

Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement

Lessons Learned from Leading Community Projects

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Meeting Agenda

- Introduction
- What is Civic Engagement/
Why Should You Invest the Time?
- Case Studies
 - Aquatics Master Plan
 - Community Sports Field Study
- Lessons Learned
- Questions & Answers



Introduction

- The “Team”
- Why Us?
 - Citywide initiatives with extensive outreach requirements
 - Actively engaged stakeholders from beginning to end
 - Significant program improvements approved by Council
 - Challenges and opportunities for lessons learned



Why Should You Invest the Time?

- ❑ Diverse perspectives, talents and resources will strengthen your project
- ❑ Understanding community needs/priorities can save you time and make it easier for you to obtain future support
- ❑ Engagement can turn adversaries into advocates
- ❑ It is the right thing to do—how can we be successful if our residents don't understand or value the work we do on their behalf?

Case Study #1 – Aquatics Master Plan

- ❑ Deliverable: Citywide Strategic Work Plan
- ❑ Results
 - Investment of \$8 million
 - Sponsorships, donations and new partnerships
 - Support for new pricing structure
 - Council adopted “full funding for pools” as a City-wide priority
- ❑ Methodology



Case Study #2 – Community Sports Fields Study

- Deliverable: Plan to increase fields/improve service delivery
- Results
 - Tiered system of fields/new pricing
 - Negotiated reservation process – maximized utilization & improved customer service
 - Community member presented to Council
- Methodology



Field Maintenance Study Tour at Harker School.

Lessons Learned

□ **Do Your Homework**

- Build your team/play to strengths & existing resources
- Understand your project and the area impacted
- Create a plan, set key milestones, identify required resources
 - Be strategic about opportunities for engagement
 - Understand the plan will change. Be clear where you have flexibility and where you don't
 - Always communicate change—early and often
 - Document changes for future reference
 - Take pictures throughout!

Lessons Learned

□ **Create the “Team”**

- *Project Manager* - Creates the vision, identifies resources, manages the process at 30,000 ft.
- *Consensus Builder* — Builds relationships with strategic stakeholders
- *Program Expert* - Provides input on the operational impact of policy discussions
- *Outreach Expert* - Ensures participation of stakeholders
- *Task Master* - Drives the schedule. Handles logistics. Must be detail-oriented with good people skills.

Lessons Learned

□ **Create Relationships**

- Who has the ability to influence/sidetrack?
- Recruit strategic stakeholders to assist
 - Subcommittees, focus groups, outreach, committee/council presentations, review documents, sit on review panels
- Be sure to make contact before and after key meetings
 - Send out meeting notices at least 2 weeks in advance
 - Send email blasts 48-hours in advance
 - Make personal phone calls

Lessons Learned

□ **Create Relationships (cont)**

- Follow-up in a timely manner
- Respect the integrity of the process
- Don't be afraid to say no or to set boundaries
- When you can't say yes:
 - provide an explanation, identify options (if any) and be open to viable alternatives
- A good process can open doors and new opportunities—a bad one will make your future projects much more difficult

Lessons Learned

- **Use Multiple Input Strategies; Tailor as Needed**
 - Identify early on which strategies you will use and when
 - Community meetings, focus groups, site tours, media releases/stories, flyers, banners, public notices, automated phone trees, surveys, email, website, knock & talks, 1-1s
 - Create internal project team meetings
 - Assign tasks to the “right” person—play to strengths & assets
 - Work with Council offices/existing resources (SNI, NBD, PRNS, etc)

Lessons Learned

□ Meeting “Do”s

- Coordinate w/other meetings; Tap into existing schedules
- Start/End on Time
- Arrange set-up to facilitate dialog
- Greet participants with a smile, badge and sign-in sheet!
- Small talk matters
- Have separate scribes & facilitators
- Be sensitive to diversity/neighborhood politics
- Speak with “one-voice”
- Keep presentations short; spend most of time listening

Lessons Learned

□ Meeting “Do”s (cont)

- Acknowledge all comments but don’t feel compelled to answer
- Stay calm and respectful
- Have an “emergency” plan
 - Pre/Post briefings
 - Ground rules
 - Sidebar/re-direct strategies
 - Community advocates

Lessons Learned

□ **Utilize Data and Technology**

- Recognize that community meetings have shortcomings
- Bring in the experts when needed in order to protect the integrity of the process
- Technology can supplement, but not replace direct communication
- Use technology to tap into general public, non-users, those that require lots of detail or frequent communication

Questions & Answers



Resources: Contact/Resource List

Community Engagement Process Policy

How to Effectively Bring the Community
Into the CIP Process Presentation