Public Involvement Task Force

Charge: Develop a consistent set of standards for public involvement processes across city bureaus.

Summary: Although the PITF did not get as far as developing a set of public involvement standards, it did produce a strategic plan that lays the foundation for the future development of standards.

FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE

A culture of listening, hearing and acting on public input Public input must be integral to the development and implementation of public policies, public works projects, public services and other city government actions.

2. A collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approach

City government/community partnerships should consistently pursue collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approaches between all stakeholders when identifying policy priorities, and when creating, developing or implementing public policies, public works projects, public services and other city government actions.

3. Early involvement

The public should be involved early when a policy and project is being shaped – not after many important decisions have already been made and little realistic flexibility remains.

4. Inclusiveness

"Community" in Portland is made up of a rich diversity of groups and interests. City elected officials and city bureau staff should identify, reach out to, and involve the full range of community groups and interests in public dialogue and decision making processes.

Recommendations:

- #1 Adopt the Public Involvement (PI) Principles.
- **#2** Rewrite the Comprehensive Plan Section 9 Citizen Involvement to reflect PI Principles.
- **#3** Amend the City Charter to support PI Principles.
- **#4** Review the composition, role and effectiveness of City boards and commissions and citizen advisory committees.
- **#5** Establish stable funding mechanisms for public involvement processes.

Top Six Core Recommendations

- 1. Adopt Public Involvement Principles.
- Require City bureaus to develop formal written PI policies that implement the adopted PI principles. Develop a model policy to serve as a framework.
- Require written PI plans for certain types of major capital, policy and planning projects.
- Ensure that culturally appropriate and effective strategies and techniques are used to reach out to involve constituencies traditionally under-represented in the community.
- 5. Establish a stable funding mechanism for public involvement processes.
- 6. Establish a standing Public Involvement Advisory Commission ... and position to staff the commission.

BUILDING CAPACITY

5. Build the capacity for partnership within City government

City elected officials, decision makers and staff must have the skills and will to support and achieve effective public involvement as set out in these principles.

Recommendations:

- **#6** Review the role of ONI and its location in the structure of city government.
- #7 Develop staff education and training program on best practices and culturally appropriate public involvement skills.
- #8 Establish a formal networking group of public involvement and public information staff from different bureaus to meet regularly to review and discuss PI policies, projects and issues.

6. Build the capacity for partnership within the community.

Portland's nationally recognized formal neighborhood and business association system is the cornerstone of public involvement and the [a] primary channel for citizen input and involvement in our city.

Recommendations:

- #9 Adequately fund and expand citizen education and training in City processes and advocacy skills. Draw on the principles and procedures of the "popular education" model and the resources of the Neighborhood Association system, diverse community-based organizations, and existing institutional training programs.
- #10 Find new and meaningful ways to create networks between the Neighborhood Association System and other community-based groups that build collaboration among community members as well as with government officials and staff.
- **#11** Develop a mechanism for identifying and funding community identified needs.

7. Coordination and consistency

City bureaus should coordinate their public outreach and involvement resources and activities to make the best use of city resources and public time and efforts.

Recommendations:

- **#12** Create internal citywide web-based management system for public involvement contacts.
- **#13** Better coordinate diverse stakeholder contacts and relationship building efforts with community organizations and media.
- #14 Coordinate with Office of Affirmative Action's Citywide Diversity Development Coordinating Committee to diversify public involvement efforts.

PROCESS DESIGN

8. Effective and flexible process design and implementation

Public involvement processes and techniques should be well-designed, appropriately fit the scope, character, and impact of the policy or project, and be able to adapt to changing needs and issues as a process moves forward.

Recommendations:

- **#15** Require City bureaus to develop formal written PI policies that implement PI principles.
- #16 Refine and implement the biennial budget outreach process as the first early involvement step that gives the public information about the bureaus' upcoming projects for the year.
- **#17** Require written PI plans for certain types of major capital, policy and planning projects.
- **#18** Develop processes and guidelines by which bureaus should design, direct, implement, provide feedback and evaluate public involvement processes for individual projects.

9. Ongoing communication and dialogue

City decision makers and staff should establish clear, understandable and ongoing communication and dialogue with the public and with formal groups in the community.

Recommendations:

- **#19** Create a position of Public Information Officer to coordinate inter-bureau development of citywide communication and media relations.
- **#20** Develop policies and a system for improving the quality, accessibility and transparency of public information, including addressing the digital divide.
- #21 Better utilize existing community resources for project outreach.

10. Diversity and accessibility

Culturally appropriate and effective strategies and techniques should be used to reach out to and involve constituencies traditionally under-represented in the community – for example, people of color, immigrants and refugees, youth, people with low incomes, seniors and people with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- #22 Expand efforts to make all public involvement events accessible to people with disabilities, seniors and other constituency groups. Require Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accessibility for all City public involvement events.
- #23 Work with the Purchasing Bureau to eliminate barriers for Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses to access professional, technical and expert contracts for public involvement and information services.
- **#24** Improve accessibility of childcare services at key public involvement events to expand participation of families with children in City public involvement processes.
- **#25** Expand language translation and interpretation accessibility of City information.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

11. Transparency of governance and processes

The public policy decision making process should be accessible, open, honest and understandable. Public participants should receive the information they need to participate effectively.

Recommendations:

- #27 Clearly state and incorporate responsibility for the development and implementation of public involvement plans in bureau employee position descriptions.
- **#28** Include in formal personnel reviews for bureau directors, managers, and staff an evaluation of the individuals support for and compliance with public involvement principles.
- #29 Require bureau directors to provide to the City Council annual progress reports on their bureau's efforts to improve public involvement performance and efforts to implement these proposals.
- **#30** Utilize the Ombudsman Office to respond to specific public concerns about public involvement implementation by city bureaus.
- **#31** Documentation of public involvement actions and outcomes to accompany all new ordinances presented for City Council consideration.
- #32 Establish a standing Public Involvement Advisory Commission to advise bureaus and hold the City accountable to adopted public involvement principles and guidelines. Create a Public Involvement position to adequately staff the Commission, among other duties.

12. Accountability

City elected officials, decision makers and staff must be accountable for following these governance and public involvement principles.

Recommendations:

- **#33** Establish consistent policies and processes for responding to formal public records requests.
- #34 Develop clear criteria for putting items on the City Council's consent agenda—both routine and "emergency" ordinances—and provide a summary statement backup information available to the public.
- #35 Develop a more user-friendly system for providing public access to complex policy, planning and capital project related documentation.

13. Evaluation

Mechanisms must be in place to allow ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of how well city elected officials, decision makers and staff follow these principles when developing and implementing public policies, projects and services, and the effectiveness of individual public involvement processes.

Recommendations:

- **#36** Implement regular evaluation of public involvement processes by bureaus.
- #37 Review bureau compliance with public involvement principles and requirements through formal performance and management audits.
- **#38** Establish peer review of bureau public involvement plans by public involvement staff.