

YOUNG LEADER VISION PROJECT

FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS

VISION

Historically, Minnesota’s urban planning and development have been primarily adult-focused. While the public-engagement process is highly prevalent in comprehensive planning and local governance, these meetings typically end up including the “usual suspects”—planning commissions and city staff— because the public process flies under the radar. This causes community meetings to be inaccessible to youth and young adults.

Before this project, I believed that the responsibility fell on youth to be more civically engaged and aware of local governance. I looked at federal news and saw the causal relationship between youth activism in areas like gun rights and the increase in nationwide conversation.

However, after completing this project, I see that the larger burden falls on external entities, like the government, to meet people at their doors rather than to expect them to always engage. Given the busy lives of youth and young adults, it’s important that we find new ways to ensure that youth voice is included in the comprehensive planning process by extending the process to areas where youth *are* engaged, such as the classroom and local events that have a larger youth demographic.



ACTION

SYSTEMS

Government systems should actively use their funding incentives and alignments to broaden youth engagement. For example, the Met Council conducts workshops for their members to discuss their equity-related goals. The Met Council should put youth on their agenda and discuss how funding incentives can be used to persuade cities to increase youth engagement or involve youth in the comprehensive planning process. Additionally, the City of Plymouth recently tried a new social media initiative and found that it didn’t increase engagement due to its passive nature. More active strategies should be used such as partnerships with youth engagement organizations.

COMMUNITY

While the responsibility falls on governmental systems to actively, rather than passively, reach out to communities, there are ways for people to be more engaged. Communities, especially youth, need to familiarize themselves with the comprehensive plan and encourage their peers to do the same. Although meeting with elected officials can be difficult, youth who wish to be engaged can schedule meetings with local or state officials. Reaching out to organizations that specialize in youth education over local governance and planning can serve as a way to attain knowledge and pass it onto others for a greater push for engagement.

BUSINESS

YEP! Youth Engagement Planning) is a non-profit organization that teaches youth nationwide about urban planning and civic engagement. YEP works in partnership with organizations like Girl, Inc. and local communities and counties in Minnesota to ensure that students have the resources to engage with their local government. Whether this be teaching about the comprehensive plan or recent happenings in cities, the organization has seen benefits through increased engagement and activism.

Communities should accept a larger role of similar organizations, for they highlight and elevate the voices of youth in the local planning process.

INSIGHTS

I was very excited to learn that despite there being many differences between the cities in District 1, they face similarities as well. For example, all the cities agree that the legislature should support more funding for infrastructure and that certain communities deserve more local government aid. I also found it interesting that the main way the Met Council urges cities to follow certain paths is through funding incentives. Additionally, through conversation I found that there is an amendment process to the comprehensive plan, so small yearly updates can be made if necessary.

Knowing that agreement exists among cities has made my view more opportunistic in terms of future compromise. Increased advocacy can make youth voice a bipartisan issue in District 1 and beyond.



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