

Sarah Wright

Community Involvement Program Representative

City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Dear Sarah,

East Columbia Neighborhood has the following concerns regarding the Discussion Draft of the Comprehensive Plan Community Involvement Program:

- Too often decisions seem to be made long before the neighborhoods hear about the issues. By the time they are notified the decision is a 'done deal.'
- Even after notification, there is not enough time for neighborhoods to respond. Input periods frequently fall between neighborhood meetings, which are usually monthly or bimonthly. Neighborhood associations need at least six to eight weeks to consider and make a formal decision. Decisions need time to move from committees, such as land use, to the neighborhood board, to the general membership.
- Effective community involvement requires a greater effort and emphasis than currently exists on making sure the neighborhoods hear about issues of concern. In addition to the official notifications, there needs to be a central location on the City's website where all issues of concern to neighborhoods are posted, enabling neighborhoods to see what is coming up at any point in time.
- Transparency is vital to community involvement. The citizens need to know that what they say carries weight and is not just meeting a requirement for public involvement. After any hearing, advisory committee meeting, public open house, or other public forum as well as written comment periods, there needs to be a summary report of: what points were made; which of the points were rejected and why; and disclosure of what other persons or entities had input, in both formal and informal communications.

Improving public involvement in the City of Portland is key to making the 2035 Comprehensive Plan effective and successful. If we don't make it right this time, there is a problem.

Barbara Kerr

Vice-chair, East Columbia Neighborhood Association