Citywide Public Involvement Standards Taskforce
Summary of Feb. 25 public workshop comments
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These are public comments from both large group and small group discussions at Tuesday, February 25, 2003 public workshop to initiate this taskforce dialogue on developing citywide standards for City of Portland public involvement efforts.

The questions were:
1. What would successful public involvement look like? - *Large group question (80+ participants)*
2. *If this taskforce could accomplish/change one thing, what should it be? - Small group question #1 (57 participants).*

Summary of key themes:
1. Create minimum citywide public involvement standards.
2. Improve transparency, access to information, how decisions made.
3. Improve City respect for public and City staff opinions, PI process.
4. Utilize electronic technologies to improve citizen participation.
5. Improve communication strategies for public involvement notifications.
6. Accountability of participants in public involvement processes.
7. Engage public at earliest point in planning processes.
8. Clear expectation and description of role of citizens, staff, consultants.
9. Increase neighborhood role in land use processes.
10. Improve outreach efforts for minority constituencies.
11. Expand outreach efforts beyond Citizen Advisory Groups, Neigh Assocs.
12. Use consensus as a decision making process.
13. ONI coordinate City public involvement efforts.
14. Expand skills training on public involvement for staff and public.
15. Provide adequate funding and resources for public involvement.
16. Ensure flexibility of standards to fit unique circumstances of projects.
17. All capital improvement projects should have public involvement process.
18. Improve inter-governmental dialogue/partnership on public involvement.
19. Include public involvement program in administrators' performance review.
20. Reinstate the neighborhood needs assessment program.
21. Create Citizen Advisory Committees for bureau, capital & planning projects
22. Clearly define stakeholders for each public involvement effort.
23. Expand dialogue between Business and Neighborhood Associations.
24. Improve accessibility for people with special needs at PI events.
25. Hold City Council meetings in the evenings.
26. Create special public invovlement process for issues with citywide impact.
27. Provide more time for public comment periods.
28. Other values/principles ideas for City public involvement efforts.

Raw data of comments given by common categories:

Create minimum citywide public involvement standards
- Create a predictable process for all parties involved that is standardized across all bureaus.
- Have a common checklist for public involvement processes, predictable.
- Uniformity in approach to PI, not a cookie-cutter policy, but value-based.
- Establish minimum standards to be met for any initiative before proceeding, minimum standards which should serve as a foundation to go further.
- Create Standards that all Bureaus buy into (Minimum Standards)
- Set Standards - a framework for an appropriate process w/ essential elements; generic enough for a multi-use working model.
- City Bureaus should hone guideline, which are clear, and well-written.
- The current city ordnances should be used as a springboard to figure out a way to have all the players involved use one standard.
- Make Public Involvement the way the City does business.
- Raise internal regard for authentic citizen involvement
- Development of protocol that public involvement process has to happen.
- Minimum Standards (goals) for process
- Uniformity among city bureaus
- Common strategies for implementation
- Provide consistency

Improve transparency, access to information, how decisions made
- Need to understand the system/players: Citizens and many city staff don't know what many city bureaus do. They also often don't know how bureaus interact with other city/county/state/federal agencies, or non-profits.
- Closing the loop: Citizens often participate and then never hear what happened with the project or policy. Citizens want to know that they've been heard and the effect of their input. Sometimes the outcomes don't reflect what they were told in the process. Let people know the results.
- Allow for minority reports in all project planning and involvement efforts.
- Closing the loop- feedback to committee as to why or why not their recommendations were accepted/rejected.
- Close the loop, make decision making more transparent.
- Unveil process of alternatives, scenarios providing technical disclosure.
- Citizens lack the technical knowledge to engage city, or make change.
- Citizens disempowered by force of technical knowledge.
- Make technical explanations more accessible to public.
- Transparency (Clarify Restraints, have Candor)
- What Info goes out?
- What is done with Incoming Info?
- Who will make decisions, who will advise?
- Transparency of issues (agenda is not easy to reference by issue)
- Transparency--open up process, legitimize participation.
- Transparency/legitimacy.

Improve City respect for public and City staff opinions, PI process

- Need for mutual understanding: Citizens and city staff need to better understand where the other is coming from. Citizens need to gain a better understanding of what bureaus do and the constraints and opportunities under which they operate. Bureau workers need to gain a better under-standing of what citizens care about and how to work with them. (Despite city bashing at the meeting, there are examples of good process.)
- Create a culture that embraces public involvement for all the public within the city bureaus and their staff.
- A non-dismissive attitude on the part of administrators & elected officials.
- Use non-abusive language by City staff.
- City staff should not be able to override authority of public, citizen advisory groups, neighborhood associations.
- Do not allow city staff on Citizen Advisory Groups or Neighborhood Associations. They bring a bias as staff.
- Initiate a presumption of citizen intelligence by public administrators and elected officials.
- Citizen activsts sometimes fear giving information due to an adversarial relationship with the city.
- "Good faith" among people implementing the system
- Bureaucracies need to listen to the ordinary citizen.
- Bureaucracies need to be open to alternative opinions.
- Ensure that city employees give top priority to citizen recommendations
- Lived in Portland 30 years and never asked
- Ask the average citizen.

Utilize electronic technologies to improve citizen participation

- Investment in new interactive tools permitting citizens to test alternative scenarios, making technical aspects of any process open for display and opening the process for meaningful debate and discussion based on firm facts or alternative scenario models.
- Investment in new interactive tools to permit the citizen testing of alternative scenarios.
- Complete awareness by everyone of everything going on, on internet.
- Publish on website and elsewhere a pre-approved set of guidelines (checklist) for everyone's interest. This is meant for all city employees, not just the PI staff in bureaus and organizations.
- Limited access/maybe include an online process.

Improve communication strategies for public involvement notifications

- Advertisements in libraries, internet, and local paper(s).
- Use City billing systems, i.e. water/sewer billings, to send notifications of public involvement opportunities.
- City should advertise in Oregonian w/Updates on City Projects.
- Promote continued ongoing communcation between city and public.

❑ Develop citywide communication strategy.

Accountability of participants in public involvement processes
❑ Public involvement procedures need to have force of law that City bureaus need to follow and be held accountable to.
❑ Articulate accountability of city to citizen recommendations, complaints.
❑ Accountability (for statements made by staff or citizens for action.)
❑ Accountability -for ALL Parties Involved.
❑ Accountability by all parties; eliminate the current Us vs. them attitude.
❑ Hold developers accountable to follow-through on their promises.
❑ Provide for two-way accountability.

Engage public at earliest point in planning processes
❑ City/citizens should learn together: Early citizen involvement can help the city staff and citizens learn and develop a common understanding of an issue or project. City staff should help citizens get up to speed just as they would other decision makers.
❑ Early Involvement (Neighborhood vs. City Involvement)
❑ Neighborhoods, business districts, and affected citizens need very early notification of city projects. As soon as it is in the budget, the public involvement process must be addresses and implemented.
❑ Early involvement vs. later: Early involvement is better than later, more superficial involvement. Sometimes people are told to "dream big" then later find out that the decisions had already been made. Be clear at the outset with citizens about when on the project continuum they are becoming involved.
❑ Go to the community early and often.
❑ Start early for all capital improvement projects.
❑ Include public in earliest stages of projects.

Clear expectation and description of role of citizens, staff, consultants
❑ Discriminate between technical and substantive policy decisions and inform citizens of these before any process begins.
❑ Realistic Goals such as "Citizen Input can only be advisory."
❑ Greater candor regarding political realities of what is possible.
❑ Establish parameters for acceptable levels of decision authority group/public will have
❑ Role clarification among coalitions, citizen groups and bureau staff.
❑ Clear Expectations of the Group.
❑ Contractors lean toward their desired outcome.
❑ Consultant role in participation process--who plays the leadership roles?
❑ Actively recruit participants: The City should actively recruit participants in public process. Reach beyond the self-selected people who serve on everything. People other than the regulars, may need incentives. Citizens often have to give up family time and other important activities to participate—they are not being paid. Show them that their involvement will

produce real results. Involve people in the identification of the problem and in designing the process. Overcome apathy and cynicism by showing people that their involvement actually has an impact.

Increase neighborhood role in land use processes
- ❑ Neighborhood control of zoning. Zoning changes shall be agreed upon by consensus with retroactive application of this rule.

Improve outreach efforts for minority constituencies
- ❑ Provide more specific recognition of minority and cultural needs.
- ❑ Recognize language barriers, language techniques when English is a second language.
- ❑ Resource threshold lowered for minority needs.
- ❑ Outreach to targeted audiences most successful.

Expand outreach efforts beyond Citizen Advisory Groups, Neigh Assocs
- ❑ More grass roots citizen involvement n development & economic development (outside of the Neighborhood Association.)
- ❑ Expand citizen participation outside Citizen Advisory Committees
- ❑ Look outside of typical neighborhood Associations; Immigrants don't access Neighborhood Associations.
- ❑ Open up processes beyond neighborhood associations.
- ❑ Outreach to Community-Based Organizations.
- ❑ Create strategies to contact public beyond neighborhood associations.
- ❑ Go to whole Community/Not just neighborhood asso.: Have a strategy that reaches out to the whole community, not just the formal neighborhood association. City staff should reach out to the variety of community groups and interests, not just the formal structures.
- ❑ To ensure that any community involvement process is reflective of the whole community.
- ❑ Do broad, far-reaching outreach reflective of the people who are most impacted.
- ❑ Do more aggressive recruitment to get people involved.

Use consensus as a decision making process
- ❑ Consensus about "What's Fair" & Reasonable.
- ❑ Construct a way to Achieve Consensus so the people who participate own & support the decision of the whole group.
- ❑ Buy-in from all parties involved as necessary.

ONI coordinate City public involvement efforts
- ❑ Public Involvement should be run by ONI, not the Bureaus- to even the playing field, including Development (Reviews/Revenues-?).
- ❑ Bureaus should use ONI for public involvement efforts.

Expand skills training on public involvement for staff and public
- ❑ Provide information to public on how to solve their issues.
- ❑ Require bureau staff to be skilled in public involvement. Provide adequate training and development.
- ❑ Provide training for citizen activists on how city systems work.
- ❑ Increase training on how citizen involvement procedures work.
- ❑ Citizens need help understanding roles and relationships in PI process.

Provide adequate funding and resources for public involvement
- ❑ Strengthen and support health of neighborhoods and business associations will helop good/increased public involvement.
- ❑ Allocate resources (time, expertise, training) for the public process.
- ❑ Money/Funding for process.
- ❑ Small town halls where people can raise their concerns.
- ❑ Bureaus need to committ adequate resources to public involvement.

Ensure flexibility of standards to fit unique circumstances of projects
- ❑ Allow for unconstrained project timelines for situations where more time is needed for adequate public involvement.
- ❑ One size does not fit all situation--ongoing participation with truth.
- ❑ Tailor PI to specifics of the project. Flexibility is needed.

All capital improvement projects should have public involvement process
- ❑ Require PDC to solicit constructive citizen involvement on all projects.
- ❑ Require citizen involvement in all major capital improvement projects.
- ❑ Defining capital improvement projects with fixed dollar amounts

Improve inter-governmental dialogue/partnership on public involvement
- ❑ City needs to advocate for citizen involvement with other public agencies: The City should be an active advocate and think strategically about how to work with other agencies to ensure good public process. On St. John's Bridge, city told citizens to dream big, then ODOT told the citizens what they wanted wasn't possible. The City should have brought ODOT in much earlier.

Include public involvement program in administrators' performance review
- ❑ Making citizen involvement part of each bureau director's annual evaluation to hold these senior officials accountable for how aggressive they've been in including the public in policy decisions.
- ❑ Agency heads need to know that participation is important, part of performance review.

Reinstate the neighborhood needs assessment program
- ❑ What happened to the "Neighborhoods Needs Process"?

Create Citizen Advisory Committees for bureau, capital & planning projects
- ❑ Citizen involvement processes in Norway have a policy of setting up citizen advisory committees and working with the community from the outset of major capital planning processes.
- ❑ Maintan ctizen involvement throughout an entire project in a timely manner. Citzen input needs to be valued.
- ❑ Create ongoing citizen oversight of outreach efforts for each bureau, such as a bureau advisory committee.
- ❑ Create advisory committees for all projects, citizen watchdog type role.
- ❑ Involvement needs to take place beyond public testimony.

Clearly define stakeholders for each public involvement effort
- ❑ Define Stakeholders

Expand dialogue between Business and Neighborhood Associations
- ❑ Bridge divide between Business and Neighborhood Associations

Improve accessibility for people with special needs at PI events
- ❑ Improve accessibility for disabled.

Hold City Council meetings in the evenings
- ❑ Evening Council meetings on significant issues so workers can attend.

Create special public involvement process for issues with citywide impact
- ❑ Separate process for city-wide impact projects.

Provide more time for public comment periods
Only 30 days was provided to respond to a three inch thick document.

Other values/principles ideas for City public involvement efforts
- ❑ Consensus on value of citizen involvement.
- ❑ Ctizen involvement should be valued as a contribution.
- ❑ Values based process--stmulate creativity
- ❑ Erosion of Citizen Involvement: Since the 1970s, citizen involvement has had peaks and valleys. Right now, we seem to be going back to an earlier model in which the City makes the decisions and asks for public comment—"Here are the three options, what do you think?" This is not real involvement.
- ❑ Meausre of success would be the dialogue and its worth and being valued in a process/exchange.
- ❑ Basic purpose of PI is QA process (Quality Control, Qualty Improvement, Quality Assurance)
- ❑ Create a better relationship between citizens and government.
- ❑ Effectively addressing public dissatisfaction
- ❑ Citizen involvement should not be a "clone."

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These are public comments from small group discussions at Tuesday, February 25, 2003 public workshop to initiate this taskforce dialogue on developing citywide standards for City of Portland public involvement efforts.   This will help us identify projects our student interns can examine to identify what works and doesn't work, best practice ideas, etc.

The questions were:
1. Name one project where public involvement went well? Why?
2. Name one project where public involvement did not go well? Why?

Name one project where public involvement went well? Why?

1990 Beaumont Middle School Expansion
❑   Neighborhood Associations were able to run the meetings.

McDonalds Restaurant siting, Bureau of Development Services
❑   SE Hawthorne McDonald's defeated.

Siting of new jail for Dan Noele
❑   Hired consultants to help facilitate process.

Traffic Safety plan, Office of Transportation
❑   All parties worked well together; worked in small group, then took time out for public to refine.

Neighborhood Development sites, Portland Development Commission
❑   Staff was responsive and facilitated the agreement. An architect was hired to expedite the process.

Hollywood/Sandy Plan
❑   Involved citizens in the earliest stages of planning, with experts directly responding to options, allowing citizens to be as constructive as possible; a very hands-on procedure.

Siting of new Fire Stations
❑   Everyone involved had a very clear understanding of expectations from the start, including what was negotiable and what was not. City Staff approached citizens as true partners.

Jack in the Box located in NW

St. John/Lombard Community Plan, Bureau of Planning
- Successful because it was a community neighbor driven process. In 2001 the citizens took over the community involvement process.

Dissolution of politically sensitive bus line, Tri-Met
- Went to community/stakeholders to figure out substitution of service.
- Transparent and involved stakeholders well before public hearings began, allowing transit agency to find private sector replacements for the service.

BES Tanner Creek Restoration, Bureau of Environmental Services
- Genuine consensus building from citizen generated idea.

Area and City Vision Plan Taskforce, Metro, City of Portland BOP?
- 10 year and 20 year City vision plan--Metro wide vision

Citizen Involvement Handbook, Office of Neighborhood Involvement
- Driven by coalition chairs, authored by both neighborhoods represented through coalitions and reps from city bureaus/agencies.

Hawthorne Streetscape Plan, Office of Transportation
- Good example of public involvement.

Capital Highway Transportation Plan, Office of Transportation
- Good example of public involvement.

Burnside Transportation Plan, Office of Transportation
- Good example of public involvement.

Belmont Livability and Zoning, Bureau of Planning?
- All stakeholders at the table as soon as problem identified. (Stakeholders included: neighborhoods, business associations, renters, real estate professionals, developers, respective bureaus, commercial and residential property owners.)
- Used a collaborative process to change zoning.

Civic Stadium Good Neighbor Agreement, Bureau of Planning, NWNW ?
- Three neighborhood and bureau signatories to agree and required in order to avoid conflict of interest charge.

I-205/Light Rail, Tri-Met
- Lots of committees and opportunities for participation.

Independent Police Review Board
❑ Ongoing, regular meeting with City Council on the protocol established

Westmoreland Park Master Plan, Parks and Recreation
❑ Parks met with SMILE ahead of time to review the proposed public involvement plan and worked with SMILE to determine who would participate on the citizens advisory committee. There has been good communication during the process between the City and SMILE. The process has included public open house events and a survey of the surrounding community. Everything is available on the project website, including the survey results.

Name one project where public involvement did not go well? Why?

St. Johns, Condominium Siting & Zoning, Bureau of Development Services
❑ Involvement between Neighborhood Association & local bureau, regarding a candid discussion about 'trade-offs', which resulted n the Neighborhood Association flings a written complaint.

"Drug Free" boundary expansion, Bureau of Police?
❑ 30-day notice was ignored by the Mayor's office, citizens objected to short timeline, called auditors who wouldn't cross Mayor, despite enforceability.

North Macadam, Portland Development Commission
❑ No clear cut goals or responsibilities.

Lents Urban Renewal Project, Portland Development Commission

NW transportation and parking structure plan, Bureau of Planning
❑ Didn't involve enough citizens.

Fire Station siting, Bureau of Fire and Rescue
❑ Fire station built in a place where Neighborhood Association wanted it, but it compromises response times; didn't assert expertise; may not have included enough people; questionable evaluation criteria.

SW Community Plan/Community Center
❑ The land selected by City Council or Park Bureau but should have come through Neighborhood Association.

BES Tanner Creek Restoration, Bureau of Environmental Services
❑ Not constrained, no funding was taken into account so bad implementation.

OHSU-North Macadam tram, Council directed?
❑ City dismissive of a public involvement process.

- The recent meeting on the OHSU Tram. The City has selected four design firms. Citizens were invited to attend presentations by each firm. Citizens were not allowed to ask questions about the tram or their approach. People took time out of their evenings to attend thinking they would get to talk about the project. They were disappointed.

Ice Rink project, Pioneer Courthouse Square, Inc.
- Backers keep changing rules of debate.
- No clear groundrules upfront.

Dog-off leash areas, Parks and Recreation
- Communication depleted over time.

Mt. Tabor Reservoir, Bureau of Water Works
- The timing was not conducive for a comprehensive public process.
- No public process.
- Cultural difference/divide.
- The project lacked commitment to get input from citizens. City responded negatively to having public input.

Port of Portland
- Issue of transportation and a related quasi-governmental entity not respecting the process of listening to the residents and the city's representatives.

Johnson Creek Blvd., Office of Transportation
- City came by with a planned project and they had inflexible goals with no citizen involvement input.

City Budget Process, Office of Management and Finance
- St. Johns organized a group of people to look through the budget and thought about where to make cuts. Unfortunately, they were not given line item information on what things cost and the implications of cuts (e.g. cutting parking enforcement would reduce revenue). People came away feeling that the City had already made the decisions.

Other examples with no project name:
- Transportation process where consultant wound up running meetings and served as a central focus, not allowing citizens advisory group to gel and get involved in the process.
- Nonprofit board's inability to effectively deal with the public process because public agency kept shifting information.
- Ineffectiveness of productive brainstorming of a major public works project because public agency failed to make clear budget constraints.
- Unclear communication between neighborhood and public agency.