

**Public Participation Working Group
Input From The Neighborhood Summit
October 29, 2016**

1. What issues and challenges do you see regarding public participation in Boulder?

R1: Meeting notices are inadequate; childcare isn't provided at meetings; the city doesn't use the wealth of participatory techniques available. I want more outreach, better engagement of minorities (material in Spanish, etc.)

R2: Lack of positive preparation on discussing issues before they become adversarial. A better way to give opinions to City Council—and getting timely feedback from them!

R3: It is difficult to find substantive, meaningful ways to have an impact as a citizen. As a 45-year resident of Boulder and former University manager I feel I have things to contribute vs. just filling out surveys or sending comments to Council and Planning Board.

R4: LOOMIO.com

R6: A) The City gerrymanders every working group and focus group they put together. Stocking majority percentages on all groups with people they know will agree w/them and support the city's pre-determined decisions (like density, in-fill, co-ops)

B) City Council systematically legislates on the basis of small percentages special interests. They should have more curiosity re: what the majority of citizens want.

C) Focus groups, working groups should be constituted based on proportional representation based on Boulder's demographics.

R7: community knowledge about how to do it. Lack of communication: 2 way. Listening to all sides

R8: a. staff/facilitator over structuring of work group agendas, process, and deliberations.

b. lack of dialogue between council and public.

c. staff control over work groups, overstructure of workgroup process, not trusting workgroup members to direct outcomes at workgroup meetings

R9: Lack of a forum for two way conversations or deliberative communication

R10: traditionally silenced or "unengaged" populations, especially renters don't seem [there's not more on the survey]

R11: --People may want to participate but jobs and family needs may not leave much time for participation. Need to find different ways to allow busy people to participation – maybe online surveys and/or focus groups. Some also travel a lot for work and miss opportunities for meetings because of that. Don't leave out people who miss a meeting because they can't attend.

--include new people in the conversation and not just the same old voices. Need to be more welcoming and open to new voices

--include CU more in the conversation to develop joint solutions

2. What are the principles that should guide good public participation?

R1: equity, openness, creativity, flexibility, curiosity, authenticity

R2:

- ✓ Making an effort to really understand viewpoints that are different from yours. Be respectful.

- ✓ Be vulnerable; Be willing to share your viewpoint and your rationale for it.
- ✓ Understand that problems can be jointly solved without changing people's basic values
- ✓ Focus on problems, not people.

R3: Again, I think people want to have meaningful input – not just window dressing so the city can say they had a public process. Specifically, I would like to see more citizen working groups, e.g., for the development of the former Boulder Community Hospital site, which I have tried to become involved in.

R4: lack of a technical framework to house these conversations in an [indecipherable], open, transparent, and democratic way

R5:

- ✓ Strong trusting relationships
- ✓ A platform or forum where ideas, voices and dialogue are encouraged

R6: We live in a democracy based on majority rule. Boulder needs to find out what a majority of citizens want. Nothing even remotely close to a majority of Boulderites want to live next to a co-op house of 10 unrelated people! Ditto for “right-sizing” Folsom St. – a tiny percentage of the population actually wanted it! So . . . b/c the City didn't listen to the community as a whole, one of the most divisive debates in Boulder's history occurred. City Council should send, through U.S. Mail, surveys to every Boulder resident.

R7: Respect and listening

R8: a. 2 way conversations, not one-way emails.

b. higher weighting of public participation on workgroups of the public that are not affiliated with city government

c. having workgroups develop their own structure of deliberation and data gathering

d. freedom to allow workgroups to brainstorm to set goals and directions

R9: trust through developed relationships that are consistent, and two way. Timely conversations.

R10: [no comment]

R11:

- ✓ Have a variety of different avenues that allow communication from and to the city.
- ✓ Good avenues for transparent two-way communication.
- ✓ Have avenues for introverts, not comfortable with being vocal in large groups, to share their opinions
- ✓ Give citizens confidence that the city is really listening to input. Don't diminish people who have divergent opinions from the city council majority. I've often heard council members say that the public did not understand certain issues when actually there were just informed disagreement.

3. What public outreach ideas and strategies have you seen or used that could be applied to Boulder?

R1:

- ✓ Block parties by the city in neighborhoods, esp. underrepresented places;
- ✓ Ice cream socials;
- ✓ Story gathering/ storytelling opportunities for public to share experiences;

- ✓ Fun, creative experiments or pop-ups (i.e., giant maps people can write on, chalkboards around the city, story booths, events)

R2:

- ✓ Buying coffee/snack/etc. in exchange for gathering information about how a variety of people feel about an issue.
- ✓ Using skilled facilitators to manage discussion on controversial issues.
- ✓ We need more true outreach—staff and City Council going out into the community.

R3: I was part of the group that established the first two Family Resource Schools many years ago (this was a joint project between the city BVSD). Although not enough community members participated, I did feel it was an authentic process to which I was able to make a real contribution.

R4: Create FB groups to connect people/leaders from events/conferences like this neighborhood summit

R5: I like the idea of an event that offer entertainment and then opportunities for public discussion

R6: 1) Yes. – We in Martin Acres survey every one of the 1,350 homes in the neighborhood, before our leadership takes a position on issues.

2) The city should endorse the idea of neighborhood plans, written by neighborhood residents themselves.

R7: Informal discussions/meetings with people – hosting discussions in houses

R8: a. staff trusting to relinquish control of workgroup deliberations.

b. allowing working group to function independent of staff leadership and facilitator

c. council members having Q & A town hall meetings in neighborhood areas at regular intervals.

R9, R10: [no comment]

R11:

- ✓ City council members could be elected from districts within the city, or at least each neighborhood could have an assigned city council member who is charged with understanding their needs.
- ✓ Use the libraries and city rec centers as locuses for meetings and dispersal of information.

4. What thoughts do you have regarding improving civic engagement processes to increase the effectiveness and transparency of City decision making?

R1:

- ✓ Have a city podcast that summarizes council deliberations and decisions for people who don't watch TV.
- ✓ If you improve engagement and data collection from it, you'll improve city decision making

R2:

- ✓ I would like more and more residents to receive education on being a facilitative group member; develop skills
- ✓ City should provide information about parameters regarding city issues before they become adversarial (e.g., what are the by right/legal aspects of a proposed development).

- ✓ Individual council members give rationale for why they are making a particular decision.

R3: The city has what appears to be an open and inclusive public process; so, the question why do city residents not feel heard? I think many people who have invested time and energy in one of these processes feel that an agenda was already pre-determined and their input was just to fulfill the requirement for public participation.

R4: see above and read The Enspiral Handbook

R5:

- ✓ Greater % of City employees actually reside in city.
- ✓ Neighborhood liaison or alderman
- ✓ City presentations of information—not simply posters with Q & A. Present the ideas!

R6: Yes . . . have an independent survey company do an unbiased survey 100% of Boulder residents. Not just 6,000. –That leaves 97,000 residents out in the cold. Then, the independent can publish the results with no spin from the city. So all of us can see that “the people have spoken” and how they spoke. Only then will they trust the process.

R7: see above

R8:

- ✓ Two way discussions
- ✓ City calendars not being written with abbreviations
- ✓ Workgroup meetings always on city calendars
- ✓ Agenda items on council to verbally address public input from emails to confirm to public their input is being heard
- ✓ Bottom-up working group processes instead of top-down staff driven processes

R9, R10: No comment

R11:

- ✓ Have regular meetings in neighborhoods to have an exchange of information (on diff. day/time to allow people with different schedules to participate
- ✓ Provide opportunities for people to give feedback to the city in conversational format (such as focus groups) so people can be more thoughtful and deliberative in the conversation and so introverts not comfortable commenting at city council meetings can participate.

5. What else would you like to share with the PPWG?

R1: Please focus on engaging families with children, non-English speaking people and meeting people where they are! Thank you for creating this working group!

R3: I think the City should careful with the seeming push towards neighborhood pseudo-representation as the primary vehicle for public participation. This may cause neighborhoods to self-interested and/or pitted against each other, to the detriment of the community at large.

R4: Thank you for starting this conversation!

R8:

- ✓ Allow public input at workshop meetings
- ✓ Be open and available at meeting for input from observers
- ✓ Workgroup take charge of directions of discussions
- ✓ Solicit public input from public about public participation problems so patterns can be identified. Define problems so group can identify possible solutions.

R9, R10: [no comment]

R11: Remember that a lot of people would like to participate, but have limited time and/or time/day restrictions to do so. Please offer a variety of avenues for participation. Include not only households, but also businesses in the conversation. Many workers are not Boulder residents, but spend many hours/days here and spend \$ here.