

Comprehensive Plan Update
Community Involvement Committee
Report to Planning and Sustainability Commission
July 28, 2015

Introduction

My name is Stan Penkin. As an original member of the Community Involvement Committee (CIC) I'm pleased to participate in presenting an evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan Update community involvement process over the past three years. I'm happy to introduce two relatively new members of the Committee who will be co-presenting this evening, Jessica Conner and Christina Blaser. I'm also pleased to reintroduce Kenneth Doswell, another relatively new member who, if you may recall, was a participant in our last presentation to you back in November.

It is somewhat ironic that today is almost six years to the day (July 8, 2009) that eighteen diverse and committed volunteers first came together to begin its work on the outreach efforts of the Portland Plan. I had far less gray hair back then and honestly had no idea that what was advertised as a commitment of four meetings a year for three years evolved into something far more extensive and exceptionally meaningful. Now, after some 50 full committee meetings and countless subcommittee meetings, presentations, workshops, work fairs and so on, we are here to provide our final evaluation of the outreach process.

Context

To provide some context, the CIC was chartered to review and make recommendations on the community involvement efforts for the entire Periodic Review process, including the Portland Plan and the Comprehensive Plan Update. The CIC reviews past involvement efforts and results and previews upcoming involvement approaches and activities. The committee makes recommendations to the Planning & Sustainability Commission (PSC) and BPS staff on ways to continue or improve its public involvement activities so they meet the overall goals of the public involvement work program.

As an outgrowth of Vision PDX in the Tom Potter administration, the Sam Adams administration, through the Portland Plan, continued and expanded the process of a serious, thorough and inclusive citywide conversation about what we wanted our city to be in 25 years (now down to 20 years). The Portland Plan was a three year process of understanding where we were as a city and what our vision and goals were for the future. The Portland Plan was aspirational as well as an attempt to engage multiple public bodies in coordinating the future

use of public dollars in a more coordinated fashion. It set the stage for the development of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

I am honored to have been a part of this process and to have had the opportunity to work with so many devoted individuals, from my fellow Committee members to the incredibly professional and dedicated staff at BPS. The committee wishes to thank and acknowledge the many staff members at BPS who guided us through this deliberative and important process. While we cannot mention everyone, we want to especially express our appreciation to Marty Stockton, Deborah Stein and Eden Dabbs who have been with us since day one, and to Sara Wright, who in these past months has so ably and diligently taken on Marty's previous role.

While the Comprehensive Plan is quickly approaching its adoption stage, it will not be the end, but rather the foundation of an ever evolving progression of making Portland the best it can be for everyone in our City. What follows is our final evaluation of the community involvement efforts in the Comprehensive Plan Update process and recommendations moving forward.

What We Did

Hi. I am Kenneth Doswell. I am a property owner and a small business owner located on the corner of N. Williams and Fremont Ave. I am here to cover a few of the events that have taken place and to summarize what we have done over the last several months.

Since April 1, 2014 the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, together with several local partners, has implemented a wide range of public information and outreach activities for the Comprehensive Plan Update.

This included an interactive map app, Comprehensive Plan Update website and an e-newsletter. There has been considerable outreach to the public that has generated face-to-face conversations, BPS staffed tables at events, presentations at community meetings, neighborhood walks, a dedicated Comprehensive Plan helpline, coordinated Planning and Sustainability Commission hearings, District Liaison "office hours" at community locations, open house events and a special learning and commenting session, mailings to property owners and published articles and advertisements in community newspapers.

The intent of all of these activities was to inform the public about the elements of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft and its effects on specific properties, answer questions from the community, and ensure that people who want to provide testimony to the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) have the opportunity to do so.

Online Tools and Information

The primary tool used to communicate and provide opportunities for input on proposed map changes was the online Map App, an interactive map showing the proposed map changes, the Transportation Systems Plan and infrastructure investments.

Since July 2014, the Map App has registered roughly 30,000 page views and approximately 1,200 comments.

BPS has also continued to use the Comprehensive Plan Update web pages and E-news to reach the public. The Comprehensive Plan Update website received over 275,000 page views between December 2013 and November 2014.

On September 9, 2014, an “online open house” was added to the website, allowing site visitors to review the materials produced for the three physical open houses,

The Comprehensive Plan E-news, which goes out monthly, was sent in October to 6355 email addresses. The E-news was opened by 27% of recipients, and 79 people clicked through to content. About 57.5% of opens used a desktop and 42.5% used a mobile device.

To explore new ways to communicate dense and complex topics in a matter of minutes as well as reach more people more quickly, urban designers and communications staff created three “topic videos” to help explain the reasons for some of the land use map changes as expressed in the Map App. One video talked about creating more land for jobs and two others talked about the reasons and rationale for down-designating for natural hazards and stormwater constraints as well as infrastructure deficiencies in East Portland.

Articles and Advertising in Local Newspapers

BPS staff placed quarter-page display ads in nine community/cultural papers in June and July to announce the release of the Map App and pending release of the Proposed Draft. BPS staff also worked with journalists at a variety of media outlets to inform coverage of the Comprehensive Plan update, resulting in more than 40 articles about the process

Mailings

Three mailings were sent out during this time period notifying owners of affected property. The first was sent to 17,338 owners of commercially designated property affected by the change to “Mixed Use” designations. The second was a general heads-up that went to 10,378 other property owners. The third mailer went to 41,551 property owners and included language required by Measure 56.

Community Meetings and Events

Staff presented information about the Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft at multiple community meetings and walks and tabled at four community events. These engagements drew a host of neighborhood and business associations, committees and coalitions centered on land use, forest use, parks and transportation coalitions, and school boards all with the intent to insure an informed public about the Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft.

Open Houses

Three Comprehensive Plan Open Houses were held in early September and featured information about the Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft as well as the Early Implementation projects. Open houses were advertised through the Comprehensive Plan Update website, the CPU E-news, social media and the district liaisons' community email networks.

Learning and Commenting Sessions

To increase participation of communities experiencing rapid change or potentially vulnerable to changes proposed in the plan, BPS hired a consultant to assist with targeted outreach to these historically under-represented communities. Through a "Listening and Commenting Session," staff met with members of a dozen community groups, who identified areas of the plan they wanted to focus on in preparation for the public hearings.

Community Engagement Liaisons

Staff is working with the Office of Equity and Human Rights to connect with the Community Engagement Liaisons in order to reach out to immigrant and refugee communities. While BPS staff is enthusiastic about the opportunity this program offers to connect with underrepresented and underserved groups, logistical issues and the challenges of building new relationships have made it difficult to get this effort moving.

Comprehensive Plan Helpline

The helpline call center was set up as a single point of contact for questions about the Comprehensive Plan. The intent was to make it easy for callers to get the information they need, and to allocate staff time efficiently.

Caller questions varied widely, ranging from concerns about eminent domain to questions about the impact of development on specific properties. Almost all callers were responding to the mailers and were concerned about impact on specific properties.

Challenges

Hi, my name is Christina Blaser. Today I am presenting the key challenges this committee has observed the staff at the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability and the Planning & Sustainability Commission encounter over the past six years in their community involvement efforts for the Portland Plan and Comprehensive Plan Update. We've chosen to highlight three topics that really stood out to the committee members as future opportunities for improvement.

The first growth opportunity I would like to share with you is Transparency. I am so appreciative to live in a city where there are high standards in both transparency and accountability throughout our local government. It is clear to me that everyone involved in this process values the opinions of all our community members, especially the concerns of our community members who fall into the category of under-represented groups. BPS has made an unprecedented effort to reach out to our many communities through multiple media channels, open houses, hearings, mailings, learning and commenting sessions, etc. and they continually fine tuned their messages and their outreach process to meet the needs of community.

Despite our best efforts, we ran into issues when the PSC, recognizing community concerns, extended the community's comment period to last March 13th. Staff, however, continued their original schedule of synthesizing comments and preparing staff reports based on comments already received. Some community members felt their testimonies were overlooked when they were told their statements would not be included in the relevant staff reports and work sessions for the PSC because those reports had been already been prepared. All of the testimonies were eventually included in future PSC discussions, but the damage of distrust was already done. I think it is important to mention that this mishap only occurred once. To maintain that high standard of transparency, we must make extra effort to educate individuals on the community involvement process so miscommunication and confusion does not occur.

The second growth opportunity is Making a Plan to Continue to Build Upon Established Relationships and Build New Ones.

This is especially important for our under-represented groups in the community. We've heard comments from our communities like "this doesn't affect me. Why should I care?" and "if I'm not being heard, why should I get involved?"

There won't always be action items for the community to comment on, especially over a six year long process, but keeping the public's interest and enthusiasm up during this long process should be a priority. It is important for the Bureau to coordinate with ONI and relevant community groups to assure that leadership and capacity building continue so these underrepresented communities develop the knowledge and capacity to fully participate in future planning efforts.

And with that comes our last opportunity for future growth, Funding for Outreach. We realize that Portland is unique and something like a Comprehensive Plan review process is unprecedented. It's hard to budget for an extensive outreach plan with so many unknowns. Luckily, with six years of experience under our belt, we can plan to budget better in the future. Funding for additional staff members for outreach, funding to broaden the reach of our communication tools like the mailers, and funding for a liaison who would be responsible for the communication between BPS staff and underrepresented communities are just a few examples where we can make a better impact in involving Portlanders in the process.

Moving Forward

Good evening Commissioners. My name is Jessi Conner and I will be giving the summation of our final reflection to you as the Community Involvement Committee(CIC). The portion of the Department of Land Conservation and Development Citizen Involvement Guide that Linda Nettekoven quoted at our last presentation, I believe needs to be heard again. "Planning doesn't end with the adoption of the comprehensive plan and neither does citizen involvement...and "Having a... committee with citizen involvement as its only responsibility – ensures that citizens are not forgotten in the planning process." This ideal is a crucial part of the fabric of policy and decision making for Portland. Having this kind of depth of citizen involvement that we, the CIC, the PSC and the C.O.P., are looking for is just one of the things that make this city great and allows us to set an example for other cities.

The CIC would like to once again like to express its gratitude to the PSC for its support of an independent CIC or CIC like body for public involvement of future planning projects and outreach. Creating a free standing CIC, similar to the one that currently exists and includes members of the Planning Commission, is a critical relationship to foster and one that has the potential to draw in otherwise unseen members of our community. The CIC sees this future group as one more opportunity to draw in representation from all corners of our diverse community.

This future CIC must have the capacity to evaluate community involvement programs for multiple bureaus, review community involvement plans for numerous individual projects, and create and maintain a community involvement manual to implement the Comp Plan goals and policies. Without strong, meaningful and *consistent* public involvement in its implementation, the Comprehensive Plan will not guide us to the outcomes we seek for our city.

Additionally, the CIC believes that PEGs were an extremely helpful part of the Comp Plan process. They really informed BPS staff and helped with the ongoing work. Because of their impact, we believe that their continuation could have further supported the Comp Plan process

and that future use of them associated with public process and a new “CIC” would be beneficial to the committee, the city and the public.

The CIC recognizes that staff time and City resources are a significant factor in any decision regarding future oversight of community involvement in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Based on our analysis, resources were allocated from the city in a responsive way. Meaning that most resources were dedicated to groups, organizations, or individuals who were ready to engage in this type of public process. Although the CIC is happy that there was a great community response, we believe that underrepresented groups, organizations and individuals and groups that are hesitant to join in the public process were not pursued as much as we would have liked. As our city addresses the goals and policies of the Comp Plan, the involvement of the breadth of diversity of our community to responding to these challenges is more important than ever. Resources must be allocated in a fair and equitable manner.

As Stan said earlier, we want to extend our gratitude to all the BPS staff that worked on the Comp Plan and have responded in some way to our committees input.

In our final pages of this last chapter as a committee, we would like to ask of all of you, what do you think went well in the community involvement process? What stands out to you that worked well? Are there areas that you believe a future committee could and should improve upon?

In closing, we want to thank all of you for your time, your dedication and your diligence.

Respectfully submitted by Christina Blaser, Jessica Conner, Kenneth Doswell and Stanley Penkin with acknowledgment to Linda Nettekoven.

Community Involvement Committee

Members

Paula Amato
Denise Barrett
Christina Blaser
Lois Cohen
Jessica Conner
Kenneth Doswell
Jason Barnstead Long
Linda Nettekoven
Stanley Penkin
Howard Shapiro, Chair
Judy Bluehorse Skelton
Peter Stark
Laura Stewart
Allison Stoll
Jovan Young