Cutting through the Noise:

Ways that the Town of Chapel Hill has facilitated meaningful civic engagement

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Cutting through the Noise

In 2011-12, the Town of Chapel Hill tried something “REALLY BIG”
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COMMUNICATE VS. ENGAGE

- share or exchange information
- convey ideas
- involve
- attract
- establish a meaningful connection

transmit information
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Old Way

Comprehensive Planning
• Land use Planners
• a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development
• a Comprehensive Plan which dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing

NEW Way

• **Community Visioning**
  • Community mapping
  • Community leaders
  • Citizen driven goals
  • Youth meetings
  • Social activities
  • Business, Faith, Civic and Visitor Communities invited to participate.
  • Electronic reports (blog, Instagram, Facebook).
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Community Involvement in the Chapel Hill 2020 Planning Process
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During the first 3 outreach meetings, 6 themes were developed to provide definition to the plan and a way to organize the community conversations about the future.

- Create a Place for Everyone
- Grown Town & Grown Collaboration
- Facilitate Getting Around
- Develop Good Places New Spaces
- Nurture Our Community
- Support Community Prosperity and Engagement
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Chapel Hill 2020 Goals
Goals and Action Items

Staff Analysis
Identify related elements; resolve conflicting goals. Analyze cost, timing, and policy implications. Recommend actions.

Council Deliberation
Set policy and priorities consistent with Chapel Hill 2020 goals. Authorize action.

Action
Staff and community partners take action, engage community, and assess results in terms of Chapel Hill 2020 goals.

Public Input
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**CHALLENGES**

- **Time** – a lot of information, short time to digest, real life kept happening
- **Continuity** – some community members came to every meeting, but a majority did not (63%).
- **Expectations** – keeping them realistic, defining “vision” vs. “reality”
- **Nay-sayers** – how to manage uncertainty
- **Accountability** – saying what you mean and meaning what you say.
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A river cuts through rock not because of its power but its persistence.