

Northwest/Southwest Neighborhood Associations Constituent Meeting

Public Involvement Task Force

June 3, 2003, City Hall, Council Chambers

Attendance: Don MacGillivray, Charles Shi, Dave Johnston, Dixie Johnston, Julie Odell, Susan Hartnett, Jeff Love, Jerry Powell, Frank Dixon, Sy Kornbrodt

Facilitator: Frank Dixon

Note Taker: Sy Kornbrodt

Hosts: Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.
Neighbors West/Northwest

Top priority issues

The NW/SW meeting was one of the few gatherings that elected to prioritize issues brainstormed. Each person used color dots to vote for their top three issues.

- ❑ Create a centralized web based calendar of City public involvement events and timelines. Put staff contact info on web. (6)
- ❑ Implement standard evaluation process. Provide evaluations of public involvement efforts and reports to identify areas of strengths, weaknesses and trends. (6)
- ❑ Bring back the needs assessment. It has its +/-'s. (3)
- ❑ Post bureau organizational flow charts on web. (2)
- ❑ Post bureau action lists on web. (2)

Summary of brainstorm ideas

Comments are organized into categories of themes that mirror the workgroup topics the Public Involvement Taskforce will be working on.

Process note: Listings are not in order of priority.

Process Design and implementation

- Provide early notification to Neighborhood Associations about changes that might affect the area, land use issues. Especially projects that might be controversial. Too many decisions are made by bureaus before the plan goes to the public.
- City needs to do outreach on issues they know will be of concern to Neighborhood Associations and the general public.
- Provide standard procedures for how public can participate and make comments.
- Bring back the Neighborhood Needs Assessment. In the past Neighborhood Associations prioritized a needs list for bureau projects. Discontinued mid-90's.
- City should not rely on Neighborhood Associations to do their outreach. They are not provided enough resources to reach all residents in most associations.

- Provide more time during the budget process for public to research and understand complex budgets.
- Create process for public involvement for needs assessments on major projects.
- Neighborhood Association boundaries do not mesh with many bureau's geographical maps. Neighborhood boundary system not understood by many, people get confused. Advocate for using ONI acknowledged neighborhood association boundaries.
- Some feel Bureau of Development Services land use hearing notification form and process is still very complex and complicated for many. Others tends to think its ok.
- Define types of capital, policy, planning projects by categories so that public can have a template to understand bigger picture of City decision-making structure and strategy.
- Provide the following standard information about all projects:
 - Description of project.
 - Decision-making timeline and length through project completion.
 - What type of project is it? Capital, policy, planning, etc. See above bullet.
 - Be honest if it is public information vs. public involvement, etc.
 - What is the estimated project budget?

Education and skills training

- Provide more public education on City budgeting process and how to get involved during budget season.
- Provide education to public on State and Metro citizen involvement processes.
- Provide easy-to-access overview of where to start when person needs information.

Accountability and transparency

- Create standard evaluation process for all public involvement projects.
- Citizen Budget Advisory Committees and other Advisory Committees have become support groups for agencies with minimal authority and effectiveness. Have lost focus on purpose to identify issues, solutions and challenge bureau practices.
- Projects with major impacts to neighborhoods must be related to the City comprehensive plan.

Communication

- Improvement of City web sites so public can go to specific interests and send out notices of new postings, with a flow chart.
- Utilize web technologies more effectively.
- Use www.google.com as a search engine or do a better job at using meta tags for searches.
- Use secure web sites for access to files, surveys, voting, polling, etc.
- Apartment house managers are a good resource for getting out newsletters.
- Direct mailings to all residents, simple post cards, for key projects.
- Expand use of door-to-door campaigns. Most effective outreach strategy.
- Provide summaries of documents, or large documents, in hard copy. Electronic access does not work for everyone.
 - Provide web access to bureau organizational flow charts.
 - Provide web access to bureau staff lists or lead staff contacts by project.

- Provide web access to bureau project action lists and timelines for decision-making. Include direct links for public comment.
- Neighborhood Associations do not have enough money to communicate to all residents and potential members.

Other issues and challenges:

- City's public involvement efforts have lost credibility with Neighborhood Associations.
- Focus PI Taskforce effort on the many unpublicized anonymous administrative decision-making processes.
- Commission form of government leads to differences between bureau, department and Council public involvement processes. Makes difficult for public to understand.
- City imposes itself on neighborhoods for the greater good.
- Many Neighborhood Associations are too large by geography and population. Need to be smaller scale.
- K.I.S.S. – Keep it Simple Stupid!, volunteer time is valuable.
- Want assurances the work of Public Involvement Taskforce will be taken seriously and is credible.