

Council's Questions – draft summary of compiled responses

1. How do you think the City can improve its public engagement process? How would you recommend that Council engage with the community?
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Beverage Licensing Authority (BLA)

- The BLA finds that the city newsletter is just a PR tool now, but feel that instead it should be used to provide more important information and perspective on community issues.
- The BLA pointed to the City of Seattle's planning website as an example where citizens can view every building project in that city and submit input via web entry that will be incorporated.
- The BLA commented that the public input process is almost farcical, in that, input is solicited and collected, but that said public input is not incorporated into the finished product of development and other projects, because inclusion of it is not mandatory and legally required. It should not be the case that residents express what they want, and then projects proceed as they will.
- This has lead, the BLA stated, in the most divisive environment that many long term Boulder resident members have ever seen. Neighborhoods, residents, and neighborhood associations do not feel heard because their input is not incorporated into the resulting development. An example of the Hogan-Pancost Property was offered.

Board of Zoning Adjustments

- n/a

Boulder Arts Commission

- n/a

Boulder Housing Partners

This is an important question to highlight this year. We agree that the current process that too often leaves neighbors, project sponsors and elected officials unhappy needs adjustment. Having developed projects in Boulder for more than 50 years, we know that opposition in affordable housing has not changed in fact, but it has changed in intensity. Our experience in the past five years is that neighborhoods are organized in opposition before we've made any initial outreach to introduce ourselves or engage them in conversation. The requests for reduced density (leading to fewer parking and traffic problems) come before any creative or collaborative engagements have begun. Boulder needs a process in which neighbors can be engaged in conversation, if not planning, well before any projects are planned or proposed.

In order for BHP, as a public developer, to be good stewards of public funds, we need the maximum predictability possible in an otherwise unpredictable and risky process. This starts with a reliance on the accuracy of underlying zoning in order to evaluate whether we can afford a project or a piece of land. From the zoning information, we can evaluate the debt-carrying capacity of a site, which comes from understanding the number and size of homes we can build. From that revenue calculation, we evaluate whether we can feasibly raise, in equity funds, the balance needed to complete a project. As a mission-driven developer, we underwrite to the maximum number of units that zoning allows so the site can maximally contribute to the City's 10% goal. We then begin the process of working with neighbors, engineers and site consultants, to determine whether we can produce a project that is high quality, compatible with the neighborhood, an asset to the neighborhood, green and durable over time. The investment to get to density-certainty via a site review process ranges from \$150,000-\$250,000, which means that significant public funds can be lost if we can't rely on zoning to indicate certainty.

A solution can be found in an affordable housing benefit ordinance that would provide for a density bonus for certain affordable projects.

From an engagement perspective, we strongly support any version of neighborhood planning and conversations that can be accomplished and facilitated via a city-led process. We know that success in establishing and maintaining affordable housing in Boulder will require strong and vocal political support and individual political will from our elected and appointed leaders as we encounter opposition to the number of units and eligible for affordable housing, to the pacing and timing of development, to growth related costs and possible exemptions from various City fees and processes, to possible commercial and residential land use and zoning changes, and within the jobs/balance discussions. The challenge for Boulder and its elected and appointed officials is the conflict between strong community-oriented goals and supportive language for increasing affordable housing and the reality of opposition from sub-community residents who want affordable housing somewhere else besides their neighborhood. Affordable housing supporters, including the business community whose employers/employees are impacted, and the environmental advocates/activists who want to reduce in-commuting have to join forces to support our City officials who must consistently put into practice the City-wide housing goals at the project level.

We believe that data and drawings, analysis and advocacy can only go so far in changing neighborhood opposition. What we need as a community and as part of the process of developing affordable housing is to put a real and personal face on the people who benefit from and live in affordable housing.

Families and individuals waiting for housing are not the typical profile of who shows up to provide testimony for or against a particular project or policy. There are a variety of barriers to participation in the typical system – transportation, child care, language, intimidation etc. At your request and on your schedule, the BHP Resident Council extends an offer to Council members (and other appointed officials) to meet with them and a focus group that they will convene of low-income Boulder residents in three demographics: families, elderly, and people with disabilities.

Boulder Junction Access Districts

- n/a

Design Advisory Boards

- n/a

Downtown Management Commission

- Actively engage boards and commissions you appoint as your ambassadors in the community to streamline the process.
- The City's mode of communication is outdated and amplifies a certain demographic. Implement web-based and mobile technology to create meaningful alternatives for stakeholders to submit public comments. Review and weigh inputs received through this medium equally with inputs received at public hearings.
- Develop a more user-friendly and intuitive city website for information.

Environmental Advisory Board

- The EAB recommends that the City create an engagement strategy that informs and supports the public aspect of all activities. This includes determining the end goal(s) of community involvement, synthesizing ideas from various experts and the community, compiling solution and working to achieve buy-in from the residents. This strategy will make it more efficient for the EAB to recommend specific tactics to support engagement.

Human Relations Commission

- At the November 2016 HRC meeting, 71 people attended to express concerns regarding civil liberties, democratic process, gender equality, immigrant safety and other issues. The Dec. 5, 2016, Safe and Welcoming Community presentation drew about 100 participants who raised similar issues. Emphasis of many comments was on the need for proactive communication, clearly expressed policies and decisive action. More specific comments addressed the needs of hard-to-reach populations.

Three ideas that the HRC brings forward to City Council based on its work with the community, as well as this recent community input are:

1. For future community surveying/input, use a community-organizing approach by hiring people from or working with the harder-to-reach community. Rely on community-based, nonprofit partners who have the relationships with the harder-to-reach and under-represented populations;

2. Use social media more effectively to expand and improve communications with under-represented communities; and
3. Better prioritize outreach to under-represented communities by utilizing existing city resources, such as the city's neighborhood liaison, to more deliberately connect with these marginalized populations. Use resources to bring more mainstream issues into communities not always engaged in city efforts.

Landmarks Board

- n/a

Library Commission

- n/a

Open Space Board of Trustees

- The City's recent efforts to improve its public engagement process have been noticeable. We see decision making-related notices in the paper and on the City website, and receive multiple emails from the City, including through HOAs and neighborhood organizations. Council and boards should prioritize allowing the public to communicate their interests about high-public-interest items. Since our aging populace has vastly differing tech abilities, the City needs to better understand how people would like to be communicated with. To improve public engagement, our board suggested that different modes of engagement with the public may be helpful. In particular, we support a "roundtable" type discussion where our board directly engages with members of the public in a more open format. Roundtables would be conducted in meetings; the point would be for our board to come to a deeper understanding of public interest and to work towards collaboration with all parties. Finally, we also suggest reaching out to public relations professionals, possibly outside of City staff, to bring in fresh perspectives. In addition to mediation/moderation, we suggest that professionals with years of training and experience may be in the best position to advise City staff on methods to minimize conflict regarding contentious issues.
- Our main interest lies in getting help from Council in doing what we cannot do for ourselves (i.e. external partnerships and using resources not available to OSMP at present). There are several avenues for partnerships we envision: First, we need to pursue opportunities to partner with County, USFS, State Parks, and even our own transportation department, so that efforts are coordinated and complimentary. Many OSMP projects that could reduce crowding, parking, and overuse involve agencies outside of OSMP. Encouraging better communication between staff and boards with respect to these larger projects would be a great benefit. Second, research partnerships with local scientists would be useful, especially long-term research partnerships. At present, Boulder offers some one- to three-year research grants, but does not have an adequate

plan for funding long-term studies. Given our big questions about human impacts, climate change, resilience, and management plans for species in conflict with development (e.g. prairie dogs), we need to fund research that can take a multi-year (or multi-decade) approach to understanding our changing environment.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

- We appreciate the city striving to engage community, and acknowledge the complex balance involved in information gathering and community processes. We would recommend:
 1. consider delegation of information gathering, perhaps utilizing information from Boards and Commissions;
 2. prepare a multi-step response process that would allow for consideration and reflection on ideas or concerns submitted by community members for larger issues;
 3. utilize community events for information gathering; and
 4. take on fewer initiatives in order to be able to focus more deeply.

The PRAB has also prioritized building community and relationships, especially as we work to engage youth and other priority populations from the Master Plan. We have discussed working to learn more about existing groups, such as the Youth Opportunities Advisory Board, and leveraging their expertise as we engage community. In addition, we have developed materials about how to engage with PRAB, to better inform community members about public comment opportunities and channels to communicate with board members. We continue to prioritize this work in 2017, and look forward to working with and learning from City Council.

Planning Board

- Planning Board appreciates the outstanding efforts that staff has made to ensure that residents are engaged in meaningful ways as part of the BVCP update. The work that staff has done to solicit public input and incorporate that input into its recommendations for land use map changes and policy upgrades has been admirable. We also applaud the digital enhancements that will make the final BVCP much more accessible and useful to the public.

The planning newsletter is well done and is appreciated. It could be even more effective at providing notice of upcoming concept and site plan reviews. Efforts to increase the number of subscribers should continue.

The Board appreciates that City Council is embracing its role as steward of the public dialog, both in terms of tone and outcome, by appointing a Public Engagement task force. We look forward to the recommendations of that effort, particularly if they offer changes to Planning Board procedures.

With regard to day-to-day community engagement on land use and project development decisions, the Planning Board continues to support expanding and improving the City's noticing procedures. Our suggestions regarding notices have been, and continue to be, the following:

1. All residents and business owners within the notification areas, including renters and tenants, should receive formal notices. This would be in addition to the present practice of notifying only property owners.
2. There should be enhanced and improved use of electronic media to provide project information to interested parties.
3. More detailed information on specific agenda items should be included in the newspaper public notices to improve public awareness and potential participation in Planning Board meetings.
4. The City should improve timely notification of property owners and residents materially affected by various City actions, such as proposed changes in floodplain mapping and area classifications.
5. There should be improved descriptions and information on project signage, with images if possible, and information on where to find a proposed site plan or other relevant information on the City website.
6. Notifications should be provided in other languages when appropriate.

Other Board recommendations regarding public engagement include:

1. This past year, some of the planning-related public conflict has involved projects that have locked in the numbers and types of housing prior to meaningful public engagement. We support reversing that order, so that the community's input is reflected in the final proposal.
2. At the pre-application stage, key city populations should be identified to the applicant to ensure their involvement.
3. Project and proposal-related neighborhood meetings should have a higher level of staff involvement, perhaps even organized and managed by staff, to ensure the provision of objective information, background, and staff and Planning Board roles

Transportation Advisory Board

- How Council Can Improve Public Engagement Process:
 1. Continue the City of Boulder newsletter, and seek ways to survey public opinions.
 2. Work with the Daily Camera to create an opportunity for regular contributions from Council in the Op-Ed pages.
 3. Establish an email opt-in process as part of the public comment sign-up form, and add these to a City-maintained listserve.
 4. Recommend City Staff respond to all email inquiries or public comment within a prescribed timeframe.
 5. Work with TAB to create a more formal process for TAB to raise specific community concerns.
 6. Update the City's website so it is more user-friendly (less jargon and more plain English) and easier to navigate.
 7. Partner with local ad and tech agencies to develop more innovative and technologically appropriate messaging.

University Hill Commercial Area Management Commission

- The city has taken several successful communications measures this past year, namely the newsletter that is sent to all residents and use of the Next Door app to connect neighbors on a

real-time basis. Not everyone reads all forms of communication, so maintaining multiple channels of communication is key to ensure that the entire community may access current information. Ensuring that city communications reach a diversity of residents across a variety of demographics is equally important to promoting an active citizenry.

It would also facilitate greater community engagement if there was an effort to educate the public on when and how to participate in the public process. For example, letting citizens know which meetings offer opportunities for public comment, and when and how to sign up to speak.

Water Resources Advisory Board

- The WRAB would like to see improvements to the format of council meetings that would enable the public to better participate in meetings. Meetings last too late for many community members to constructively participate. Community members would appreciate focused discussion on a limited number of agenda items, leaving less important items for the consent agenda. Council members should keep their comments succinct and limit public comments to two minutes per speaker. The WRAB also suggests that council members should increase the effort spent to engage with advisory boards and their members. We recognize that council members cannot be expected to interact with every board member or even every board, given time constraints. A solution would be for each board or commission to have one or two council assigned to that board or commission for purposes of attending a public coffee talk with that board once a year to discuss and learn about important issues that will eventually come before council. The coffee talk could also include an invitation to the Daily Camera in order to maximize community awareness surrounding important issues