



# **Public Involvement Task Force Report: A Strategic Plan for Improving Public Involvement in the City of Portland**

**October 2006**

Office of Neighborhood Involvement  
City of Portland

This summary report was completed after the PITF discontinued meeting.  
It has not been formally approved by the PITF members.

For more information on the Public Involvement Task Force go to:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=29118>

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

In the Spring of 2003, Commissioner Jim Francesconi commissioned the Public Involvement Standards Task Force (PITF) to review and revise, as appropriate, the City's adopted Public Involvement Principles and identify gaps and inconsistencies in the implementation of the City government's public involvement processes. Supported by Commissioners Dan Saltzman and Randy Leonard, the PITF was charged with recommending a consistent set of standards for public involvement processes across City bureaus that are in accordance with the Public Involvement Principles, and take into account the needs of City staff and a diverse set of public interests.

Although it has been demonstrated that the City of Portland has relatively high rates of civic involvement and opportunities to participate in government decision making, public involvement principles and processes are not clearly codified in a way that causes their consistent implementation across City government. While the City has successfully implemented several public involvement processes, such as the Albina Community Plan, the Hollywood-Sandy Boulevard planning process and Parks and Recreation skate park siting, there have also been several high profile examples that were not a success, such as the Mt. Tabor Reservoirs, the Holocaust Memorial, Northwest District Plan, and the Southwest Community Plan.

In 1996, the City Council adopted a set of general public involvement principles by resolution. Resolutions, in general, are not enforceable, and this resolution, in particular, has had little effect on the operations of city government. Other attempts at guidance and regulation for citizen involvement have included a Citizen Involvement Chapter in Portland's Comprehensive Plan, a 1996 review of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, and a few adopted planning documents, such as the Southwest Community Plan. Some City bureaus, such as the Bureau of Environmental Services and Parks and Recreation, have written public involvement policies while other bureaus rely on informal practices transmitted through on-the-job experience.

This hodge-podge of administrative effort does not provide the kind of comprehensive guidance critical to effective and consistent engagement of the public in government affairs. The effect of this is felt in the community when engagement activities vary dramatically from one project or bureau to the next. Confusion among participants about expectations for citizen involvement can quickly derail the process. Staff feels the effect when it is unclear from project to project what level or process of involvement is required or expected, and they must proceed with hesitancy, caution and, in some cases, fear.

Overall, the uncertainty shortchanges everybody – citizens, staff and elected officials – because civic capacity - or the ability and willingness of people to participate - is reduced. Civic capacity suffers when civic skills learned and relationships carefully built are not transferable from one arena or project to another; roles and capacities are not

clearly understood; critical stakeholders and opportunities for engagement are missed; more staff time and effort is required to build each civic engagement process from scratch; or there is worry for everyone about whether civic engagement will “get done right,” or be fair. The opportunity is created for anger or fear from past mistakes to carry into future processes.

Effective public involvement is essential to good governance and the health of our City because:

- Effective public involvement leads to better decisions.
- Effective public involvement is essential to ensure the legitimacy of government action and public understanding of and support for public policies and programs.
- Effective public involvement increases government accountability by increasing public awareness and understanding of public policy challenges, options, decisions, and results. Greater accountability also sheds light on government operations and reduces the likelihood of mistakes, poor decisions, and abuse of power.

Good quality public involvement leads to better decisions by ensuring that:

- Decisions are based on objective and thorough analysis of all the important factors.
- Community problems and needs are accurately and fully defined.
- The broad range of public goals and priorities affected by proposed policies and projects is identified.
- The full range of policy and project alternatives is identified.
- The likely impacts on the community and opportunities to maximize benefits and minimize the negative impacts are better understood.

## *THE PITF PROCESS*

The PITF was comprised of 32 neighborhood and business association leaders, City staff, public involvement professionals, leaders from communities representing people of color, immigrants and refugees, and others. (See Appendix A for a list of PITF members.) The PITF sought early public input to identify issues and priorities by engaging over 400 people through 12 community forums, bureau staff interviews, and a public survey.

The PITF was then divided into six working groups with focal topics to review community input and then research and draft recommendations. The groups’ topics included 1) principles of public involvement; 2) process design and implementation; 3) diversity and accessibility; 4) accountability and transparency; 5) education and skills training; and 6) communication and access to information.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Neighborhood Involvement has archived a wide range of materials that document the PITF process on the ONI website at:  
<http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=29118>.

## *THE PITF OUTCOME*

Each of the sub-groups brought their work back to the PITF as a whole to work together to find important common themes and overlapping elements that could be shaped into recommendations for public involvement standards. PITF members found, however, that some of the most critical issues, such as process design and early involvement, required deeper and broader community discussions to build consensus on recommendations than could be carried out within the PITF's time frame or forum. Therefore, the members of the PITF agreed to put forward a set of principles with implementing recommendations that can serve as a strategic plan to help foster these future community-wide discussions.

This strategic plan is built upon three foundational concepts: 1) the public should have a voice in the government decisions that affect their lives; 2) governance is a partnership between elected and appointed government officials, government staff and the public; and 3) the key to improving public participation is to develop a culture of city governance that encourages active community participation. Elected officials and other city government decision makers bear a strong responsibility for guarding and nurturing the public partnership; sharing power with the community; and recognizing and protecting diverse interests in the community. The public partnership must also extend to interactions and agreements that affect our community between the City of Portland and other government entities.

The strategic plan proposes that any evaluation of current public involvement practices and setting of future standards should be guided by these foundational concepts. This creates a view of the public as citizens<sup>2</sup> as opposed to clients or consumers, which are secondary roles. Any discussion of standards and guidelines should be based on the strategic plan's core concept of a governance partnership, the proposed 13 principles, and the 38 implementing recommendations summarized below. The principles and recommendations are grouped in four categories for ease of reference as follows:

- ❖ Foundations of Governance;
- ❖ Building Capacity;
- ❖ Process Design; and
- ❖ Government Accountability

## Principles of Good Public Involvement

**Core Concept—Governance as Partnership:** City elected officials and staff must join with citizens to create a partnership in which the public has a real voice in setting the course of the community. Effective involvement of the public is essential to achieve and sustain this partnership.

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<sup>2</sup> The term "citizen" is used here to denote a person actively engaged in civic activity and/or who belongs to a community as opposed to someone who has attained a specific legal status in the United States.

Public involvement processes should communicate the interests and meet the process needs of all participants—in city government and in the community. True “public involvement” requires a very different mindset, approach, and skills than “public information.” Good quality process design and implementation is crucial to the success of any public involvement process.

The following principles will help achieve this partnership. These principles set out a public involvement “bill of rights” and define what citizens should expect from city elected officials and city government staff. Portland’s elected city officials and city staff should follow the spirit and ethics laid out in these principles and engage the public in a true governance partnership to create, develop, implement, and evaluate legislative and administrative decisions and actions in our City. City elected officials and city staff must be accountable for the implementation of these principles.

## *FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE*

1. **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. **Collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approach:** City government/community partnerships consistently should 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 PITF governance partnership and Public Involvement (PI) Principles.
- #2 Rewrite the Comprehensive Plan Section 9 Citizen Involvement to reflect the governance partnership and PI Principles.
- #3 Amend the City Charter to support the governance partnership and 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.

## *BUILDING CAPACITY*

**5. Capacity 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. Capacity within the Community:** Portland’s nationally-recognized formal neighborhood and business association system is a cornerstone of public involvement and a primary channel for citizen input and involvement in our City. It should play a pivotal role in creating opportunities for skill building and networking among both neighborhood/business association leaders and leaders of other community-based organizations.

**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 an 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.

- #26 Engage youth and young adults in civic activities through community-based service learning.

## *GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY*

**11. Accountability:** City elected officials, decision-makers and staff must be accountable for following these governance and public involvement principles.

**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 Require 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. 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:**

- #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 make a summary statement and 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 PI plans by PI staff.

## **Next Steps**

The principles and recommendations put forward by the PITF closely parallel Mayor Potter’s vision for community governance. Some of the recommendations in the following report have already been or are being discussed by various teams that are part of Mayor Tom Potter’s Bureau Innovation Project (BIP). The PITF sees this strategic plan as providing a critical large-scale overview of public involvement issues that can inform and organize the recommendations being pursued by the various BIP Teams. In fact, the BIP Teams can provide the kind of focused discussion that the PITF envisioned as carrying forward the PITF’s recommendations. As each recommendation is pursued and/or resolved, the PITF’s strategic plan can continue to be used as an organizing road map that guides the BIP Teams or other discussion forums. The strategic plan shows how each of the individual issues fits into improved public involvement overall.

The first step is for the City Council to adopt the PITF’s strategic plan as a guiding document. If the City Council is unable or unwilling to adopt the PITF strategic plan in its entirety, the PITF recommends that it adopt, at minimum, the following top six core recommendations to institutionalize public involvement principles and processes in the formal legal framework of the City:

### ***TOP SIX CORE RECOMMENDATIONS***

1. Adopt in ordinance the core concept of “governance as partnership” and the 13 Public Involvement Principles.
2. Require City bureaus to develop formal written public involvement policies that implement the adopted public involvement principles. Develop a model policy to serve as a framework.
3. Require written public involvement plans for certain types of major capital, policy and planning projects.
4. 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 to advise bureaus and hold the City accountable to adopted public involvement principles, standards and guidelines. Create a Public Involvement Support position to adequately staff the Commission and issue an annual report, among other duties.

The members of the PITF hope that this document will serve as a practical tool for implementing long range activities by the City of Portland to improve its practices of involving the public in government decision-making processes. We thank the City Council for the opportunity to discuss these issues and make recommendations, and we sincerely hope the City Council will see our efforts as helpful in outlining a way forward.

Respectfully submitted,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

*Core Concept: Governance as Partnership*..... 2

FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE ..... 2

*Principle 1. A culture of listening, hearing and acting on public input* ..... 2

*Principle 2. A collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approach* ..... **3**

*Principle 3. Early involvement* ..... 3

*Principle 4. Inclusiveness* ..... 3

BUILDING CAPACITY ..... **7**

*Principle 5. Build the capacity for partnership within City government* ..... **7**

*Principle 6. Build the capacity for partnership within the community.*..... 10

*Principle 7. Coordination and consistency* ..... 14

PROCESS DESIGN..... 18

*Principle 8. Effective and flexible process design and implementation* ..... 18

*Principle 9. Ongoing communication and dialogue*..... 24

*Principle 10. Diversity and accessibility*..... 28

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY ..... 35

*Principle 11. Accountability* ..... 35

*Principle 12. Transparency of governance and processes* ..... 39

*Principle 13. Evaluation* ..... 41

APPENDIX A: PITF Members ..... 42

APPENDIX B: PITF Principles of Good Public Involvement ..... 44

# Public Involvement Task Force Report: A Strategic Plan for Improving Public Involvement in the City of Portland

## INTRODUCTION

The PITF's strategic plan for improving public involvement in the City of Portland begins with a summary of the principles that are the foundation for the implementing recommendations. (See Appendix B for the list of principles.) The 13 Principles of Good Public Involvement support the core concept that governance must be approached as a partnership between elected and appointed officials, government staff and the public. Each group has both unique and inter-related roles to play in the democratic process that must be clarified, nurtured and sustained to create a functional system. According to the charge given the PITF, the focus of this report is largely on the role of bureau staff although it also attempts to address critical intersections with the roles of elected officials and the public.

The body of this report expands on the principles and includes 38 implementing recommendations. Some individual recommendations that were considered highly important but not resolvable in the time frame and format of the PITF include boxed commentary that helps explain what PITF members were thinking and striving for and presents different points of view where agreement was not reached. This commentary is included to help guide and facilitate future discussions of the development of public involvement standards.

The 13 principles and the related recommendations are grouped into the following four categories:

<u>Foundations of Governance Building</u> 1) Culture or listening, hearing, and acting on public input. 2) Collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approach. 3) Early Involvement. 4) Inclusiveness.	<u>Building Capacity</u> 5) Capacity within city government. 6) Capacity within the community. 7) Coordination and consistency.
<u>Process Design</u> 8) Effective and flexible process design and implementation. 9) Ongoing communication and dialogue. 10) Diversity and accessibility.	<u>Government Accountability</u> 11) Accountability 12) Transparency of governance and processes 13) Evaluation

***Core Concept: Governance as Partnership***

City elected officials and staff must join with citizens to create a partnership in which the public has a real voice in setting the course of the community. Effective involvement of the public is essential to achieve and sustain this partnership.

Public involvement processes should communicate the interests and meet the process needs of all participants—in city government and in the community. True “public involvement” requires a very different mindset, approach, and skills than “public information.” Good quality process design and implementation is crucial to the success of any public involvement process.

The 13 principles set out in this report will help achieve this governance partnership. These principles set out a public involvement “bill of rights” and define what citizens should expect from city elected officials and city government staff. Portland’s elected city officials and city staff should follow the spirit and ethics laid out in these principles and engage the public in a true governance partnership to create, develop, implement, and evaluate legislative and administrative decisions and actions in our City. City elected officials and city staff must be accountable for the implementation of these principles.

**FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE**

***Principle 1.***

***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.

To create a culture of listening, hearing, and acting on public input, city government must create a culture that is receptive to working with the community. Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence city government decisions. Elected officials and city staff must listen, hear and act on public input. Public involvement must not simply be an opportunity for public comment, but must be used to identify and respond to the range of community goals and concerns during the creation, development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of public policies and actions.

***Principle 2.***

***A collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approach***

City government/community partnerships consistently should 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.

City government’s use of this approach is essential to reaching the best decisions and for weighing and balancing diverse needs, hopes, and interests in the community. Stakeholders include city bureaus and officials and all implementing bodies as well as the “public”—which includes neighborhood and business associations, other community organizations, and individual citizens.

***Principle 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.

The public should be integrally involved in planning, projects, and policy development, from concept through evaluation and revision. The public should be involved when most likely to be able to affect the outcome. This includes being involved in the setting policy priorities and especially in the formation of city budgets, which drives much of the daily agenda of city government.

***Principle 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.

Community in Portland includes the formal neighborhood and business association structure as well as a wide variety of other groups, organizations, and interests. City elected officials and staff must ensure that groups and interests that are not well-represented within the formal neighborhood and business association structure also have a voice in the development and implementation of public policy, projects and services.

## **Recommendations:**

### **#1 Adopt the governance partnership and Public Involvement (PI) Principles.**

The City Council should adopt, by ordinance, the Public Involvement Task Force's recommended governance partnership and Public Involvement Principles. An ordinance carries the force of law, whereas the current resolution, adopted in 1996, does not. The ordinance should apply to all city government activities.

### **#2 Rewrite the Comprehensive Plan Section 9 Citizen Involvement to reflect the governance partnership and PI Principles.**

The City Council should initiate a rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan Section 9 Citizen Involvement to incorporate the new governance partnership and public involvement principles and process requirements.

The Comprehensive Plan, which is required by state law, establishes a vision for a significant scope of city government activity. The current Section 9 encourages citizen involvement, but the section is very brief, is targeted toward land use decision-making and implementation, and the review and amendment of the Comprehensive Plan. It says little about the purpose and characteristics of good public involvement. The City's Comprehensive Plan should also reflect SB100 Goal One – Citizen Involvement.

The role of the Comprehensive Plan should be clarified. Some say it is narrowly focused on land use decisions, while others say it applies more broadly and sets out a vision for the community that goes beyond land use.

### **#3 Amend the City Charter to support the core concept of a governance partnership and the PI Principles.**

Amend the City Charter to include language that describes and supports the implementation of the core concept of a governance partnership and the public involvement principles and requirements.

Portland's City Charter does not include a section on citizen involvement. Placing citizen involvement principles and requirements in the City Charter will increase their stature and the likelihood that they will be followed, and protect them from future attempts to weaken them.

This should be part of a broad review of Portland's form of government through a Council appointed Charter Review Commission for the purpose of reviewing and strengthening checks and balances and supporting better public involvement and

accountability measures. Consider instituting a regularly scheduled Charter review by a commission similar to Multnomah County's.

#### **#4 Review the composition, role and effectiveness of City boards and commissions and citizen advisory committees.**

The City has numerous boards and advisory committees. Questions have arisen about how effective these boards are at providing oversight of and input into city policy and decision-making processes, how well they represent public concerns and ideas, and how useful their input is to city staff and decision-makers. The City needs to commit to a principle of supporting strong and independent boards, commissions and advisory committees.

#### **#5 Establish stable funding mechanisms for public involvement processes.**

Establish a stable funding mechanism for public involvement processes for both citywide infrastructure needs and to hold bureaus accountable to adequately fund project specific public involvement processes. A common funding model could support: a) a public involvement position; b) a public information position; c) a public involvement advisory committee; d) research and fiscal analysis of task force recommendations; e) implementation costs for citywide public involvement efforts to build the capacity of web tools, diversity best practices, staff and public leadership skills trainings, citywide outreach newsletter, and tabling at community street festivals, among other activities.

**The PITF had a preliminary discussion about these two possible funding models:**

- Administrative overhead funding model:  
Numerous administrative functions in the City are funded through this model in which each bureau follows a funding formula, such as a percentage of budget, that is dedicated to providing specific common administrative support functions.
- Percentage of project budget for public involvement:  
To ensure public involvement is adequately funded, bureaus should be required to dedicate a percentage of project budgets for public involvement processes. This would include major policy, planning, and capital projects as outlined in the Process Design section proposal of the types of projects required to have a public involvement plan.

Currently, the City has no common expectations or criteria for funding levels for public involvement processes for key city policy, planning, and capital improvement projects, in general. The Diversity Workgroup finds the City of Portland historically has not provided adequate funding for public involvement efforts targeting culturally specific communities, in particular.

Several years ago, the Administrative Service Review (ASR) made a systematic review of citywide administrative functions to look for cost saving opportunities. Public involvement was identified as an administrative support function. The ASR suggested that public involvement functions should be funded through an overhead model.

## **BUILDING CAPACITY**

### ***Principle 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.

City government must achieve and maintain a culture that understands, values, and implements effective public involvement. Adequate and ongoing public involvement education and training of city officials and city staff is needed to achieve and maintain this culture.

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **#6 Review the role of ONI and its location in the structure of city government.**

When ONI (then Office of Neighborhood Associations or ONA) was established, its role was to help the community communicate with city government. In recent years, this role has shifted to a greater focus on bureaus' outreach into the community. Additionally, ONI, as a bureau, has become increasingly marginalized. The role of ONI should be developed as a balance between empowering the community to act on its own behalf and communicate with government, and providing bureaus with coordinated public involvement resources, including bringing together staff from various bureaus and providing best practices information and staff training.

ONI's place in the structure of city government has an important effect on its ability to carry out these roles. The current practice of placing a single commissioner over ONI severely limits the agency's ability to advocate for good public involvement in city bureaus that are not under the control of the ONI commissioner. Placing ONI under the Mayor would raise its stature and link it to the Mayor's authority to assign and remove bureaus from commissioners' portfolios. Placing ONI under the City Auditor would provide more independence from the City Council, but may decrease its ability to influence city bureaus.

#### **#7 Develop staff education and training program on best practices and culturally appropriate public involvement skills.**

The practice of public involvement is a constantly evolving and dynamic profession. Both staff with a public involvement role and concerned citizens have identified a need for ongoing training and sharing of ideas in current best practices. Often, project

managers and other staff whose roles are not primarily oriented towards public involvement may have minimal experience with current best practices.

Resources are often limited within individual bureaus to pay for ongoing or advanced training for public involvement staff. Many staff do not have the skills to use emerging web and email tools that can be very effectively with public involvement and information.

Additionally, elected officials and bureau management have consistently identified lack of diverse participation in public involvement efforts as a problem. Many staff are not familiar with the culturally-appropriate skills needed to respond to Portland's increasingly diverse communities.

To address these problems, an ongoing skills training program for staff should be developed on current best practices for public involvement. Cost savings are possible if training or networking opportunities are organized across city government and/or with other government agencies.

Implementation actions could include:

- Utilize peer-to-peer staff led trainings or brown-bag sessions for sharing skills.
- Utilize Citywide Public Involvement Network, currently an informal network of PI staff that infrequently meets, as an organizational structure for bringing staff together.
- Work closely with key project managers to effectively reach all project staff with any public involvement role.
- Create list of City staff with training skills on these topics available to provide advice and technical assistance. Provide release time and compensation rates to train others.
- Dedicate staff to coordinate or manage contracts for training program.

Training content should include:

- Culturally specific skills for effectively engaging diverse community interests.
- Develop electronic skills for using the web and email listserves.
- Database development and management.
- Training in strategic public involvement process design.
- Hold ongoing staff workshops for customer service, public involvement, and public information.
- Training on how to deal with difficult people and conflict resolution.

**Partnerships with existing institutional training programs**

Research collaborative efforts with the following institutions and community efforts such as:

- ❑ International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) has developed a three-tier training program for public involvement professionals including a foundation, advanced, and executives/management series of classes.
- ❑ Collaborate with PSU Hatfield School of Government curriculum on citizen involvement. Have staff attend PSU classes. Follow PDOT model for their transportation systems planning class.
- ❑ ODOT contracted for the development of a series of training modules for use in Oregon that were never utilized. The City would need to contract with developers of each training module, which include facilitation, assessments, evaluations, tools and techniques, and diversity. Each module includes ten trainings over a two year period.
- ❑ Consider a collaborative staff training program with Metro, Tri-Met and county governments for cost efficiencies and capitalize on cross-government networking and relationship building.

**Partnerships with diverse community-based organizations**

Several community organizations of color have advocated they should be utilized and funded to develop popular education models (i.e. culturally-appropriate training that might include alternative models of presentation, such as skits or hands-on projects) to reach diverse constituency groups.

- ❑ Contract with community-based organizations and trainers to provide culturally appropriate skills trainings such as how to use popular education as a model for engaging non-English speaking populations, understanding the City's diversifying demographics, group format and communication styles in different cultures, etc.
- ❑ Collaborate with Multnomah County Capacitation Center.
- ❑ Provide adequate funding for staff training on cultural competency skills building.

Training content could include:

- ❑ Training on surname syntax in multiple languages and database management. This would improve stakeholder database management for individuals with foreign national surnames and spellings.
- ❑ Awareness of changing City demographic trends for broad range of diverse populations.
- ❑ Awareness of unique immigrant and refugee cultural practices when interacting with business and governmental institutions. e.g. unfamiliarity with how public approaches government services in U.S. limits many foreign nationals from approaching our services.

- ❑ Training on culturally appropriate outreach strategies for immigrants and refugees, youth, seniors, communities of color, people with disabilities.

**#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.**

City staff are often unfamiliar with other bureau policies or projects that are underway. This leads to missed opportunities for collaborating on outreach efforts and possible cost savings. Lack of an ongoing staff networking structure makes it difficult to quickly pull staff together when a common policy or technical issue could use dialogue between staff.

An informal network of staff has met on and off over the years; however, without a formal structure and dedicated staff support, the group comes and goes. Such a network could lead to good internal City communication to ensure staff are informed about co-workers' projects and can serve as community ambassadors to answer questions or refer people to the right contacts. Staff have repeatedly identified the value of a such a network, most recently during the Administrative Services Review (ASR).

An ongoing network of citywide public involvement and public information staff should be institutionalized to review and discuss public involvement policies, projects and issues.

The groups would meet on a regular basis for:

- ❑ Peer sharing and training on best practices.
- ❑ Providing overviews and updates on current PI efforts.
- ❑ Identifying opportunities to collaborate and share resources on public information or involvement processes, possibly saving money.
- ❑ Brainstorm technical issues like development and improvements for the web-based calendar, River Renaissance booths at Rose Festival, etc.
- ❑ Develop an intra-net web site for PI staff with one-page summaries on PI projects with overviews and FAQ's.
- ❑ Assist with peer review of bureau public involvement policies.

***Principle 6.***

***Build the capacity for partnership within the community.***

Although the primary focus of the PITF was on how city government can more effectively engage community members, PITF members recognized that community members must have the capacity to participate in public involvement activities. Effective community engagement in government priority setting and decision-making requires building and sustaining strong capacity in the community to ensure citizens can meet the

demands placed on them, from conducting open public meetings properly, to staying abreast of complex issues, to reaching out to diverse groups of neighbors.

Much of the community's capacity to participate is built through Portland's nationally recognized formal neighborhood and business association system, which is a cornerstone of public involvement and a primary channel for citizen input and involvement. While the neighborhood and business association systems are central elements of the structure of civic engagement in Portland, a true understanding of "community" needs to encompass the full range of the groups and interests that serve as focal points for community gathering, deliberation, and engagement. Communities of color and interest-based groups have not always been integrated into the formal system. A high priority for building community capacity is to create meaningful and collaborative networks between the neighborhood/business association system and other community-based groups.

In addition to creating networks, skills-building training has been identified as another high priority by neighborhood and business association leaders as well as community leaders of color. While it seems most practical to develop training programs through the neighborhood/business association system, ONI and most neighborhood coalitions have not had the staff capacity to fulfill even basic contractual obligations to provide leadership training and board orientations due to budget constraints. At the same time, communities of color have long advocated that resources be channeled through their organizations to better achieve culture specific leadership training.

Additional resources are necessary to strengthen the community's capacity to support linkages between the neighborhood and business association structure and other community-based groups; to strengthen the community's capacity to engage in a meaningful partnership with city government; and to strengthen the capacity of communities of color to advocate on their own behalf and develop culture-specific training.

### **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.**

Neighborhood Association leaders are often recruited to take on leadership roles in which they quickly find themselves engaged with complex City issues. They may be unfamiliar or ill equipped to respond in a timely or effective way or to organize others to participate. Their lack of confidence in their advocacy and organizing skills often contributes to burnout and reducing or ending their participation.

Leaders from other community-based organizations, particularly those with diverse or minority constituencies, have similar needs to those of neighborhood association participants. They need training in understanding the City's decision-making processes, advocating for their interests and developing their leadership potential.

A leadership training program, open to the public, should cover basic City processes and advocacy skills so that individuals can be informed and effective advocates for the diverse range of communities engaged with City public involvement efforts.

The program might include understanding City organizational structure, decision-making processes along with leadership skills such as: facilitation, parliamentary procedures, organizational development, building diverse membership and leadership, conflict resolution, how to research an issue, public speaking, basic land use concepts, how to organize a newsletter, email lists, web sites, etc. It should incorporate culturally appropriate training models such as use of popular education to help non-English speaking individuals comprehend issues.

A skills building/leadership training program should be built on the following objectives:

- ❑ Creating partnerships between culturally-specific community-based organizations and existing neighborhood coalition offices.
- ❑ Supporting culturally-specific leadership training opportunities, utilizing popular education models when appropriate.
- ❑ Building capacity of culturally-specific organizations to develop leadership skills and organizational capacity to provide outreach services to City bureaus.

*Program development should include the following components, each of which has unique issues that need to be addressed individually as well as overlapping needs that can be integrated:*

- ❑ ***Neighborhood Association system.*** Adequately fund and expand upon existing neighborhood association oriented trainings that build the skills of volunteers to be effective leaders in their associations. Provide coordination through the Office of Neighborhood Involvement in partnership with the seven neighborhood coalitions and offices and utilize volunteers as peer-to-peer trainers.
- ❑ ***Partnerships with diverse community-based organizations.*** Contract with community-based organizations that can provide culturally appropriate skills training that would effectively engage people of color, youth, people with low-incomes in City public involvement processes. This may incorporate popular education training models.
- ❑ ***Partnerships with existing institutional training programs.*** Research collaborative efforts with the following institutions and community efforts such as:

Portland State University – There are many programs that might be interesting in collaborating. One good example is the PDOT funded transportation system planning classes that have been effective. There are also various research centers, such as the Center for Public Participation, and community planning and development programs that could provide student internships.

Multnomah County Capacitation Center – They have implemented popular education as a tool for effectively engaging immigrants and refugees, which could serve as a model.

The program would require dedicated staff to coordinate or manage contracts. An effective and cost-saving model would incorporate training volunteers for peer-to-peer learning similar to past ONI trainings, the Neighborhood Mediation Program model, or utilizing student interns in partnership with PSU or Ameri-Corp.

**#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.**

Increased relationships, communication and cooperation between the neighborhood and business association systems and other groups and interests within the community will build a stronger and more credible political voice and will help identify priorities that meet a wider range of needs in the community.

Some ideas that were discussed to accomplish this included:

- provide additional resources to the neighborhood and business associations as well as to other groups in the community to help them build stronger capacity to reach out and communicate with community members;
- provide leadership training, strategic planning, and networking and relationship building between groups in the community.

These efforts should be integrated within the existing functions of the neighborhood association and coalition structure to avoid creating a parallel structure. Leaders of color advocating for this proposal support this integration, but emphasize a need to recognize the unique differences and challenges of building the capacity of culturally-specific constituencies.

In addition, a partnership should be established with the Multnomah County Health Department Capacitation Center to learn how it uses popular education as a tool for effectively engaging diverse communities.

**#11 Develop a mechanism for identifying and funding community-identified needs.**

Currently, no formal process or funding support is available by which communities can identify their own local spending priorities and have these priorities formally considered in the city budget planning process. In the past, Portland had the “Neighborhood Needs” process in which neighborhoods could identify the capital improvement projects that they believed would best serve their community. City bureaus considered these requests when building their agency budgets.

Models and options for meeting this need should be explored and a mechanism developed to provide community funding (e.g., community grants, community budget, etc.) and dedicate funds for community-identified needs.

Neighborhood Needs Grant Program: Develop a grant program that provides one-time funding for community-determined projects that improve neighborhood infrastructure (e.g. playground equipment, sidewalk improvements, etc.); initiate community-based service projects as pilot projects; or build organizational capacity for groups to be more effective partners in working with the City. This might meet the same goals of the original Neighborhood Needs Assessment that resulted in small community-based priorities going unfunded. Several Commissioners have expressed strong interest in replicating the Seattle model.

***Principle 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.

Basic infrastructure necessary for effectively involving the public, such as facilitating staff networking, problem-solving, training, database management, and responding to public complaints are not well coordinated. Bureaus are rarely assigned lead responsibility or given clearly assigned authority or responsibility for the coordination of these efforts.

**Recommendations:**

**#12 Create an internal citywide web-based management system for public involvement contacts.**

Individuals are receiving duplicate, outdated, and deceased persons mailings. This creates inefficiencies in printing and distribution costs. The City is not maintaining up-to-date stakeholder lists for organizational leadership and contact information. The City is potentially wasting significant resources as well as inefficiently using staff

resources by employing multiple staff to maintain similar contacts on numerous databases.

Additionally, interested stakeholders have few web-based options to filter email notices by City bureau, project, and geographical region. This leads to email overload.

Emerging web-based technologies and the centralization of Information Technology support at the City lends itself to strategic coordination to use web-based and database management tools that better serve the public at large.

Strategies include:

- ❑ Develop citywide web-based database that all staff can access to provide updated contact info, committee/topic interests, and list management for each record. This would allow for one-time updating of contact info for business and neighborhood associations, community organizations, etc. Metro's database system has resulted in significant cost savings with printing and postage costs.
- ❑ Ensure data security and integrity with passwords and tracking which staff have updated records.
- ❑ Create a staff position for list management and coordination.
- ❑ Integrate the database with existing Portland Online subscription service by having the data live on same SQL server.
- ❑ Allow individuals to filter topics and projects they wish to receive emails or notices mailed through the postal service.
- ❑ Provide web-based archives of bureau email notices.
- ❑ Require notices to include contact information for how to get more information or how to sign up for project/bureau mailing lists.
- ❑ Improve maintenance of bureau databases to remove duplicates, delete people who are deceased or moved away, etc.
- ❑ Create criteria for which types of projects and notices require "snail mail" to be used or at least to supplement email. Require all list databases to split email and "snail mail" address so some who do not have email are not left out of being notified.

### **#13 Better coordinate diverse stakeholder contacts and relationship building efforts with community organizations and media.**

The City is not adequately reaching people of color and other underrepresented groups through institutions in which they trust and to which they relate. Many community constituencies are not familiar with how to access City bureaucracy. People do not see City notices in a diverse range of media. Mainstream newspapers do not reach people of color, youth, etc. The Daily Journal of Commerce is not sufficient for official notice.

Bureau staff needs to develop ongoing relationships with diverse community organizations, media, and leadership. City needs to diversify its base of community contacts that can be readily accessible when a bureau needs to reach out to a specific community. Developing this contact base is a critical project for both the Public Information and Public Involvement positions.

ONI has begun compiling a list of nearly 600 community organizations of people of color, and low-income, youth, senior, immigrant and refugee, and gay, lesbian, bi and trans groups. This list could be posted on City intranet or could be accessible through a web-based database.

Other strategies include:

- ❑ Assist and/or coordinate bureau efforts to build relationships when appropriate with diverse community organizations, media, ethnic minority faith organizations and chambers of commerce, etc.
- ❑ Maintain a database of diverse community organizations, media and stakeholder lists for all City PI staff and project managers.
- ❑ Identify and maintain lists of community meeting spaces in locations that are accessible and trusted by diverse constituency groups.
- ❑ Assist with linking City staff with community leaders when appropriate for specific issues or projects.
- ❑ Build media relations and encourage bureaus to place ad copy in the *Skanner*, *Asian Reporter*, *Observer*, *Hispanic News*, etc. At a minimum require all press releases to be sent to a common list of diverse media.
- ❑ Provide GIS analysis of neighborhood demographics to assist bureaus with identifying what geographic-based projects may need to utilize culturally appropriate outreach strategies.
- ❑ Provide media notice, both earned and paid, in a wide variety of community and neighborhood newspapers read by a broad sampling of Portland demographic groups including youth, people of color, immigrants, refugees, and seniors.

#### **#14 Coordinate with Office of Affirmative Action’s Citywide Diversity Development Coordinating Committee to diversify public involvement efforts.**

The City lacks any coordinated effort to improve public involvement efforts to reach diverse constituencies. While there have been some successes, these have been isolated. The City is missing opportunities to share resources and coordinate efforts that we believe would lead to more effective engagement of Portland’s rapidly diversifying populations. Public involvement staff needs to coordinate with the City of Portland’s Citywide Diversity Development Coordinating Committee (CDDCC), led by the Office of Affirmative Action on accessibility/adaptability issues.

The CDDCC’s adopted work plan and bureau-adopted work plans can provide a template from which to evaluate the City’s commitment and progress on diversifying

participation in public involvement efforts. Many of the ideas listed in this section are in the Committee's adopted work plan or Diversity Development Strategic Initiative, which was developed in the fall of 2002.

The recommended strategy is to organize a citywide Public Involvement Advisory Committee that could advise City bureaus on developing and implementing citywide and bureau diversity work plans related to public involvement. This would be coordinated by the proposed public involvement position.

Below are some of the ideas from the CDDCC Diversity Development Strategic Initiative:

- ❑ Assess bureau public involvement policies for ensuring public involvement strategies are accessible to diverse constituencies, e.g. meeting spaces are accessible to people with disabilities, allocation of resources for translation or interpretation when appropriate, building diverse stakeholder lists, etc.
- ❑ Encourage bureaus to publicize bureau diversity goals and/or principles in bureau newsletters and brochures, post on the web and provide copies to staff with frequent access to the public.
- ❑ Seek customer/stakeholder/citizen feedback on bureau diversity and affirmative action efforts. Utilize Bureau Advisory Committees if in existence.
- ❑ Include commitment to culturally competent community relations in bureau mission statements.
- ❑ Require new staff orientations to include overview of bureau public involvement policies, guidelines and practices to emphasize bureau expectations for working with diverse constituencies.
- ❑ Develop recruitment strategies for diverse representation on City Boards, Commissions and Committees. Review recruitment practices for biases in outreach efforts with diverse constituencies. Set bureau goals for recruiting a diverse range of community participants. Collect and track data on representation and involvement of diverse constituencies on these committees and other public involvement efforts.

## PROCESS DESIGN

### *Principle 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.

City bureau public involvement processes can be inconsistent. This creates confusion for the public and lack of support for bureaus when citizens question the process. Bureaus and the public do not have a basic framework for developing, implementing, and evaluating public involvement processes to encourage consistency and reliability. Also a lack of connection between project design and public involvement process design exists.

Currently, there is no commonly-adopted citywide process to determine which projects, policies, and decisions need public involvement and/or public information or what type of involvement at what stage is appropriate for different projects.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **#15 Require City bureaus to develop formal written PI policies that implement PI principles.**

Require, by ordinance, that every city bureau develop written public involvement policies and strategies that define their vision and goals for how their bureau will be consistent with and implement the public involvement principles. The policies will vary according to the type of work and needs of individual bureaus and must be available to the public.

A model public involvement policy should be created to help guide bureaus in developing their bureau-specific policies. The Metro “Project Public Involvement Plan Form”, and City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and Portland Parks and Recreation bureau policies offer some good ideas. The proposed Public Involvement Advisory Commission should review draft public involvement policies to help ensure the policies are consistent with the principles and are likely to be effective. Draft policies should also receive peer review by public involvement staff from other bureaus. Additional useful review may come from ONI and the public. The purpose is not to create rigid, cookie-cutter policies, but rather to have each bureau fashion a policy that is appropriate to the nature of its work and promotes the implementation of the principles.

Policies would outline how each bureau addresses each of the following:

- Types of the bureau’s activities requiring public involvement;
- Range of public involvement strategies appropriate given the work of the bureau;
- General guidelines that will guide bureau staff in the development of project-specific public involvement plans;
- Implementation and evaluation strategies.

**#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.**

Citizens do not feel they have enough early information or involvement to provide informed input on decisions about project prioritization, funding, and levels of public involvement in implementation. The budget process is the first step for project implementation. There should be a method for involving citizens in the budget process that provides for more input than simply voting on the prioritization of pre-selected projects.

Continue to refine and implement the biennial budget outreach process – Your City, Your Choice – which includes community forums with bureau directors and Council prior to development of the Proposed Budget.

Other ideas for the Biannual Budget Process include:

- Community budget assessment dialogues: Organize a joint staff and volunteer task force to research and make recommendations for improving public participation in the City bi-annual budget process. Develop a mechanism by which the public is included in the Bureaus’ discussions about upcoming budget recommendations to the City Council before bureaus submit their plans to the Mayor and Council.
- Re-evaluate the use of Bureau Advisory Committees (BACs). While BACs were not as effective as some hoped in their past incarnation, many task force members felt that they could be improved. Some issues identified include: 1) bureaus took control of community member appointments – appointments should be made by the community being represented; 2) there needs to be a system for holding community organizations accountable for the people they send to be representatives and for representatives to be accountable for bringing back information to the community; and 3) neighborhood needs should have a substantive place in budget discussions – the perception is that bureaus only chose neighborhood-designated projects if they were already on bureaus’ project lists.
- Bureaus should maintain a calendar to be updated annually that informs citizens about the projects that are being funded and the level of public involvement for each project.

**#17 Require written PI plans for certain types of major capital, policy and planning projects.**

Require, by ordinance, written formal public involvement plans for certain types of city projects and policies, such as large capital improvement projects, and policies and projects that either involve high levels of public spending or have significant impacts in the community.

Public involvement plans should follow the guidelines set out in Recommendation #18 below.

**#18 Develop processes and guidelines by which bureaus should design, direct, implement, provide feedback and evaluate public involvement processes for individual projects.**

Public involvement plans should address these following stages:

- Conceptual design, which includes directing a project into a public involvement or public information process
- Technical process design
- Implementation
- Feedback to the community
- Follow-up evaluation

**A. Conceptual Design**

Public involvement processes often are developed after an overall project design has already been created. Public involvement staff are often disconnected from the primary staff leading the project rather than being closely integrated. Community members often feel that the important decisions already have been made and that public involvement is tacked on as an afterthought.

A project conceptualization stage should be included to identify possible public involvement issues and needs. This process should address the public goals for the project, public values impacted by the project, and possible stakeholders. Public involvement should be integrated into the project design from the outset. Project timelines should be developed from the beginning with an understanding of how much time it will take to involve the public.

Guidelines need to be developed that will help staff identify the types of activities that require public involvement and to determine extent and timing of the public involvement process for the overall project. Some considerations include:

- Priority level of project
- Project duration
- Goals of involvement

- ❑ Level of impact
- ❑ Stakeholder analysis

The conceptual design stage should help staff determine whether to direct the project into a public involvement or public information process.

Other possible outcomes of the conceptual design stage:

- Develop processes and guidelines by which to direct a project into a public involvement or public information process, including a checklist to guide bureaus in evaluating the appropriate level and nature of public involvement processes.
- Develop a mechanism by which to provide early notification and that includes public input into Bureau discussions about major CIP proposals and upcoming budget recommendations to the City Council *before* Bureaus submit their requested budgets to the Mayor and Council.
- Develop a Matrix to guide determination of types and timing of public involvement. (A good example is the Warringah (Australia) Community Consultation Matrix and Community Consultation Toolkit ([http://www.warringah.nsw.gov.au/community\\_consultation.htm](http://www.warringah.nsw.gov.au/community_consultation.htm)).

### **Community Consultation Matrix and Community Consultation Toolkit**

#### **B. Technical Process Design**

Once the public process has been conceptualized in terms of the overall project and directed into a public involvement or public information process, a public involvement plan should be developed for the project that includes contingencies for reevaluating and revising the plan during implementation.

The plan should include the following elements:

- ❑ Notification
- ❑ Methodology
- ❑ Communications
- ❑ Logistics
- ❑ Public review and comment
- ❑ Use of public input
- ❑ Evaluation
- ❑ Project Public Involvement Plan Form
- ❑ Project Public Involvement Plan Checklist (See Metro website at: [http://www.metro-region.org/library\\_docs/citizen/pipg.pdf](http://www.metro-region.org/library_docs/citizen/pipg.pdf).)

Develop, adopt, and provide staff and community training on a “Best Public Involvement Practices Handbook” with a common template, checklist, and questions for developing public involvement plans. The Handbook should incorporate existing successful practices of city bureaus and it should be based primarily on the Metro’s

model and the city public involvement staff proposal developed during the Task Force process.<sup>3</sup>

**Minimum Notice Requirements:** There is a need to determine the minimum period of time for public notice before final action is taken by a bureau or City Council on major policy or capital improvement projects as well as other types of projects. Current City Code and State law provide some guidance on this issue, but there remains a perception that notice is not adequate for the public to prepare comments and for established groups to notify their memberships. There is still lack of agreement between current Code requirements of a minimum 30 days advance notice to Neighborhood Associations before final action is taken and the request of citizens on the ONI Guidelines, Review, Empowerment, and Assessment Team for a 45-day period.

However, the number of days notice may not be the key criteria affecting public perception. The underlying causes need to be explored to address this issue fully. Key to exploring the underlying causes will be looking at hard data on current notice periods. To date, only anecdotal data exists stating that the city as a whole does not follow Code requirements and does not provide adequate notice. There may be a difference between the perceived lack of notice and the actual amount of notice given. If notice standards are not being met, the solution will be different than if, in fact, notice is usually provided most often 30, 45 or more days in advance.

The working group also found that what is sometimes perceived as lack of notice is really distrust of the intent of the involvement process. If the community perceives that there is no true intent to utilize or respond to its input, then it often concludes that the problem is notice too late in the process to influence the outcome. The solution in that case *may* be earlier involvement, but earlier notification would not resolve the issue if there really is little or no influence the community can bring to bear to change the outcome.

In other words, the working group found that an equally important solution in many cases is to clarify and provide full disclosure of the community's role in and degree of influence on a given project; for instance, when the city solicits input on the entire project but really can only modify a small component of the project, then the role of the community is not clearly communicated.

A compromise on this issue should be considered as part of the Best Practices Handbook development process. It needs to be determined when minimum notice requirements would apply and whether there are possibly different notice periods that would be appropriate for different projects. It may be that a lack on ongoing information exacerbates this issue.

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequent to the work of the PITF, Portland Mayor Tom Potter's Bureau Innovation Project Team #9 has updated and published a draft 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the original Outreach and Involvement Handbook for City Bureaus. This could be used as a foundation and further development could be considered.

### **C. Implementation**

Develop processes and guidelines by which bureaus should implement public involvement processes.

#### **Post important public involvement documents on PortlandOnline**

The process of public information about public involvement efforts is not consistently transparent or available to the public. The public often lacks basic knowledge and understanding of public involvement processes related to projects they care about. This information gap can lead to lack of trust in the processes themselves.

All projects with public involvement should be required to include a web page outlining process issues such as how to provide public comment either through a comment form or email link to staff; the timeline before a final decision is made; who to contact if you want to get involved; who is making the decision; a schedule of forums, hearings, public events; sign-up for email notifications; a map showing geographical impact area for major projects; links to portlandmaps.com; costs; construction timelines; etc.

In addition, the following documents should be posted on the web:

- Council adopted public involvement principles.
- When completed, Council-adopted Public Involvement Best Practices Handbook and accompanying forms.
- Types and timing matrix and guidelines.
- Bureau public involvement policies; especially major policy and capital improvement project public involvement plans.

### **D. Feedback**

Develop processes and guidelines by which bureaus should provide feedback to the public after project completion on how input was used, final decisions and rationale, and for evaluating public involvement process for major types of projects.

After project completion close the feedback loop by notifying interested stakeholders and individuals who have made public comments:

- That the public comment period is over, the next steps for decision making process and how comments will be utilized;
- If staff prepared a report, let participants know how comments were utilized. Provide a summary of minority opinions.

### **E. Evaluation**

Develop a template that will guide bureaus through an evaluation of the public involvement plan, process and outcome. While it is important that evaluation not

become an excessive burden on staff time, routines for evaluation should be institutionalized, even if it is a simple “what went right/what went wrong” review. This could include peer, supervisor and/or public review.

***Principle 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.

The goal is to better standardize procedures for access to public information and public records requests that are consistent across all City bureaus and agencies. It is of particular interest to develop a more user-friendly system for providing public access to complex policy, planning and capital- project-related documentation.

**Recommendations:**

**#19 Create a position of Public Information Officer to coordinate inter-bureau development of citywide communication and media relations.**

The City does not have a coordinated citywide communication and media strategy for public information. The City has not had a system for coordinating messages on key citywide issues. This has led to confusion and missed opportunities to better educate the public and business community on City policy and project priorities.

City staff who provide public information services have repeatedly identified the need for a public information coordinator who can facilitate various bureaus to work together to create a citywide strategy for message development and education about City accomplishments. Ultimately, this would also result in cost savings from coordinating roles that are now duplicated by numerous people such as list management and initiating relationships with media contacts.

This position would not take the place of existing internal bureau resources but fill in long identified gaps in coordinating public information needs.

Job responsibilities might include:

- Facilitate development of annual citywide media work plan/strategy.
- Coordinate media contact list management for all staff.
- Initiate and build relationships with key media in community.
- Initiate and build relationships with targeted media in communities of color, neighborhoods, business, youth and seniors, etc.

- ❑ Coordinate earned media work, distribution of PSA announcements, follow-ups with media, and provide media technical assistance for smaller bureaus that do not have an in-house PIO.
- ❑ Facilitate inter-bureau dialogue for framing citywide issues and projects.
- ❑ Coordinate public education on key Citywide policy issues and projects, i.e. updates throughout lifecycle of major projects, how they are moving forward, what step they are in development.
- ❑ Facilitate bringing public information officers together for networking, training, and looking for opportunities for inter-bureau cooperation.

## **#20 Develop policies and a system for improving the quality, accessibility and transparency of public information, including addressing the digital divide.**

The public information about public involvement efforts is not consistently transparent or available to the public. The lack of knowledge and understanding of City public involvement processes among the public can lead to lack of trust in decision-making processes.

Project web sites typically do not do a very good job of integrating the numerous public involvement activities associated with a project. The public has a difficult time finding quick answers about key projects on the City's web site. And once someone gets to a site there are few opportunities to interact, such as through the use of polls and surveys. Project information may be on a bureau's web site, but it may be missing key information such as staff contact, schedule of events, etc. Maps showing the geographical impact of a project should also be available.

Some projects that had early involvement during a planning or project development phase come up for action once funding becomes available, which may be several years later. Sometimes in these cases citizens may feel they are brought into the process too late. The affected neighbors may not be the original ones who were involved, leading to the perception that there is late notice or involvement. The underlying cause of the problem may be a lack of continuous information flow that keeps citizens informed throughout a lengthy process.

It should be noted that most of the following specific suggestions for developing policies and a system for providing better public information revolve around the use of the Internet; however, many people still do not use email or may not feel comfortable accessing information through the use of a computer. While it is recognized that the cheapest and easiest way to make available large amounts of often evolving information to large numbers of people is through web-based communication, some accommodation must be made for other forms of access.

Some specific web-based action steps for improving the system include:

**Create a user guide for navigating PortlandOnline.com and City bureaucracy.**

Create an outline of helpful hints posted on City homepage to assist the public in navigating the City bureaucracy to find the information they want.

**Post bureau public involvement policies and project public involvement plans online.** Utilize the web more effectively to post documents relevant to major policy, planning and capital improvement project to maximize the transparency of their public involvement processes. Specifically, post bureau public involvement policies and individual project public involvement plans.

**Require all projects with public involvement to include a web page outlining process issues.** This could include how to provide public comment either through a comment form or email link to staff; timeline before a decision is made; who to contact if you want to get involved; who is making the decision; schedule of forums, hearings, public events; sign-up for email notifications; map showing geographical impact area for major projects; links to portlandmaps.com; costs; construction timelines; etc.

**Post online important project documents relevant to public involvement efforts, including:**

- Council adopted public involvement principles.
- When completed, Council-adopted Public Involvement Best Practices Handbook and accompanying forms.
- Bureau public involvement policies.
- Types and timing matrix (see Process section.)
- Major policy and capital improvement project Public Involvement Plans.
- Maps showing geographical impact of a project should be available.

**Improve use of online calendar for listing key City meetings and events.** While an online calendar has already been implemented at PortlandOnline there is room for improvement. Perhaps most significant is the need for all bureaus to actively utilize the existing online calendar function for their public meetings and events. The following would improve the PortlandOnline calendar function:

- Search function needs to allow queries by geographical section of city, topical keywords, sponsoring bureau, etc.
- Require bureaus to post all public events online - hearings, open houses, forums, etc. - that bubble up to the City home calendar page.
- Need to have links to project website for more info and opportunities for public involvement.
- Notify media on a regular basis of calendar updates.

**Publish a list of capital construction projects on PortlandOnline.** Provide list of upcoming Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) on PortlandOnline at the beginning of each fiscal year. Link to PortlandMaps.com for information about project timelines and contact information.

**Post Council agendas including significant items on web 10 days in advance.** Council agendas including items related to significant public works/capital projects, public services, policy and/or planning projects need to be set and posted on the web with 10 days advance notice to provide adequate time for public notice and response. Current practice of agendas being made public on the Friday before a Wednesday meeting provides minimal time for public reaction and comprehension of agenda items. Develop criteria for which agenda items are significant enough to require 10 days or more advance notice.

**Develop criteria for timeliness and accuracy for posting information to City Information and Referral line and bureau web sites.** Develop criteria and expectations for timeliness and accuracy of the information bureaus need to post with the City's three centralized information locations: the City/County Information and Referral Center (823-4000 line); PortlandOnline.com; and portlandmaps.com.

**Post web links to background info:** List web links on Council agendas to background research or supporting information related to each individual agenda item. This would allow the public to quickly access more info on agenda topics with which they may not be familiar. Develop criteria for minimum information that should be posted online such as contact information for staff responsible for the project or a bibliography/summary of the document history related to the project.

**Train city staff how to utilize Portlandonline.com for creating content and how to use new tools for polling, surveys, etc.**

**Make sure electronic document archives are accessible to those with slow computers, have links to Adobe download for Adobe Reader.**

**Coordinate with other governments when their projects may impact City residents.**

**Expand information related to specific addresses on Portlandmaps.com:** Provide more information linked to projects identified on Portlandmaps.com to related documents, contact information, background information, public involvement opportunities, etc.

**Improve use of Portland Community Media.** The City's use of cable TV has been primarily limited to airing City Council meetings on TV. Portland Community

Media has expressed interest in providing more coverage of City public involvement efforts.

The following would be improvements:

- ❑ List all public involvement meetings listed on PortlandOnline calendar to be listed on Portland Community Media calendar.
- ❑ Develop a cable access talk show or informational meeting on City and/or neighborhood issues.
- ❑ Coordinate having public meetings at locations wired by Portland Community Media to have live feeds to their central facilities.

## **#21 Better utilize existing community resources for project outreach.**

The City does not have an adequate presence at locally-based events and activities, such as community street fairs and festivals, where we could reach new constituencies not traditionally involved with City governance.

The City needs to increase visibility of City projects by reaching out to the community instead of the usual requirement that the public come to City-organized events. Community event organizers frequently contact staff to invite them to set up an information table. This would go a long way towards building goodwill and relationships with community organizations.

Provide better visibility for city projects in the community by:

- ❑ Creating a City booth that multiple bureaus could utilize for marketing projects that are unique to that geographic area.
- ❑ Building a schedule of street fairs in winter/early spring and share with staff through a Public Involvement Coordinator staff role.
- ❑ Creating a paid internship or temporary staffing roles for college students to assist.
- ❑ Coordinating developing City kiosks and wall displays to be located at community centers, shopping malls, libraries, etc.

### ***Principle 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.**

People with disabilities, and/or limited transportation and/or childcare options are limited in their ability to participate in City public involvement efforts. People with disabilities or language-special needs often simply give up trying to engage in civic issues after an initial negative experience in which their special need was not accommodated. Many City bureaus are not committing adequate resources to ensure their public involvement efforts are made accessible to people with special needs or marketing their events as accessible.

Accommodating special needs for people with disabilities is federal and state law. There could be liability issues if events are not accessible and special-needs assistance is not provided. Indeed, State of Oregon Open Meetings and Public Records laws mandate that all meetings must be accessible to people with disabilities, and that a good faith effort must be made to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services with 48 hours notice, for example. Many government agencies are still not aware of the comprehensive accessibility requirements in the federal American Disabilities Act. Both the ADA Information Technology Center and City/County Advisory Committee on Disabilities (CCACD) could help agencies become more familiar with the law to avoid future lawsuits.

Numerous people have commented that the City, and government agencies in general, have simply gotten lazy about accommodating special needs for people with disabilities. Some bureaus have stopped listing special needs contact information.

Accommodating special needs for disabilities and transportation access at key public involvement events will make the City much more accessible in the eyes of people with disabilities and seniors. Making our public involvement processes accessible will go a long way towards reaching the diverse participation that City Council and bureaus have committed to in principle.

**Improvements could include:**

- ❑ Require bureaus to commit a specific percentage of bureau and project budgets for accommodating special needs requests, ADA accessibility and childcare at key events.
- ❑ Require all public involvement events to be ADA accessible. At a minimum events need to be wheelchair accessible and near public transit lines.
- ❑ Require notices for public involvement events to list contact information to request special assistance within a minimum of seven days and list that event is wheelchair accessible.

- ❑ Work closely with the CCACD in order to determine how to make events accessible and then to make certain that they were accessible.
- Other considerations for ADA accessibility for people with disabilities include:**
- ❑ Attempt to ensure meeting locations are accessible by public transportation, disabled parking is designated and entrances from sidewalks and parking area are well lighted.
  - ❑ Require notice on all public involvement marketing that events are wheelchair accessible and that special needs shall be accommodated with 48 hours advance notice.
  - ❑ Require listing of City TTY number(s), 503-823-6868, on all public involvement event notices and all City documents.
  - ❑ Develop a centralized contact list of individuals who wish to receive regulatory or bill notices in Braille.
  - ❑ Require all City bureaus to post an accessibility policy statement on their bureau web pages, particularly stating the City’s responsibility to ensure all documents, especially PDF’s, on the web are accessible to people with vision disabilities.
  - ❑ Create a central City web page listing resources and documents that are accessible to people with vision disabilities (Braille).
  - ❑ Identify and maintain lists of community meeting spaces that are ADA accessible to people with disabilities, where space would be appropriate for childcare, and that are community gathering places utilized by communities of color and immigrant/refugee communities.

**#23 Work with the Purchasing Bureau to eliminate barriers for Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses (MWESB) to access professional, technical and expert contracts for public involvement and information services.**

Numerous minority, women and emerging small business owners have identified barriers in the City’s complex contracting procedures that limit their ability to successfully compete for bureau contracts to provide public involvement and public information services. Concerns include:

- ❑ The Request For Proposals (RFP) contracting process to submit proposals is too complex and time consuming for small firms and community-based firms, many of which simply do not bother applying.
- ❑ General liability and other insurance requirements are too high for many small firms that cannot afford the \$2 million in required coverage, especially with a Request for Standard Services (RFSS) where there is no guarantee they will receive any business.
- ❑ Bureaus provide few small-scale contracts for targeted outreach with diverse community stakeholder groups that might be more appropriate for MWESB firms.

Work with Purchasing Bureau to eliminate barriers for MWESB to access

Professional, Technical and Expert (PTE) contracting opportunities for public involvement and information (PI/PI) services. The Bureau of Purchasing has already initiated several efforts that will expand their capacity to diversify contracting opportunities under the PTE category which public involvement and public information services falls under.

**Suggested action steps include:**

- ❑ Encourage bureaus to develop smaller scale PI/PI contracting opportunities targeted to culturally specific constituency stakeholder groups.
- ❑ Encourage bureaus to require large-scale contractors for PI/PI services to utilize MWESB sub-contractors.
- ❑ Encourage contracting opportunities which promote RFP and RFSS partnerships between larger-scale contractors and MWESB contractors that have unique skills to reach targeted audiences.
- ❑ Increase points in the RFP process for evidence of cultural competency experience and skills of staff in firms, i.e. experience working with diverse communities, training in culturally appropriate outreach skills, bi-lingual staff, etc.
- ❑ Lower liability requirements for PI/PI service contracts because of the nature of public involvement work is fairly low risk.
- ❑ Develop RFSS that pre-qualifies PI/PI firms based on their ability to work in culturally specific constituency groups, i.e. communities of color, low-income, etc.
- ❑ Reduce paperwork necessary to qualify for PTE contracts. Many small firms do not have the staff capacity to respond to RFP's, RFQ's, and especially RFSS's if no clear indication exists that they have a likelihood of receiving City business.

**#24 Improve accessibility of childcare services at key public involvement events to expand participation of families with children in City public involvement processes.**

Lack of childcare options poses a significant barrier to participation for many citizens. Many difficult issues need to be addressed in providing childcare for participants, including liability for the City and the reluctance of some parents to leave their children with strangers. A comprehensive and innovative strategy for childcare issues needs to be developed.

Some suggestions include:

- ❑ Develop a contractual relationship with Just Kids Childcare in Portland Building for ongoing childcare services for Council and Commission meetings, and key project events downtown.
- ❑ Develop events that provide information to adults but are also child friendly so that children can stay with their parents.
- ❑ Create Request for Standard Services flexible service contracting agreement for childcare that makes it easier for City bureaus to provide these services.

- ❑ Coordinate the acquisition and maintenance of child care supply boxes for each bureau for use at events with books, toys, games, etc. that can easily be made available at events.
- ❑ Continue to work with Risk Management on minimizing liability issues with childcare services.

## **#25 Expand language translation and interpretation accessibility of City information.**

People for whom English is a second language often are not able to participate in City public involvement efforts. They are unable to access information and referral services, City web sites, and project literature. Many City bureaus are not committing adequate resources to provide language interpretation and translation services.

The City's population of people for whom English is a second language or do not speak English is growing rapidly. City leaders are insisting bureaus reach diverse constituency interests as part of their public involvement efforts. Some bureaus already must meet certain regulatory requirements to have materials translated in multiple languages. At a minimum, publicity materials need to inform the public that language needs can be accommodated with 48 hours notice. In some cases, this is the law.

Accommodating special language needs will make the City much more accessible in the eyes of people for whom English is a second language or who do not speak English. Making our public involvement processes accessible will go a long way towards reaching the diverse participation that City Council and bureaus have committed to in principle.

Suggestions for expanding the capacity of City bureaus to overcome language barriers for the City's rapidly diversifying non-English speaking population include:

- ❑ Provide interpretation services both when requested and proactively at key project and decision-making meetings, especially at site-specific project in neighborhoods with high concentration of non-English-speaking and/or ESL individuals.
- ❑ Work with City bureaus to encourage provision of key documents in multiple languages and interpretation of key public involvement events.
- ❑ Develop and maintain flexible service contractor lists for translation and interpretation services.
- ❑ Expand awareness of the Information and Referral Line's access to AT&T language interpretation service that could be utilized for all City customer service desks.
- ❑ Require bureaus to have at least one bureau overview web page in multiple languages, including Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese, and includes information about how to reach the bureau.

- ❑ Build partnerships with area colleges to offer paid internships and volunteer opportunities for foreign language students to assist with interpretation and translation needs.
- ❑ Purchase for common use a multi-person radio transmitter for interpretation at large group events.
- ❑ Require notice on all public involvement marketing that interpretation services and/or special needs shall be accommodated with 48 hours advance notice.
- ❑ Encourage bureaus proactively to provide interpretation at key events for site-specific projects in language diverse neighborhoods.
- ❑ Create Request for Standard Services flexible-service contracting agreement for interpretation and translation services that makes it easier for City bureaus to provide these services. Ensure criteria for accuracy, foreign fonts, and prioritize ESL certification.
- ❑ Provide notice on City web pages that web-based language translators are often inaccurate. Or possibly remove translators until accuracy is improved.
- ❑ Have centralized City web pages listing citywide resources and documents that are translated into multiple languages.

## **#26 Engage youth and young adults in civic activities through community-based service learning.**

Young adults face economic and familial obligations that limit their ability to participate in civic-oriented activities. In addition, our community has not provided sufficient resources to entice young adults to participate in civic and policy-oriented organizations. Neighborhood Associations and many other community-based organizations have not adapted organizational structures to create a more hospitable environment for youth. As a result, many young people are not engaged with local civic issues, nor are they familiar with how the City works and how they can make a difference in key policy issues.

In addition, civics curricula have not been a priority at many area schools and or have faced significant cuts due to budget reductions. We must address how we nurture a new generation of Portland residents to engage in City public involvement processes or ultimately we risk relegating a whole generation to the sidelines of local democratic processes.

City elected officials have expectations that the neighborhood association system and City bureaus should have more diverse participation in City-sponsored public involvement efforts. If adequate resources are not provided in the City budget, proposals should maximize partnerships with:

- ❑ Existing public school programs through the Portland, David Douglas; Centennial, Reynolds and Parkrose school districts, including the Sun School and/or Community Schools programs;

- ❑ Area universities and colleges that provide community-based service learning opportunities, especially PSU’s Capstone program for seniors and the Compact model through the University Studies program;
- ❑ Citizens, neighborhood district coalitions and City staff who can take on a volunteer mentoring role that taps into the wealth of leadership and community organizing skills they possess, and can link student interns with neighborhood associations and other community-based organizations.

One goal would be to initiate a pilot project building off existing community-based programs and expand opportunities for young adults to participate in volunteer projects related to neighborhood associations and community-based organizations and City policy-making efforts. This will require dedicated staff to coordinate or manage contracts for community-service programs.

Specific activities might include:

- ❑ Assist with planning and implementation of tree planting or neighborhood clean-up events.
- ❑ Assist with web design or newsletter production.
- ❑ Organize turnout for annual meetings and special events.
- ❑ Assist with issue campaigns for organizations working on City-related policy.
- ❑ Schedule and coordinate presentations to civic classes, environmental sciences, etc. by City officials on how decisions are made by the City.
- ❑ Create a 4-8 week hands-on curriculum/exercises/lesson plans to engage youth with City staff as mentors. Match with “hands-on” community service projects. Mirror Rotary Club project.
- ❑ Support existing youth leadership summits and identify links with City leadership and programs.
- ❑ Develop online volunteer and program descriptions that appeal to youth.
- ❑ Identify strategies for improving recruitment and appointment of youth to City standing boards, commissions, advisory groups, and neighborhood association leadership roles.

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

City elected officials, decision makers and staff must be accountable for following the governance and public involvement principles presented in this report. Portland's current city government does not provide the direction or structure needed to encourage bureau directors, managers, and staff to implement the level and character of public involvement described in the Task Force's public involvement principles. No formal mechanisms or checks and balances exist to hold city commissioners and city bureau staff accountable for following public involvement principles and standards.

Implementation of the public involvement principles will require a significant culture change in how city government operates. Such a culture change will occur only if effective incentives, review, and oversight are implemented as well. Additionally, effective public involvement requires transparency in government decision making and access to information is crucial. Evaluation is also necessary in order to determine what is working well and where additional changes are needed over time.

### *Principle 11.* *Accountability*

Too often, public involvement is not integrated well into city government decision making. Accountability for ensuring adequate and effective public involvement depends on clearly defining a chain of responsibility for meeting involvement goals and creating a system for tracking this performance. The links of this chain should flow from the public involvement principles, to formal bureau public involvement policies, to staff job descriptions and personnel reviews, to work plans for individual projects, and to systems to monitor and track compliance and evaluate outcomes. Creating a true governance partnership culture in city government will require clear direction and incentives for individual city staff members to implement the public involvement principles.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **#27 Clearly state and incorporate responsibility for the development and implementation of public involvement plans in bureau employee position descriptions.**

Responsibility for the development and implementation of public involvement plans should be stated clearly in bureau employee position descriptions. Duties and responsibility for public process management should be included in the position descriptions and performance expectations for bureau directors, a designated bureau manager and at least one bureau staff person. However, general support of effective public involvement, should be included for bureau employees at every level to

establish a culture of collaboration and partnership between government and the community.

**#28 Include in formal personnel reviews for bureau directors, managers, and staff an evaluation of the individual's support for and compliance with public involvement principles.**

Good quality public process is not considered a priority for many city decision-makers and staff. Making compliance with the public involvement principles and processes a major part of personnel reviews will increase their visibility and importance for bureau directors, managers and employees.

**#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.**

The Ombudsman's staff can only review compliance by city staff with existing city policies related to specific cases. If public involvement practices are placed in City Code, the Ombudsman's staff could determine whether appropriate processes were followed in specific instances.

Ombudsman's staff can attempt to resolve issues between community members and individual bureaus and identify patterns of success and problems. The Ombudsman can issue public reports on individual cases and an annual report. The Ombudsman can shine a light on some problems and establish a record of complaints but has no enforcement or sanction power.

**#31 Require documentation of public involvement actions and outcomes to accompany all new ordinances presented for City Council consideration.**

A common form should be developed as part of the "backing form" used by Council that summarizes the implementation and results of public involvement efforts related to the subject matter of each ordinance that goes before the City Council. Commissioner Saltzman is using a form that might be used as a model. The purpose would be to encourage city staff to think about the public involvement needs and to provide the public and elected officials with evidence of the extent to which the public was involved.

**#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.**

Establish a standing City advisory committee that would act as an ongoing body to review and advocate for implementation of the public involvement principles and recommendations in City government. Many other City policy areas have formal boards or commissions that focus both public and government attention on issues and provide a vehicle to review and comment on related city government activities. Both Metro and Multnomah County have citizen involvement committees that have similar roles.

The advisory commission should include both community members and city staff to best facilitate problem-solving efforts.

**The committee would have a charge to:**

- ❑ Track implementation of the PITF governance public involvement principles and recommendations and help keep them in the public eye.
- ❑ Review bureau public involvement policy and plans and make recommendations where improvements should be made.
- ❑ Devise a method of measurement for involvement by traditionally underrepresented groups that would provide a baseline and report quarterly or annually on progress. If it cannot be measured, it will not improve.
- ❑ Institutionalize the role of advocates of communities of color, immigrants and refugees, low-income residents, seniors and youth, people with disabilities and other constituencies to have a voice to hold the City accountable for reaching diverse constituency stakeholder groups with culturally appropriate techniques.
- ❑ Produce an annual report reviewing City efforts to support quality public involvement processes and provide recommendations for improvements to those processes.
- ❑ Work closely with Auditors Office and Ombudsman Office on developing procedures for responding to complaints and recommendations for corrective actions.

**In addition, the group would advise the City on a number of related tasks including improvements to:**

- ❑ Culturally appropriate public involvement techniques for engaging Portland's increasingly diverse population and constituencies that have not traditionally been engaged with City public involvement efforts. Look at popular education models, how to support other community organizations to work with the City, and efforts by neighborhood association system to diversify membership and leadership.
- ❑ Education and training needs to build the capacity of neighborhood association leadership, and other interested community-based organizations to be better

informed advocates for the constituencies with whom they work with.

- Public information and communication advances are needed in utilizing interactive web technologies, use of surveys, email lists, improving newsletters/communication efforts for neighborhood associations.

**Possible duties for the Public Involvement staff position might also include:**

- Assist with ongoing development of Portland Online calendar and other interactive features that assist public involvement.
- Work with Auditor's Office on implementing recommendations related to access to public records and transparency of Council agendas.
- Assist with coordination of City presence at community street fairs and festivals.
- Work with area education institutions to encourage community-based service learning for youth with City public involvement efforts.
- Assist with development of language and translation services, ADA accessibility, and childcare availability for City public involvement efforts.
- Work with Purchasing Bureau on improving accessibility of PTE contracting for public involvement and information services for MWSEB's.
- Assist with maintenance of diverse stakeholder/community organization contact lists and media lists for use by all City staff.
- Assist with coordination of informal public involvement staff network.
- Work with Bureau of Technology Services on developing web-based database for constituent contact information and tracking.
- Assist with development of training program for public involvement staff on public involvement best practices and culturally-appropriate outreach skills.
- Coordinate with Affirmative Action Office Citywide Diversity Development Coordinating Committee on implementing diversity recommendations.
- Coordinate with the Public Information position.

The work of the Public Involvement Advisory Commission (PIAC) cannot be effective without adequate staff. At a minimum, the PIAC would need support staff to prepare its annual report, scheduling, member recruitment, agendas and minutes. The degree of independence of this position would need to be determined.

The Auditor's Office and ONI have explored incorporating public involvement questions in the City's annual survey of community satisfaction. Guidelines are needed to establish benchmarks to evaluate progress towards improving public involvement efforts. The PIAC could assist with this effort. This work should be coordinated with the Auditor's Service Efforts and Accomplishments program and Managing for Results Initiative.

***Principle 12.***  
***Transparency of governance and processes***

The public policy decision making process should be accessible, open, honest and understandable. The workings of government must be transparent, to ensure that community members can be involved meaningfully in the democratic process and the civic life of our community.

Two types of transparency exist. Both apply to city commissioners, managers, front-line staff, citizen commissions and advisory committees, and the formal neighborhood/business association system.

**Governance/global transparency.** Governance and global issues concern how the city operates, coordinates internal activities and provides expectations that are meaningful, effective, and fair.

**Project-specific transparency.** Project-specific issues concern how the city communicates to the public and are limited to the project and whether the process design fits the application.

Basic principles behind the concept of transparency include the following:

1. Timely, accessible and understandable information is open to the public.
2. Community members can easily find out about current and upcoming city programs and projects; including:
  - The decision-making process,
  - Key decision points, who makes final decision and when,
  - Factual and legal/policy bases for decisions,
  - Responsible staff and organizational structure,
  - Expected budgets, timelines, workplans, schedules,
  - What type and level of public involvement will occur and when, and,
  - Avenues for appeal/review and deadlines.
3. Information is honestly and objectively shared, including presentations of pros and cons and likely costs and impacts of proposed actions.
4. Government openness is monitored by a checks-and-balances system.
5. Policy impact assessments should provide a clear rationale for the project, state why we are proposing this, and outlining pro/con analysis of alternatives.
6. Identify the range of public values that are impacted in each project or process.

**Recommendations:**

**#33 Establish consistent policies and processes for responding to formal public records requests.**

Currently, some city bureaus respond to public records requests quickly and fully, while other bureaus are less forthcoming and cooperative. Access to timely and complete information is vital to meaningful public involvement in decision making.

**#34 Develop clear criteria for putting items on the City Council’s consent agenda—both routine and “emergency” ordinances—and make a summary statement and backup information available to the public.**

Consent agenda items can include both routine actions of government and emergency ordinances that require immediate action. Putting something on the consent agenda allows the council to take action without formal public testimony. Many routine actions require no formal council or public discussion. No formal criteria exist to determine which ordinances are true “emergencies” requiring fast-track action.

Clear criteria should be developed and enforced to distinguish between routine actions and true “emergency” ordinances and applied to ensure that “emergency” ordinances are true emergencies. Consent agenda items should include a summary statement explaining the purpose and need for the consent agenda action. Criteria should be developed to define what is included in a summary statement and what background documentation should be made available over the Internet. Internet or staff contact links should be provided to background information and documentation.

Similar clear explanations and background information should be available for all City Council agenda items before council meetings take place

**#35 Develop a more user-friendly system for providing public access to complex policy, planning and capital project-related documentation.**

This might include:

- Providing summary lists or tables of content for documents related to a specific project.
- Continued expansion of Portlandmaps.com interactivity of links between projects identified on maps to related documents, contact information, background information, public involvement opportunities, etc.<sup>4</sup>

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□ <sup>4</sup> . The City’s Capital Improvement Program outreach workgroup may doing some of this already.

- ❑ Outline of helpful hints posted on City homepage to assist public in navigating City bureaucracy to find the information they want.
- ❑ Clarify and affirm role of City Auditor to facilitate public access to City records and information when an individual has a conflict with a bureau.

### ***Principle 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 the governance and public involvement principles when developing and implementing public policies, projects and services, and the effectiveness of individual public involvement processes.

City government has no program or mechanisms to consistently evaluate public involvement processes. Without some means to evaluate public involvement efforts, city decision-makers, staff, and citizens are unable to identify and document what is working and what is not, and to develop and recommend changes to improve public involvement. Formal evaluation will shine a light on problems and create an incentive to fix them.

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **#36 Implement regular evaluation of public involvement processes by bureaus.**

Implement regular evaluation of public involvement processes by bureaus, which includes setting criteria for evaluation; capturing comments, opinions and suggestions of different stakeholders; and establishing a base of information that will allow a broader review. Evaluation can be complex and expensive—evaluations should be appropriate to the scope and importance of the project or process. It may be appropriate to integrate some of this evaluation function into the City Auditor’s Service Efforts and Accomplishments program and Managing for Results Initiative.

#### **#37 Review bureau compliance with PI principles and requirements through formal performance and management audits.**

Broader compliance by each bureau with public involvement principles and recommendations should be evaluated as a part of formal performance and management audits. Determine and establish an effective documentation routine that allows for effective audits.

#### **#38 Establish peer review of bureau PI plans by PI staff.**

(See Principle 5, Recommendation # 8.)

## APPENDIX A: PITF Members

PITF Members (as of December 2004) included:

### **Co-Chairs**

- Laurel Butman, Office of Management and Finance
- JoAnn Bowman, Bowman Consulting
- Julie Odell, Southwest neighborhood leader, PSU Ph.D. candidate in public involvement

### **Staff support**

- Brian Hoop, Office of Neighborhood Involvement

### **Neighborhood Coalition Representative**

- Carlotta Collette, SE Uplift, Ardenwald Neighborhood Association
- Phil Colombo, Central NE Neighbors, Roseway Neigh. Association
- Corinne Weber, SW Neighborhoods, Inc., Maplewood Neigh. Assoc
- Vacant North Portland Neighborhood Services
- Arlene Kimura/Linda Bauer, East Portland Neighborhood Office, Hazelwood
- Frank Dixon, Neighbors West Northwest, NW District Association
- Willie Brown, Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
- Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong, representing district coalition directors

### **City staff representatives**

- Jim Gladson, Bureau of Environmental Services
- Bill Hoffman, Portland Office of Transportation
- Laurel Butman, Office of Management and Finance
- Mary Volm, Bureau of Planning, OMF, Transportation
- Lynn Knox, Bureau of Housing and Community Development
- Brian Hoop, Office of Neighborhood Involvement
- Brian Aptekar/Mary Rose Navarro, Parks and Recreation
- Tim Hall, Water Bureau
- Marsha Palmer, Police Bureau

### **Communities of Color**

- Rey Espana, Latino Network
- Nathan Nguyen, Asian Pacific American Network Oregon

### **Low Income communities**

- Sik Yin Chan, Portland Impact

### **People with Disabilities**

- Anne O'Malley, Portland Habilitation Center

### **Youth**

- Jake Oken-Berg, Oregon Business Council

### **Business Representatives**

- Patti McCoy, Columbia Corridor Association
- Nancy Chapin, Alliance of PDX Neighborhood Business Associations

### **Public Involvement private firms**

- Doug Zenn, Zenn Associates
- Jean Lawson, Jean Lawson and Associates

- Jo Ann Bowman, Bowman Consulting Services

**Academic**

- Paul Leistner, PSU Ph. D. candidate
- Julie Odell, PSU Ph. D. candidate

**Other citizen involvement committees**

- Scott Seibert, Metro, Citizen Involvement Committee
- Sy Kornbrodt, Multnomah County, Citizen Involvement Committee
- Jerry Powell, Guidelines, Review, Empowerment, & Assessment Team

**Ex-Officio**

- Brent Canode Office of Commissioner Randy Leonard

## APPENDIX B: PITF Principles of Good Public Involvement

**Core Concept—Governance as Partnership:** City elected officials and staff must join with citizens to create a partnership in which the public has a real voice in setting the course of the community. Effective involvement of the public is essential to achieve and sustain this partnership.

The following principles will help achieve this partnership:

### *FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE*

- 1. 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. Collaborative, consensus-seeking, community-based approach:** City government/community partnerships consistently should 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 bureaus staff should identify, reach out to, and involve the full range of community groups and interests in public dialogue and decision-making processes.

### *BUILDING CAPACITY*

- 5. Capacity 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.
- 6. Capacity within the Community:** Portland’s nationally-recognized formal neighborhood and business association system is a cornerstone of public involvement and a primary channel for citizen input and involvement in our City. It should play a pivotal role in creating opportunities for skill building and networking among both neighborhood/business association leaders and leaders of other community-based organizations.

**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.

### *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.

**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.

**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.

### *GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY*

**11. Accountability:** City elected officials, decision-makers and staff must be accountable for following these governance and public involvement principles.

**12. 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.

**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.