



A City that Works

Departments work seamlessly and strategically with each other and the community

What strategies are working?

STAFF ARE COMMITTED TO REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS, INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY AND ADDRESSING ISSUES.

- The City's principles of engagement guide our work. Departments have really evolved in their efforts to engage the community on projects and share information.
- 311 staff go to community events to promote its services. Staff is committed to attending events and meetings because they recognize that the issues raised at these gatherings are 311 issues.
- Departments are working with neighborhoods on neighborhood priority plans.
- The City has used the Creative CityMaking process to proactively reach out to neighborhoods and complete small area plans.
- The City introduced HOME Line, a nonprofit tenant advocacy organization.
- We're making efforts to bring three constituencies — neighborhoods, the City Council and City departments — into one conversation to address neighborhood issues.
- Regulatory Services is seeking to learn why its citations have disparate impact on communities of color.
- Public Works has evolved in its efforts to engage the community as it plans projects.
- Staff are working to get data in order so community meetings are more informative.

311 PROVIDES FRONT-LINE COMMUNICATION.

- The 311 staff answers day-to-day questions and quickly connects residents to the department that can address concerns.
- 311's services are very helpful to the City Council.

THE CITY USES MANY FORMS OF MEDIA EFFECTIVELY.

- The City provides the news media with a wide range of information. The City gets good media relations results, especially with the daily newspaper and local television stations.
- City staff are identifying the messages that communities are seeking.
- The City does a good job of using the Internet, text messages and social media to reach out to the community in innovative ways.

What strategies are not working?

CITY DEPARTMENTS DON'T TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES OR COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES.

- The Neighborhood and Community Relations Department isn't always fully resourced to other City departments or isn't engaged early enough.
- The City's internal structure still feels siloed to residents. For example, if it's a housing meeting and a different topic comes up, staff's response is, "We're not here to talk about that."
- City staff don't get involved early enough because the City and neighborhood associations don't coordinate efforts. Neighborhood associations create a vision and ask City staff to play catch up.
- The Community Engagement Task Force's report got put on a shelf.

OUR APPROACH TO ISSUES CAN CREATE DIVISION AND CONFUSION.

- Holding separate neighborhood meetings for transportation projects that cross several neighborhoods pits neighborhood against neighborhood. It's not a process that builds consensus.

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- We put our neighborhood volunteers in tough spots because development issues are so divisive.
- Because neighborhoods — rather than the City — facilitate development review, the process is inconsistent.
- Neighborhoods are still functioning in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program mode. They are still learning how to connect in a goal-oriented — versus project-oriented — approach.
- The City gives mixed signals to neighborhood organizations on what feedback is needed.

OUR APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ISN'T EXPANSIVE ENOUGH.

- The City spends an enormous amount of time engaging the community around development and too little time engaging the community around sweeping policy changes, budgetary decisions and other major issues. Just because it isn't in your neighborhood doesn't mean that there's no need to engage.
- More staff need to be trained in the principles of community engagement.
- Community involvement isn't a realistic option for residents who are struggling economically. You can't join a committee if you're trying to feed your family. Only professional boards pay stipends.
- There isn't an objective measurement of success, so it's hard to tell whether we are meeting our goals.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS IS DIFFERENT WHEN OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS ARE USED.

- When departments use outside consultants, the process becomes the consultant's agenda. Outside consultants don't always understand the City's core values of community engagement.
- Using outside consultants makes it harder for the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department to provide engagement help.
- Spending on outside consultant services can shortchange the overall project budget.

OUR OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION EFFORTS SOMETIMES FALL SHORT.

- It's a challenge to know about all the meetings being held in Minneapolis. The Neighborhood Community Engagement Commission can't be a facilitator if it doesn't know about projects.
- More needs to be done to reach out to community newspapers and non-English media outlets.
- Communication with non-English-speaking communities remains a challenge.
- Some residents have better access to information or are more skilled at working the system than others.
- Residents get confused between Neighborhood Revitalization projects and other projects.
- Departments rely too much on the City Council to do communication.
- Community engagement efforts from City Council ward offices are inconsistent.

WE AREN'T MANAGING EXPECTATIONS.

- We need to do a better job of managing expectations for transportation projects.
- We don't manage expectations of participants. We go to neighborhood association to ask their views of a plan, and they tell us they don't like it. Then, when the City goes ahead with the plan, they don't believe they've been heard. It's not fair for us to ask what a neighborhood thinks if the City has already committed to a citywide plan.

Working in partnership, what strategies could we pursue?

USE THE SERVICES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS DEPARTMENT.

- View the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department as an extension of each City department. Departments should use its help frequently to better understand and carry out community engagement functions.
- Departments should meet with the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department before a community meeting to learn about issues that could arise during that meeting. Then staff will be prepared for topics that aren't

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on the meeting agenda.

- Give the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department an opportunity to vet an outside consultant to ensure the consultant understands the City's core values of community engagement.

BROADEN THE FOCUS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT EFFORTS.

- When transportation projects cross neighborhood lines, hold joint meetings that include all impacted neighborhoods. Bring stakeholders together so participants see projects from a communitywide perspective rather than a neighborhood-specific standpoint.
- When a neighborhood priority plan crosses neighborhood boundaries, don't give that plan a neighborhood name. Instead, name the plan by a street that crosses all the involved neighborhoods.
- Encourage neighborhoods to connect to the City early in the process so plans are goal-oriented instead of project-oriented.
- Develop and share universal principles to apply to all neighborhood meetings. More commonalities would result in a better conversation.
- Have more boots on the ground. Regulatory Services, Public Works, 311 and other departments should attend neighborhood meetings and informal community gatherings. The City shouldn't always ask residents to come downtown for meetings.
- Offer a stipend to help low income residents afford to serve on task forces and committees.
- Seek new strategies to reach out to renters, non-English speakers and populations that aren't engaged.
- Track attendance at meetings to help measure community engagement efforts.
- Assemble focus groups to get feedback from neighborhoods on what is and isn't working in City communications and community engagement efforts.

SHARE MORE INFORMATION.

- Staff should share their successful strategies to give departments ideas and options for proactive community outreach.
- Create a database that could numerically rank departments on how they share information. Develop this in a way that won't be viewed critically but will be used as way to encourage improvement.
- Create a shared calendar of meetings that can be used by departments, the Neighborhood Community Engagement Commission and City Council offices.
- Acquaint City staff with neighborhood priority plans.

TRAIN AND EMPOWER CITY STAFF.

- Empower City staff to communicate proactively with residents on a regular basis.
- Provide City staff with the training and tools they need to effectively communicate with residents.
- Recognize and accept that conflict is inevitable. Learn to be comfortable with discomfort.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND CONSISTENTLY.

- Be clear and consistent in communicating what the community engagement process is trying to achieve. Spell it out. Tell people what we are here for, how we will engage with you and how we can work together to get things done.
- Always explain the purpose of the process. If this is a citywide program, not a neighborhood-specific program, explain the big vision and how we can work together to achieve the community initiative.
- Complete the feedback loop by telling participants what the City heard and how that information was used to make a decision. Present a careful analysis of data and explain why the City proceeded as it did. People won't mind if you make a different decision if you tell them what you heard and why the City proceeded in a different direction.

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This conversation had representatives from Minneapolis City Council, Mayor's Office, City Coordinator's Office, Regulatory Services, Neighborhood and Community Relations, Communications, 311, Pillsbury United Communities, Stevens Square Community Organization and Target Corporation.