

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

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The goal of this Citizen Involvement Element is to provide a series of policies and strategies for including citizens' voices in decision making. This Element is designed to build solid interactions between city officials (elected, salaried, and appointed) and the citizens they serve.

Democracy relies on engagement by citizens as a means of creating evolving solutions to civic matters. Citizen involvement processes must be inclusive of those who identify themselves as interested and/or affected by decisions that will be made on issues of relevance to them. These processes should also result in decisions that reflect the community's voice.

Citizen involvement is not a substitute for decision making by the City, but it is an important influence on it. Shared decision making is not a cure for conflict, because it does not necessarily mean the final decision will make everyone happy. It lets everyone know the reasons for a decision in the hope that all or most participants will accept that decision, even if they do not agree with it, because they understand that the process was open and transparent.

Policy 1: Citizen Involvement: Provide a process for widespread citizen involvement as defined by Oregon's Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) including the creation of a Committee for Citizen Involvement and Citizen Involvement Plan.

Objective 1.1: Create a Committee for Citizen Involvement (CCI) that will develop, implement and evaluate components of the Talent Citizen Involvement Plan (TCIP) for Council's approval.

Implementation Strategy: While duties of the CCI are primarily in the area of land use planning, policies in the TCIP may also be used to address other community issues, such as clean energy and Integrated Pest Management policies. This approach allows for broader community involvement: citizen concerns are not limited to land use and the CCI can serve as a mediator if the planning department and citizen advisory committees disagree about a land use.

Implementation Steps:

- 1.1a: The Planning Commission and City Council will develop and approve legislation defining the role and authority of an independent Committee for Citizen Involvement.
- 1.1b: The CCI will work with the Planning Commission and City Council to develop and adopt a Talent Citizens Involvement Plan (TCIP) that includes policies on the formation and responsibilities of Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) and Acknowledged

Neighborhood Associations (ANAs) and for land use and other planning and community outreach and education.

- 1.1c: The CCI will produce an annual report evaluating the city's citizen involvement efforts and meet with the City Council no less than annually to suggest improvements needed to keep the effort effective.

Objective 1.2: The City commits to engaging all Talent citizens in the planning process, with an expectation of geographic, economic, and cultural diversity.

Implementation Strategy: In an open and well-publicized process following city policy for all appointments, Mayor and Council will recruit and appoint five citizens to serve as the CCI, one each from Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest of Talent Avenue, and one from the Urban Growth Area. Term lengths of initial appointments will be staggered to ensure future smooth transitions.

Implementation Steps:

- 1.2a: When developing the appointment process for the CCI, the Council will strive to include members of varying cultures and economic status, drawing on target groups that may include labor and welfare organizations, retail/industrial communities, schools, and other interested parties.
- 1.2b: Consider developing a database of former and potential individuals who have participated in other commissions and committees to aid in volunteer recruitment.

Objective 1.3: Create an infrastructure within the city government that is both flexible and strong, to ensure sustainable, effective, and maximum public involvement in all land use and other planning and community procedures and issues. The TCIP will work to create a culture of transparency, access, and education.

Implementation Steps:

- 1.3a: The CCI will work with the Planning Commission and City Council to establish an education plan for the year.
- 1.3b: The CCI will work with the Planning Commission and City Council to establish its goals and work program annually.

Policy 2 Communication: Assure effective two-way communications between the City (elected and appointed city officials, as well as staff) and citizens.

Objective 2: The City will make every effort to communicate decisions and deliberative discussions to citizens, especially those who participated in the process; and to assure citizens that their participation was considered.

Implementation Steps:

- 2a: The City will work with the CCI to create an outreach program that includes (but is not limited to) social media, print and broadcast news outlets, the City’s newsletter, website, and city billings to inform residents about upcoming decisions being made by the City.
- 2b: The City will work with the CCI to develop a program that includes regular open houses, neighborhood meetings, and publicized opportunities at local businesses.
- 2c: The CCI will develop a TCIP that will encourage the widest possible dissemination of information in advance of public meetings, including keeping the City’s website up-to-date, notices in public places throughout the city, maintaining and employing mailing lists, postal and email, and the like.
- 2d: The CCI will develop a TCIP that will include a variety of techniques and processes for maintaining communication between citizens and local officials, which may include, but is not limited to:
 - televised or live-streaming meetings
 - brochures and other written materials
 - library displays
 - links on the City website to other jurisdictions
 - physical facilities outside of the downtown core for public bulletin boards and kiosks
 - social media
- 2e: Communicate clearly with permit applicants, citizen groups, managers and elected officials about state and local time limits and deadlines.

Policy 3 Citizen Influence and Education: Citizens will have information about all phases of the planning process in a timely manner so they may be involved and effective; and have time to become educated and prepare a response. Citizens also have the responsibility to take the time and energy to participate in land use and other decision-making processes.

Objective 3: The TCIP will make explicit the processes by which citizens can learn how and when to participate in, and have influence on, land use and other discussions and decisions.

Implementation Steps:

- 3a: The CCI will be the lead source for citizen education of general citizens.
- 3b: Develop a TCIP that describes all phases of the Talent planning process and specify how citizens can be involved in each phase,

including a schedule and means for information sharing for city-originated land use actions and for land use [development/?] applications.

- 3c: Develop a TCIP that includes how citizens can access specific information on current planning actions.
- 3d: Develop a TCIP that details how and where the city will provide information to help citizens understand their rights and responsibilities at different types of land use meetings.
- 3e: Develop a TCIP that details how and where citizens can acquire agendas and other pertinent information to help them understand how to participate effectively and influence land use and other actions.
- 3f: Develop a TCIP that establishes public outreach and education programs for citizens interested in learning more about City processes.

Policy 4 Technical Information: Provide information about all phases of the planning process in language that is easily understandable by newcomers to the process.

Objective 4: Develop a program for disseminating information in non-technical format.

Implementation Strategy: Provide information in a manner that is commonly used by people who are not professionals. This should include language, but also may be applied to data, maps, and photos.

Implementation Steps:

- 4a: Develop a TCIP that includes a process for translating technical language into commonly used words and phrases.
- 4b: Develop a process for the CCI to review new printed and digital information as well as reprints for clarity.
- 4c: Develop a TCIP that includes guidelines on how and when translations of materials into languages other than English will be implemented.
- 4e: Evaluate ADA-required accommodations in public education communications and meetings.
- 4f: Draw on agencies (such as road or water construction, transportation, subdivision studies, and zoning changes that evaluate or implement public projects or programs) to provide assistance in explaining technical matters.

Policy 5 Feedback Mechanisms: Establish a process that assures citizens receive timely responses from staff and public officials.

Objective 5: Create a system ensuring that citizens receive requested information in a timely manner, including the rationale for City policies and decisions.

Implementation Steps:

- 5a: When developing the TCIP, consider a system that gauges citizen satisfaction on responses from staff to requests for information or data.
- 5b: Develop a TCIP that provides general guidelines about how questions from citizens about land use and other policies will receive prompt, clear answers via the same communication type.
- 5c: Develop a TCIP that includes an educational component explaining how to properly respond to land use notices and how to submit items into the written record.
- 5d: The TCIP will clarify that the Planning Commission will adopt, and continually strive to refine, procedures for responding to CAC comments on land use-related matters.
- 5e: The rationale for various policies and other City decisions will be available to the public in a written record.

Policy 6 Financial Support: Recognizing that a strong citizen involvement program leads to better decisions and fewer costly litigations and plan revisions, ensure adequate funding for programs outlined in the adopted TCIP.

Objective 6.1: Earmark funds specifically for citizen involvement.

Implementation Steps:

- 6.1a: Staff will clearly identify citizen involvement line item in the Community Development budget.
- 6.1b: The CCI will work with Community Development annually to provide the City Council and the Budget Committee with it requested budget needs.
- 6.1d: Encourage staff to utilize student interns, volunteers and AmeriCorps participants to leverage City staff time and resources.
- 6.1e: Evaluate the feasibility of funding a volunteer coordinator position, or include a similar responsibility within existing City staff.

Objective 6.2: Recognizing that staff time is a significant expense, ensure adequate time for noticing, hearings appeals, and other citizen involvement activities.

Implementation Steps:

- 6.2a: Allocate adequate time for noticing, hearings, appeals and other citizen involvement activities in work program.
- 6.2b: The budget will cover expenses for training opportunities for CCI members.

- 6.2c: The City's Staff and public officials will designate within the Community Development budget the amount needed for the TCIP as determined by the Community Development director.
- 6.2d: The City's policy makers and City Manager will support the Community Development Department as it adds and sustains the TCIP into the short- and long-range goals and workload by adding support staff and training as needed.
- 6.2e: The CCI will report on efforts to sustain TCIP to the City Council.
- 6.2f: City Manager will respond to staff needs to support and sustain the TCIP.