



Public Involvement Procedures

Portland's parks and recreational facilities are provided for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone who lives, works or plays in our city. Portland has long held the belief that an informed and engaged community is a key asset that sets us above other cities. The commitment and passion that Portlanders feel for their home is evident in the numerous examples of community engagement that have served to enhance the beauty and livability of our city and hold us, the bureaucrats, and politicians accountable to a higher standard.

Public involvement is a term that encompasses everything from public information to partnerships and collaboration. The development of a Public Involvement Plan is a collaborative process that uses the best thinking of project managers, public involvement staff, and key stakeholders to create a tool that maximizes the each party's interests and skills to create the best possible outcome. Every person working on a project or policy within the bureau is responsible for achieving excellent standards in public involvement.

Public involvement activities offer us the opportunity to develop and enhance relationships with the community that will serve our organization for years to come. Through collaboration and partnership, we learn to work with and trust each other. An effectively implemented Public Involvement Plan will strengthen our policies, projects, and programs.

This document defines a process for collaborative development of public involvement plans and describes key elements that plans should include.

Outcomes for Effective Public Involvement

Portland Parks & Recreation will:

- Develop a strong and supportive partnership with the community.
- Build investment and participation of the community in our programs and activities.
- Improve our ability to identify and respond to differing community needs for information and engagement.
- Recognize the desire of the community to be **authentically** engaged in processes that respect their commitment to their city.
- Develop the community's capacity to engage in strategic decision making regarding use and prioritization of PP&R facilities.
- Build the leadership of a wide variety of community stakeholders through intentional leadership identification and development (volunteers become team leaders, parks advocates, friends groups; team leaders are invited to join committees (PACs); committee members are invited to join boards).

Development of the Public Involvement Plan

The first task of the Project Manager is to produce the project summary. This document should provide the necessary information to begin development of the Public Involvement Plan. In addition to developing the project summary, the Project Manager should also perform an assessment of the project or initiative that includes the following:

- An environmental scan for related mandates, plans, and other directives that may have bearing on the project,
- An initial stakeholder assessment, including consideration of whether this project may disproportionately affect a particular community or traditionally underrepresented community,
- A review of the goals and purposes of public involvement for the project, and
- An evaluation of resources available for the public engagement component of the project.

At the time that a project, policy or program is ready to move forward, the Project Manager will bring together a team including PI staff, a community stakeholder, and themselves. Using the assessment from Bureau Innovation Project #9, this team will work together to determine the best process, including tools and strategies to achieve the best outcome for both the bureau and the community to be impacted.

Public Involvement staff can assist with the process by researching community demographics, contacting neighborhood associations, coalition offices, schools, and community groups to learn more about the community and how it would like to be engaged. Early contact with neighborhood associations and coalitions, friends groups, community-based organizations, businesses associations, housing groups or user groups can inform what will work best for the project and the community. This collaboration results in a draft plan that outlines the basic process, discusses public information and involvement strategies, and suggests potential meeting dates/venues. An initial list of stakeholders is also developed through these conversations. The draft plan is further refined with input from the PP&R staff and design consultants working on the project. Once finalized, the Public Involvement Plan is posted on the project website and shared with involved people and organizations.

It is important to note that the public involvement process may evolve throughout the life of a project. *The plan is intended as a guide, but is often modified along the way.* There may be need for additional meetings, for example, or a teacher interested in hands-on involvement for their students. Planning for the artwork of a project could lead to a neighborhood tile-making day, or surveys could be distributed at a community fair that hadn't been anticipated. It is important that the plans are flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities.

Responsibilities and Process

Parks & Recreation staff has a collective responsibility to ensure a successful public involvement process for each project. Specific responsibilities for development and implementation of public involvement plans are described below.

Division Manager – The manager of the division responsible for the project initiates the planning process by defining the project scope and assigning project management.

Public Involvement Staff – Working with the project manager, the project team, and the community, the Public Involvement Coordinator is ultimately responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the public involvement plan.

Project Manager – For purposes of this policy, the term “Project Manager” refers to the person within Portland Parks & Recreation who has been assigned the lead responsibility for a planning initiative, policy development or capital project. For planning projects, a Senior Planner will take the place of a Project Manager.

The Project Manager is responsible for scheduling the initial meeting with the Public Involvement staff, for working collaboratively on all aspects of the public involvement plan’s development and implementation, and for assuring that adequate resources and information are available for its accomplishment.

Project Team – The Project Team has responsibilities throughout the life of the project. The team is responsible for providing key information and input during development of the public involvement plan. Appropriate members of the Project Team (e.g., building directors, park district supervisors, and others who come in contact with the public as part of their jobs) assist the Project Manager and Public Involvement staff in the implementation, ongoing refinement, and evaluation of the plan.

Steps for Developing Public Involvement Plans

All plans will include a project description that defines the project purpose and scope, goals, products, project management contacts, and schedule. The Public Involvement Plan will be uniquely tailored to the project. The nature of the project and the anticipated level of public interest are primary considerations in determining the full scope of the plan. However, the following **key elements** should always be addressed.

- I. Defining the Public Role.** It is absolutely critical that what we are asking the public to do is defined at the outset. Are they designing a park? Are they developing a policy? What impact will their participation have on the outcome? The role and responsibility of the public will often drive the nature of the involvement.
- II. Identification of Stakeholders.** A stakeholder is identified as any person, business, community group or cultural group who has an interest in the outcome of the project or impact of the policy. During the initial assessment, Portland Parks & Recreation staff can develop an initial list of stakeholders based on their information and experience, but it is ultimately our responsibility to allow the individual or group to determine their interest in the effort. A basic responsibility is to make sure enough information is out there so that if someone were interested, they could be involved.
- III. Identifying Key Strategies.**

To Provide Information (these tools allow us to both provide and receive information)

Public Meeting – A public meeting is held by Portland Parks & Recreation on a specific topic or issue. We are asking the audience to come to us to participate in an agenda we created. Public meetings are effective tools to consider under the following circumstances:

- The target audience is ill-defined or unknown.
- The policy or issue has broad public interest.
- There are strong opinions on different sides and a broader understanding is sought.
- The project is at a very early stage and you are trying to generate interest and/or involvement.
- The project or issue warrants enough time to allow for full explanation and discussion.

Preparation for public meetings should be done with the Project Manager, Public Involvement staff, and consultants and community members where appropriate. Public meeting format:

- Have a clearly stated outcome.
- Present information appropriate to a variety of learning styles.
- Allow for individual discussion.

Presentation – A presentation is when a staff person goes to an already scheduled meeting or gathering to provide information about a project. Generally the amount of time allotted to staff is small and the ability to engage in discussion is limited. Presentations are generally given to neighborhood associations, community organizations, business associations, churches, and schools. The audience is typically groups that already exist, hold regular meetings, and have a mission or purpose that is similar or lends itself to our work.

Media – Portland Parks & Recreation's Public Information Officer is available to assist staff to pitch stories to reporters, and write news releases and public service announcements. Media can help increase public and political awareness of a project, advertise meetings, and lend credibility to an effort.

Print Materials – Print materials allow us to get information into the hands of individuals in a very strategic and intentional manner. The advantage of our doing the writing and delivery is that we control the message, content, and distribution. Print materials continue to have a slightly higher readership than electronic materials. Print materials can include newsletters, postcards, fliers, leaflets, and posters.

Electronic Materials – Every project and policy should be available on our website. Additionally, Portland Parks & Recreation has a blog, listserv, and an electronic newsletter to get information out to the public. Unfortunately, electronic communication is restricted to those who have access. Using this technology we control the message, but we do not control the response.

Material Distribution – In general, publications are distributed through the postal service, email, and various community locations. The distribution plan should include all stakeholders and community gathering places where the information could be shared or posted, e.g., libraries, police stations and community policing offices, community centers, schools, grocery stores, and senior centers. It should also include citywide print and electronic media including City Search, ONI Notification, and PP&R event calendar. All publications are posted on the PP&R website.

As a rule, project publications are always sent to City Commissioners and other city departments as appropriate, Portland Parks & Recreation Expanded Management Team, Public Information staff, and to each department for posting.

Signage – Signs announcing the planning process, inviting participation, and explaining park improvements should be posted. In addition, opportunities to display project-related information on site or elsewhere in the community should be considered – particularly when a mechanism for citizen response could be included.

Site Walk-Through – Informal site walk-throughs are an excellent way to exchange information about current conditions, issues, challenges, and possible solutions. A walk-through can be included as part of a scheduled meeting or planned at a separate time.

Display/Stop & Talk – Staffed displays at traditional community gathering places are a good way to reach out to individuals who might otherwise not be aware of the project. Libraries, shopping malls, grocery store parking lots, downtown plazas, trailheads, and onsite “Stop & Talks” can be especially effective when advertised in advance and timed to coincide with an upcoming public meeting or decision point. Static displays (not staffed) are also useful and can be placed at a variety of locations simultaneously.

Hard Hat Tour/Sneak Preview – Hard hat tours or sneak previews are popular and very useful during extended construction periods. For safety purposes, these tours are generally limited to members of an advisory committee, neighborhood leaders, and members of the design or project team. Community sneak previews are an option if safety concerns are addressed.

Open Trailer – During major construction projects, open trailer events (essentially an 'open house' held in the construction trailer) provide an opportunity to keep interested citizens updated on the project's progress, answer their questions, and address their concerns. Open trailers are usually scheduled monthly, in cooperation with the contractor, and can be hosted by the project manager, associate or construction manager, along with the contractor and design consultant.

To Gather Information

Interception Strategy – An interception strategy is used to convey information or gather feedback from individuals based on location. Examples could be tables by off-leash areas to share information about times or locations changes, or collecting surveys from individuals as they enter a community center. These strategies allow us to gather feedback from individuals who may or may not attend a meeting.

Design Workshop – Workshops are similar to a meeting, but they convey a sense of active engagement. A person attending a workshop expects to be engaged and to see results in the end product.

Advisory Committee – An Advisory Committee is a selected group of individuals who generally participate on behalf of an organization or perspective. The role of the Advisory Committee is to communicate that perspective in the design or policy development process.

Person-to-Person Opportunities – Plans may also include other opportunities for sharing information during the planning phase, as well as during construction or project implementation. These opportunities vary depending on the nature and complexity of the project and are refined as the project develops, but may include community presentations, site walk-throughs, hard hat tours, sneak previews, open trailers or acquisition site visits.

Attending Existing Meeting – Most groups and organizations already have full agendas and lots of work. It is important to keep your presentation brief and allow time for comments. A key goal of attending these meetings should be to listen and learn from the audience at least as much as we expect them to learn from us.

Survey/Questionnaire/Poll – Depending on the information and outcome needed, the Public Involvement staff can assist with development and implementation of the appropriate tool.

IV. Evaluation. Each Public Involvement Plan includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the public involvement process from both external and internal points of view. Evaluation tools vary depending on the nature of the project. Regardless of the tools used, however, the final evaluation always includes observations and recommendations from both public participants and the Project Team. The recommendations are incorporated into future public involvement strategies. The evaluation should include:

- Questions from public meeting surveys or comment cards that ask for feedback about the public involvement process and how it might be improved
- Small group critiques of the public involvement process conducted with community groups, neighborhood coalitions or similar organizations
- Internal critiques by Project Team members
- Written evaluations by Advisory Committee members (if appropriate)
- Feedback/comments from the PP&R website

Public Involvement Process Documentation

The final Public Involvement Plan is documented and then shared with the individuals, organizations, and staff that participated in its development. At the end of the project, a summary of the public involvement process, including actual dates and activities and any additions or changes made along the way, is filed in the central project files along with appropriate back-up information. The Public Involvement staff will be responsible for creating this file. Materials filed include, but are not limited to:

- A list of Advisory Committee members
- Copies of all publications, press releases, and other related materials
- Results of all public meetings, including attendance, issues, and outcomes
- Tabulations from any surveys and comment cards
- Event outlines and supporting materials