

Arcata General Plan Update

How should we plan and prepare for the future of Arcata?

Meeting-in-a-Box Guidebook

Thank you for hosting this Meeting-in-a-Box!

The City of Arcata is grateful for your time, thoughts, ideas, and participation.

Filling out this “Meeting-in-a-Box” is part of a collaborative effort to help shape a better, brighter future for everyone who lives, works, and plays in our City!

For more information or to engage in the General Plan Update process, visit

<https://www.cityofarcata.org/896/Strategic-Infill-Redevelopment-Program>

BACKGROUND

The Strategic Infill Redevelopment Program is the City's process for developing a plan for the City's growth and development for the next twenty years and beyond. The project involves updating the City's General Plan, as well as collecting data to support Plan Updates, and identifying actions to complete the goals included in the Plan.

The last major update was 20 years ago, and the needs of the city and community and state have evolved since that time. Updates to these documents are needed to respond to community needs and to ensure the City takes full advantage of the opportunities that growth presents in equitable and sustainable ways.

MEETING-IN-A-BOX OVERVIEW

What should Arcata be like in 2040? Meeting-in-a-Box is a community engagement method designed for use by community groups, neighborhood associations, or friends to gather at a convenient time and location to share their ideas and proposals for the future of the city. This Meeting-in-a-Box approach is inspired by the City of Sacramento, as part of their *Sacramento 2040* General Plan Update process. City of Arcata staff have chosen to replicate this structure in order to allow us to "meet people where they are at" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We believe that discussions related to the future of Arcata should not be limited to those organized by City staff but instead should happen wherever and whenever it is convenient and meaningful for a group of interested people to get together and talk. The following is the Meeting-in-a-Box kit which contains tools to hold your own discussion. Meeting-in-a-Box can be downloaded from the project website, activated at your own meeting, and the results of your discussion can be returned to the City as indicated below.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Meeting-in-a-Box is organized into three parts:

1. Prepare

The steps that the host should take in advance of the meeting

2. Activate

The “Day-of” steps for set-up and facilitation of the meeting

3. Return

The phase when the materials are collected and returned to the City

Contents



Prepare

- Process Overview
- Host Check-List
- Sample Invitation



Activate

- Guest List
- Meeting Agenda
- Presentation
- Participant Worksheet
- Group Priority Worksheet
- Engagement Survey



Return

- Host Feedback Form
- Return Instructions
- Project Contact Card

PREPARE

1. Reserve a physical or virtual meeting location

Identify and reserve a location for your meeting. Host a meeting at a place where your group can access it. The location should be able to accommodate the number of participants you expect to join the conversation. We suggest you plan for an hour and a half meeting, to give an hour for discussion and a thirty-minute buffer for beginning and ending the meeting.

2. Invite

A group of 8-12 people is an ideal size, but other group sizes can work (see tips for breakout groups below). Identify and invite your participants. This can be done through an invitation in the mail, email, phone, or social media. The sample invitation can be used as a template and printed, filled out, and mailed/mailed to participants. Make sure to let participants know how long to expect the meeting to be. If they want to give feedback, but can't attend, share you can provide them with this [survey link](#) instead.

3. Remind

Call, text, or email the people on your invitation list 1-2 days before the scheduled meeting to remind them to attend.

4. Review the materials

Deepen your understanding what the general plan is by reviewing our meeting prep materials, which can be found online at:

<https://www.cityofarcata.org/952/11860/Meeting-in-a-Box?activeLiveTab=widgets>

At minimum, please watch all related videos and request participants do the same in advance of the meeting (about ten minutes of content).

ACTIVATE

1. Set-up

If meeting in person...

Before the meeting, set up the space to accommodate the number of expected participants. For a small group, arrange chairs in a circle. For larger meetings, arrange chairs in small breakout groups. Sort copies of the Participant Worksheets and Group Priority Worksheets into sets for the participants. Make sure to have enough pens available.

If meeting virtually...

Set up a virtual meeting using the software of your choice and consider recording the session to share with city staff. We recommend using zoom if you would like to record the meeting and send the file to us along with the post-meeting surveys or any other information you'd like to give us. As a host in a Zoom meeting, you can create breakout groups [using these instructions](#).

Tips!

- Free Zoom software tends to cut conversation off at forty minutes. However, you can use the same link to re-enter the same meeting if it ends after forty minutes.
- If you do break into small groups, give the group a name or number to distinguish the small groups. Note this on the Participant Worksheet and Group Priority Worksheets.
- You may choose to use the worksheets included, or you may feel more comfortable using other materials, such as large flip charts or laptop computers. If you do use something other than the worksheets provided, please make sure you include information from the worksheets when you return your materials.
- If you choose to take pictures of flip charts, please make sure the pictures are readable.

2. Welcome and introductions (5-8 minutes)

We recommend starting and ending your meeting on time. Thank participants for taking the time to discuss their vision for Arcata's future. If you are holding a virtual meeting and feel comfortable doing so, ask participants if they are willing to allow you to record the discussion to share with city staff.

Take a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting for introductions. This should be brief *and* meaningful. For example, you could ask people to share their name and one

thing they really love about Arcata. The intent is to get everyone's voice into the meeting early and help people get connected.

3. Set the context (5 minutes)

Review the purpose of this meeting and discussion questions. Check for any questions about procedure before moving on.

For example, "The purpose of this meeting is for us to gather and prioritize our ideas about our vision of Arcata over the next 20 years-starting right now. We're going to do some individual work and then work as a group to identify our top three big ideas for the future of Arcata's built, natural, human and economic environment. Any questions before we begin?"

4. Facilitate introductory questions (15-20 minutes)

Ask participants to pull up the "Participant Worksheet" on their computers, or hand out physical copies if you are holding the meeting in person. This worksheet is meant to give every participant a chance to think through some important "big picture" questions before entering into a group discussion. Plan to spend 15 minutes on the Participant Worksheet, and make clear that this worksheet is for individuals to share their own opinions. The Group Worksheet is to capture the discussion and priorities of the whole group.

The participant worksheet includes three parts:

- Part 1: Three questions to prompt thinking about General Plan priorities
- Part 2: Three "big ideas" based on the answers to the previous questions
- Part 3: Three questions about ongoing participation

This worksheet can be filled all at once, or you can build in time for participants to share their answers after each part. We suggest having participants complete Part 1 and then facilitate people sharing their answers as a "lightning round" to make it more interesting. This means going around your group and asking each person, one-by-one, to share their answers to Part 1 in 2-3 minutes. There is no "right answer" and no need to reach agreement on these answers. You will discuss the group's priorities in the next part. Hearing each other's answers to Part 1 might prompt some new "big ideas."

Now ask participants to fill out Parts 2 and 3 in the Participant Worksheet by themselves. Their answers will be shared in the next section.

5. Facilitate the group discussion about ‘Big Ideas’ (40 minutes)

This is where the fun really begins! A facilitator’s job is to keep the conversation moving, make sure every voice is heard, and ensure all relevant thoughts and ideas are captured. We understand this can be challenging! Thank you for volunteering your time and energy to assist your group with this work.

Facilitation Tips!

- *If you have more than 10 people in your meeting, we recommend breaking out into smaller groups. For example, if you have 11 people attend, you could break the group in half and ask people to work in two smaller discussion groups.*
- *Do your best to keep everyone on topic and make sure time is allocated for group members to answer all of the questions in the Participant Worksheet.*
- *You are also a participant and can share opinions as an equal member of the group, but make sure everyone has a chance to share and feels comfortable to express their opinions.*
- *You could propose a “move up, move up” agreement--meaning you invite people who tend to share verbally easily to “move up” their listening, and for people who tend to listen easily to “move up” their speaking. As facilitator, try and ensure each participant has an opportunity to speak.*
- *Try to make the meeting relaxed and enjoyable for all participants.*

Begin by asking for a volunteer note taker for the group, or volunteer to hold this role too.

The purpose of this discussion round is to have individual participants share their answers to Part 2 in the Participant Worksheet: their top three “Big Ideas.”

Go around the group and ask participants to share their big ideas. Alternatively, if your group prefers a more free-flowing discussion, you can see who wants to share first and “popcorn” to the next person. If you take a free-flowing route, make sure everyone has a chance to speak and that one or two people do not dominate the conversation. The note taker should take care to record people’s ideas accurately and in a way that people can see what is being written down. In a virtual meeting, this would require that the note taker share their screen. In an in-person meeting, this could happen on flipchart paper.

The note-taker should read back the responses, and see if any of the ideas could be merged. After this report-out, ask the group if there seems to be any ideas that could be merged or changed to result in one idea. Then open it up for free discussion and ask the group to begin to prioritize the responses.

When it seems as though all ideas have been considered and discussed, have participants vote on their top three ideas. This will determine the top three priority items that will be recorded on the Group Priorities Worksheet.

If there is time, feel free to continue having the discussion and explain why the three highest priorities were selected. If a consensus cannot be reached on the top three ideas, record the discussion on the Group Priority Worksheet.

5. Wrap Up (15 minutes)

If you have divided participants into small groups, reconvene the larger group.

Summarize the discussion and the top three “big ideas” that the group agreed on. Note that you will be submitting the group’s ideas using the “Group Priorities Worksheet.” If you are meeting via Zoom, you could complete the form in the meeting so the group sees what is being submitted.

Ask participants to reflect on the process: what worked well, and what didn’t. Please record those points on the “Host Feedback Form.”

Share the Post-Meeting Survey with participants,

If participants would like more information, you can direct them to the Strategic Infill Program’s webpage for more about the visioning and planning process, and upcoming activities and ways to be involved:

<https://www.cityofarcata.org/896/Strategic-Infill-Redevelopment-Program>

Thank everyone for their participation!

RETURN

1. Package and send digital materials

- Fill out this form with the group priorities at the end of the meeting.
- Ask participants to fill out this form with meeting feedback.
- Email the host feedback form, Guest list and participant worksheets to dfreitas@cityofarcata.org

2. Package and send printed materials

Sort the materials as follows:

- Group Priority Worksheet
- Participant Worksheet
- Engagement Survey
- Guest List
- Host Feedback Form

Package all materials together and return Meeting-in-a-Box using one of the methods below.

- **Method 1** : Mail to “Attention: Community Development Department, 736 “F” Street, Arcata, CA 95521”
- **Method 2:** Drop-off at City Hall by dropping in the finance billing box, or calling and setting an appointment, 736 “F” Street, Arcata, CA 95521. Call (707) 822-5955 to set a drop-off time.