



SUSSEX COUNTY LAND USE WORKING GROUP MEETING #3

May 1, 2025

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS



Sussex County

- Todd Lawson
- Vince Robertson
- Jamie Whitehouse
- Brandy Nauman

McCormick Taylor

- John Mullen
- Christina Arlt
- Jillian Dierks

Kramer & Associates

- Andrew Bing



WORKING GROUP ROLE AND DELIVERABLES

Recommendations That:

1. Implement smarter, sustainable development
2. Ensure growth is supported by infrastructure
3. Address affordable/workforce housing needs
4. Preserve farmland and natural resources
5. Prevent low-density, uncoordinated sprawl



WORKING GROUP ROLE AND DELIVERABLES

Deliverables & Timeline

- **Q2 Focus:** Develop draft recommendations
- **Q3 Focus:** Finalize recommendations & present to County Council
- **Q4 Focus:** County Council prioritizes list of recommendations; begins public hearing process for Ordinances and/or Comprehensive Land Use Plan updates





MEETING OVERVIEW



Today's Agenda

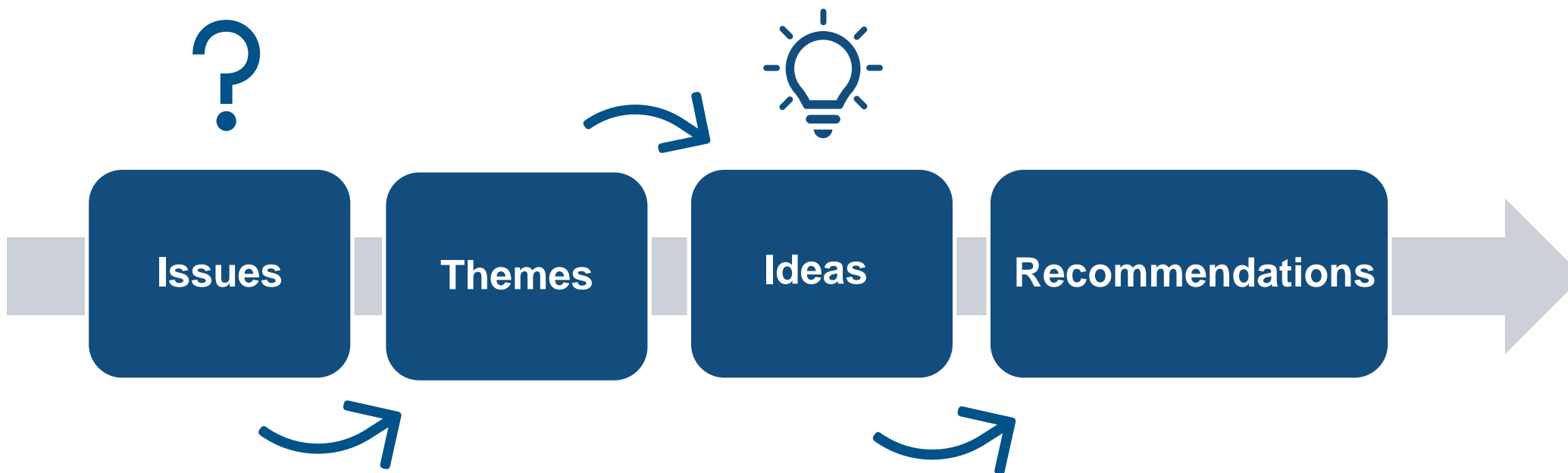
- Welcome & Meeting Overview
- Recap of Last Meeting
- Technical Discussion: Affordable & Workforce Housing
- Questions & Final Thoughts
- Public Comment



RECAP OF LAST MEETING



EMERGING THEMES





MEETING SCHEDULE

- **Today**
 - Address affordable/workforce housing needs
- **Meeting #4: Monday, May 19 (2:00 – 4:00)**
 - Implement smarter, sustainable development
 - Ensure growth is supported by infrastructure
 - Prevent low-density, uncoordinated sprawl
- **Meeting #5: Thursday, June 12 (10:00 – 12:00)**
 - Preserve farmland and natural resources
- **Meeting #6: Thursday, July 10 (10:00 – 12:00)**
- **Future Meetings TBD**



MEETING FOCUS: AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING



AFFORDABLE HOUSING & WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Affordable housing is housing that **costs no more than 30% of a household's gross income**, including rent or mortgage plus utilities.

- It's not one-size-fits-all—what's affordable depends on your income.
- “Affordable housing is what's affordable to you, based on your income.”
- That means:
 - A \$1,200/month apartment may be affordable to a household earning \$48,000/year...but may not to someone earning \$30,000/year.

Why it matters:

- Affordable housing supports residents across income levels, from young workers to retirees.
- Stable housing strengthens communities and local economies.
- A healthy housing market fuels workforce retention and growth.



MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING





NATURALLY OCCURRING AFFORDABLE HOUSING (NOAH)

What is NOAH?

- Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing
- Unsubsidized rental housing affordable to low/moderate-income households
- Often includes small multifamily buildings, duplexes, and triplexes



How They're Connected to the Missing Middle

- New NOAH can be built when zoning allows missing middle housing
- Both support affordability without subsidy
- Enable housing options for a wider range of household sizes and incomes



Source: missingmiddlehousing.com



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE ALREADY



PROGRESS TO DATE

Sussex County Rental Program (SCRCP) Expansion

- 2022
- Incentivizes housing developers to incorporate affordable rental units in their projects

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- 2024
- Reclassified 'garage/studio apartments' and broadened the rules for where and how such secondary housing can be implemented

It's a good start, but it's not an end point.





EARLY IDEAS

FORMAT

- **Early Ideas- what we have already heard from you**
- **DSHA Taskforce Recommendations**
- **Other Best Practices**
- **Looking at Overlapping Recommendations**
- **Support and Prioritization Exercise**
- **Discussion**

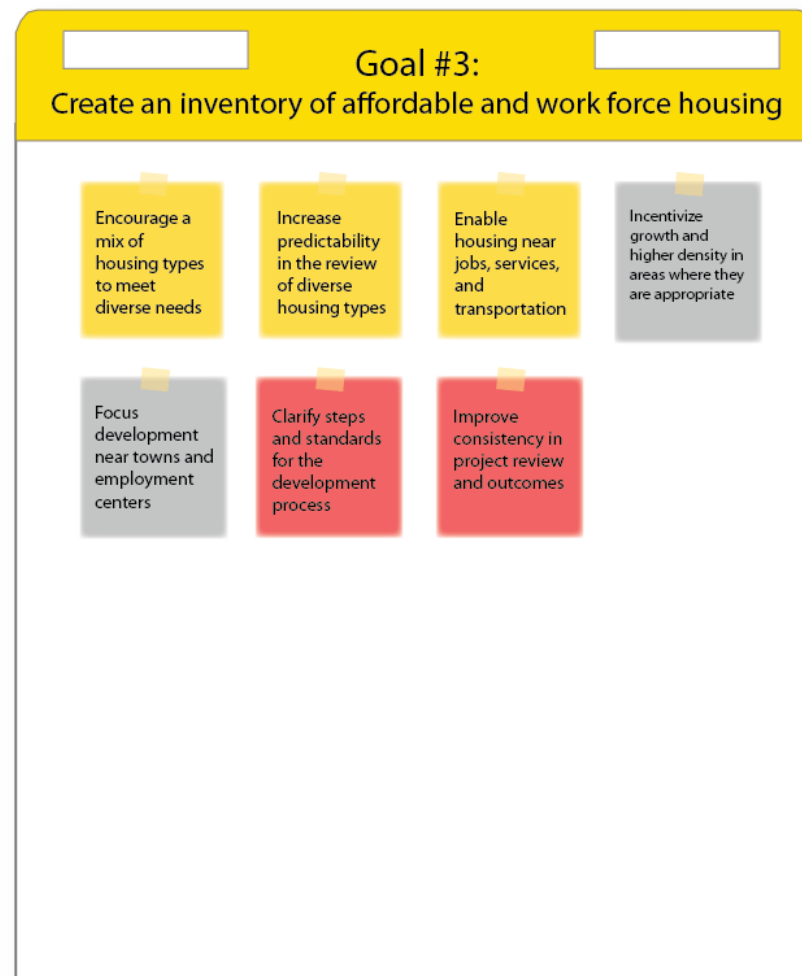




WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Identified Theme Elements Supporting This Goal:

- Encourage a mix of housing types to meet diverse needs
- Increase predictability in the review of diverse housing types
- Enable housing near jobs, services, and transportation
- Incentivize growth and higher density in areas where they are appropriate
- Focus development near towns and employment centers
- Clarify steps and standards for the development process
- Improve consistency in project review and outcomes





WHAT CAN SUSSEX COUNTY INFLUENCE?

Zoning
Standards

Administrative
Process

Incentives

Subdivision &
Land
Development
Regulations

Fees

Land



WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS – ZONING STANDARDS

- Revise the definition of multifamily housing.
- Allow duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and other “missing middle” housing types by right.
- Introduce mixed-use zoning near towns and employment centers.
- Reduce bulk standards and lot size requirements.
- Allow higher densities and building heights in designated growth areas.
- Create subzones or overlays in Levels 1 & 2 specifically for affordable housing.
- Remove subjective or vague language from the zoning code.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS – ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

- Create predictable zoning and permitting paths for affordable housing.
- Expand use of by-right development processes.
- Use the Sussex County Rental Program (SCRIP) as a model.
- Streamline development review timelines and allow construction phasing flexibility.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS – INCENTIVES/TOOLS

- Apply meaningful density bonuses for including affordable units.
- Consider allowing developers to pay into a preservation/infrastructure fund in exchange for density.



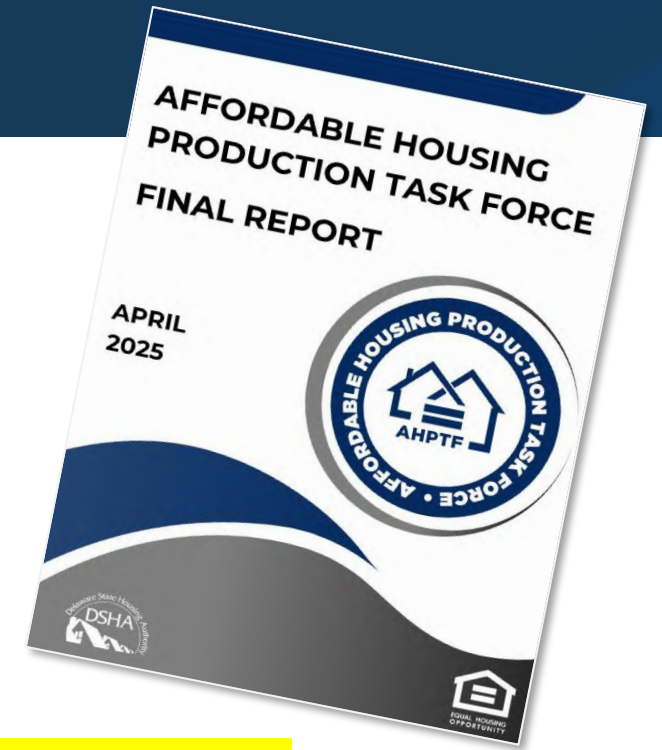
WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Build support for affordable housing through public education and real examples.
- Use visual tools (e.g., 3D models) to illustrate zoning and housing concepts.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRODUCTION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Increase/expanding funding opportunities
2. Implement local zoning reform
3. Streamline the approval/permitting process
4. Adopt a statewide building code
5. Strengthen comprehensive plan requirements
6. Provide incentives for developers to build affordable housing units
7. Develop construction workforce pipeline
8. Assist in the purchase of manufactured housing communities by homeowners
9. Optimize and improve the capacity of existing programs/processes





TOOLS AND IDEAS FROM OTHER PLACES

Creative tools that could be adapted for Sussex County's needs.



Portland, OR

Treat Multifamily as Residential, Not Commercial

Portland updated its code to treat multifamily buildings like other residential uses, reducing permitting costs and timelines.

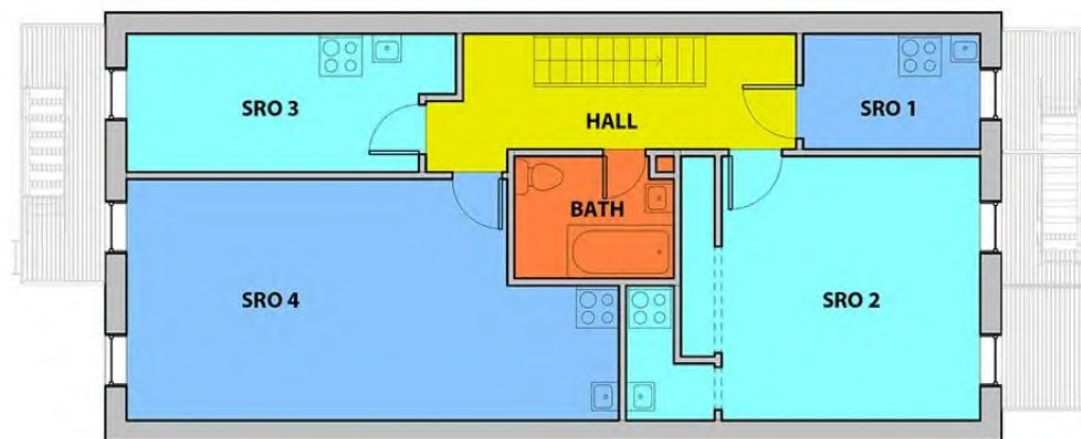


Buffalo, NY

Reduce or Remove Minimum Parking Requirements

Buffalo eliminated parking minimums citywide, cutting construction costs and encouraging more walkable, mixed-income housing.

SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY: SRO



San Diego, CA



Washington, DC

Allow Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Units

San Diego re-legalized SROs to create affordable options for single individuals.

Vacant Building Fees

DC imposes escalating fees on vacant properties, encouraging reuse and redevelopment, especially near transit and employment centers.



Denver, CO

Allow Residential Conversion of Vacant Retail/Office

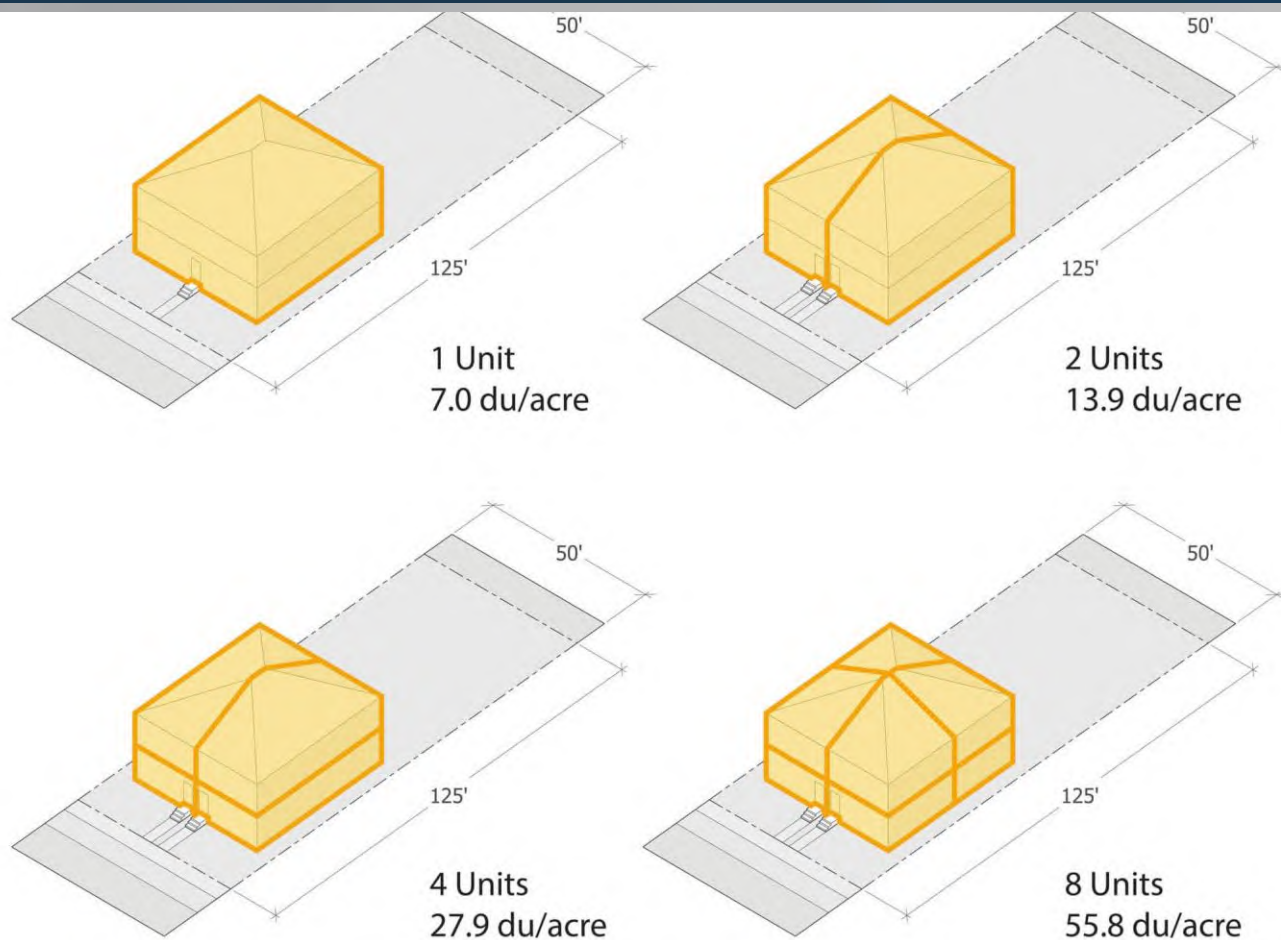
Denver permits residential conversion of obsolete commercial spaces, supporting new housing without additional land consumption.



Reno, NV

Master Plan and Pre-Entitle “Shovel-Ready” Sites

Reno worked with developers to master plan infrastructure-ready sites, reducing risk and speeding up affordable housing delivery.



Minneapolis, MN

Eliminate Single-Family-Only Zoning

Minneapolis ended single-family-only zoning in 2018, allowing duplexes and triplexes by-right across the city to expand housing options.



Portland, OR

Create Pre-Approved ADU Plans

Portland launched pre-approved ADU designs to streamline approvals and cut design costs, making ADUs easier and cheaper to build.



Santa Cruz, CA

Offer Tax Incentives for ADUs

Santa Cruz offers property tax reductions for homeowners who build and rent out affordable ADUs.



EMERGING AREAS OF ALIGNMENT

EMERGING ALIGNMENT

- Broad agreement appears to exist on ideas across the Working Group and Taskforce.
- However, differences appear in the level of detail (e.g.: how much density; where missing middle housing is allowed; how overlays are structured).
- Our initial focus today is confirming areas of general support.
- Our discussion today will allow us to continue refining the areas of alignment to ensure they reflect Sussex County's character and priorities.



ZONING REFORM



Idea	Working Group	Task Force
1. Allow missing middle housing types by right	Allow duplexes, triplexes, townhomes by right; reduce conditional use	Establish a by right administrative review process
2. Increase allowable density	Allow higher densities in growth areas	Min. 24 units/acre (multifamily); 4 units/acre (single-family)
3. Reduce lot sizes and bulk standards	Reduce lot size and bulk requirements	Max 5,000 sq. ft. lot size; enable minimum density through bulk standards
4. Allow greater height	Allow higher building heights in designated areas	Min 60 ft. height for multifamily
5. Focus development in designated growth areas	In appropriate Investment Levels	Eligibility tied to municipal boundaries, sewer, and Investment Levels 1-3

PROCESS STREAMLINING



Idea	Working Group	Task Force
6. Expand by-right development options	Expand by-right development processes	By-right process without rezoning or conditional use
7. Create predictable zoning and permitting paths	Predictability is essential for funding timelines	Max approval timelines; expedited review for affordable projects
8. Streamline review timelines	Permit phasing and faster review	Develop maximum timelines; opt-out of PLUS review in Levels 1 & 2



INCENTIVES & TOOLS

Idea	Working Group	Task Force
Apply density bonuses for affordable housing	Must provide real value	Density bonuses for qualifying projects






SUPPORT FOR AND PRIORITIZING EMERGING IDEAS

Identifying areas of strong support, discussion needs, and concerns.

EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS

You have been provided a worksheet listing the emerging ideas we've discussed.

For each idea, indicate where you are currently:

-  Strong Support – Ready to Move Forward
-  Some Support – Needs Further Discussion
-  Concern – Need Revisions or Alternatives

There are areas for “Other” where ideas that may be have been presented here today can be included.

We will be pausing for five minutes to allow working group members to reflect and fill out the worksheet.





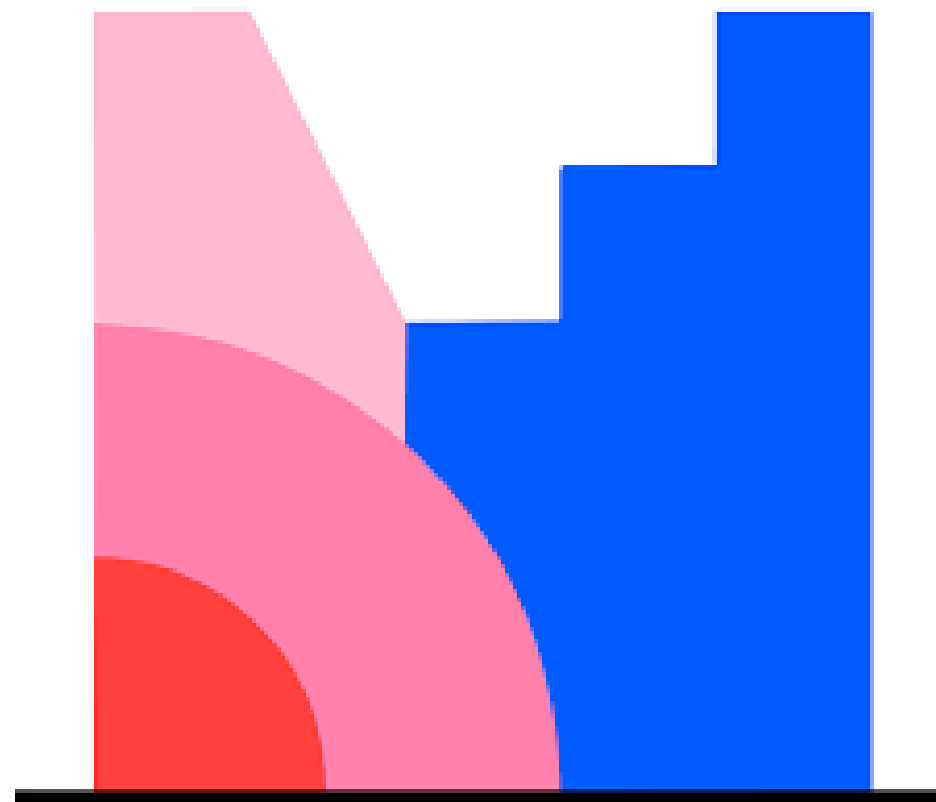
EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS

Once the worksheet is complete we will be using Mentimeter for a quick group snapshot.

- Please input your responses into Mentimeter.
- Responses will not be attributed to individuals.
- The link and QR code for Mentimeter poll is provided for on the worksheet

We are asking:

- Share your level of support for ideas.
- Rank the ideas based on where you believe they would have the greatest positive impact and are most appropriate for Sussex County.





DISCUSSION



WRAP UP



MEETING SCHEDULE

Schedule

- Meeting #4: Monday, May 19 (2:00 – 4:00)
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FINAL THOUGHTS & OPEN FLOOR

- Questions
- Takeaways and final thoughts



PUBLIC COMMENT

