secure such services, as necessary.
- **Location.** All public events and workshops will be located at venues with ADA accessibility and accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including public transit. Meeting materials will be posted on the project website following all events so they are available to the public for review.
- **Communication.** Public meetings and events will be advertised in both traditional (e.g. print media) and non-traditional media (e.g. digital media) in English and translated to Spanish (or other languages) as deemed necessary. Mailed advertisements will also be sent to the Town's residential property addresses within the Town (as opposed to property owners only) to ensure notification is received by both homeowners and renters within the Town.
- **Internet Accessibility.** Hard copies of all meeting materials, surveys, advertisements, draft documents, and other relevant project deliverables may be made available at Town Hall for residents and stakeholders with limited access to reliable broadband services.

Communication Methods

>> WEBSITE

The Town of Bethlehem has created a web page for the code update. The web page will serve as a platform for both informing and collaborating with the public and fostering two-way communication. Community members will be able to access to up-to-date project information and documents, public event advertisements, schedules, and summaries, surveys and virtual engagement tools, and a project-specific email that can be used to submit questions and comments directly to the Project Team. Comments may also be submitted to the Bethlehem Forward email. All links provided below.



WWW.TOWNOFBETHLEHEM.ORG/940/ZONING-UPDATE

ZONINGUPDATE@TOWNOFBETHLEHEM.ORG

BETHLEHEMFORWARD@TOWNOFBETHLEHEM.ORG

CONTENT

Bergmann will be responsible for the development of advertising materials to be posted on the project web page in consultation with the Town and Planning Board. Town staff will maintain the web page. It is recommended the web page include a general project overview, engagement opportunities, and key documents relevant to the code update. Regular updates should be made to ensure the public has access to the latest information regarding:

- Project Progress
- Public Event & Virtual Engagement Information
- Meeting Agendas & Summaries
- Draft Deliverables
- Online Survey (Paper copies will also be available at Town Hall)

>> ADVERTISING TOOLKIT

To ensure a broader reach and maximize participation in engagement events, the Consultant team will prepare an Advertising Toolkit that includes a wide array of media for use across multiple communication channels. The resources will be updated and adapted, as necessary, for each public meeting and survey/online engagement opportunity. These tools may also be utilized for distributing project information, sharing process updates, and directing the public to key documents and deliverables.

MEDIA MATERIALS

Advertising and informational materials prepared by the Consultant Team will include:

- Press Releases
- Print Materials (flyers, handouts, postcards, etc.)
- Social Media Graphics
- Email Invitation Language

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In coordination with Town of Bethlehem Staff, Planning Board members, and stakeholders, the Consultant Team will assist with the distribution of advertising materials through the following channels:

- Town Website & Social Media
- Local News & Media Outlets
- Stakeholder Contacts
- Others (as identified throughout the planning process)

Anticipated Schedule

