

CITY OF DUNWOODY
COMMUNITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM
SCOPE OF WORK

Project Background

Elected and appointed officials in attendance at the 2012 Annual Retreat for Dunwoody City Council and staff discussed more than a dozen critical topics and issues, and met to also review projects, plans and goals for the year ahead. One question which retreat council members brought up several times over the course of discussion revolved around the concept of “*Civic Engagement.*”

The primary query on everyone’s mind: *How does a mid-sized city of 46,000 residents engage and communicate with all segments of its community in an effective and inclusionary manner to promote active information sharing and participation?*

It is essential that all City departments communicate with and address the concerns and issues of the public, both proactively and as a reaction to unexpected events. To be successful, any civic engagement culture change within Dunwoody would need to touch each of the City’s departments (Police, Human Resources, Finance & Administration, Municipal Courts, Public Works, Community Development, Economic Development, and Parks & Recreation).

Currently any civic engagement activities are primarily deployed by a City department in times of a crisis, issue or need, oftentimes as an afterthought or addendum. To enable civic engagement and public participation to be fully ingrained in the City’s culture, it must become a basic element of any department’s plans, efforts or standard practices, from a program’s inception through to completion.

Because the City has yet to establish a strategic civic engagement agenda, philosophy or department, the primary purpose of this Scope of Work is to provide the City with an approach and structure on which to build a long-term civic engagement program that is integrated into all departments and within the culture of staff. Based on our general understanding of the City’s needs and desired outcomes, we prepared the following Scope of Work to create a culture of civic participation and commitment in Dunwoody.

Community and Civic Engagement Program Approach

Based on our discussions to-date with City staff, as well as some initial research on the evolution and integration of municipal government civic engagement, we have found that the concept and practices of formalized civic or community engagement is nascent. While elements, strategies and tactics of municipal civic or community engagement are part of many communications and public relations programs in place in many cities across the U.S., preliminary research indicates no single primary handbook or guidelines has emerged to define the most successful best practices. However, there are examples of successful programs in cities across the country, and identifying the key elements of these efforts will help to inform a community and civic engagement program for the City of Dunwoody.

Dunwoody is a unique community with demographics, issues, goals, and challenges specific to it. Combining successful elements from other cities with research and experience, Jacobs will provide a structure to create a civic engagement process and spectrum of activities tailored to Dunwoody.

To help clarify an approach, it is important to first establish an understanding of what civic engagement is and what it means for Dunwoody residents and City leaders. According to *the International Association of Public Participation, (IAP2)* a standard definition of “community engagement” used and established by association members is as follows:

“Community engagement is about involving the community in decision making processes, which is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in government, the private sector and the community.”¹

This definition aligns with what we’ve heard from Dunwoody staff and what’s been shared to-date by Council members and retreat participants. We took this foundation one step further and added what we see as general Dunwoody-specific desired parameters and objectives for civic engagement onto this definition structure. These include, but are not limited to the following:

OPEN: Realize *civic engagement is a two-way process* by which the desires, concerns, and values of citizens and communities are integrated into all levels of department planning, decision-making, and implementation.

INCLUSIVE: Understand *civic engagement actively involves citizens, businesses, communities* and other stakeholders in these processes.

REWARDING: Agree that *effective civic engagement generates better decisions*, committed participants, and improved economic, social and cultural benefits.



The Jacobs’ approach ultimately seeks to strengthen and enhance the relationship between residents and the City. Civic participation helps create engaged people working on meaningful and local solutions. By creating a unified understanding of what civic engagement is, how it can benefit all participants and why it is an important practice, a phased approach can be established and enacted to promote a long-term civic engagement approach for Dunwoody.

Creating opportunities for meaningful and interactive civic engagement is not entirely new for Dunwoody. The City is currently engaged to various degrees in civic engagement practices through its various City departments, as well as through public relations, communications and marketing activities. To optimize and realize the most value for these efforts, a formalized and wholly integrated practice should be established. This structure will

¹ Adapted from www.dpi.wa.gov.au/communityengagement/717.asp

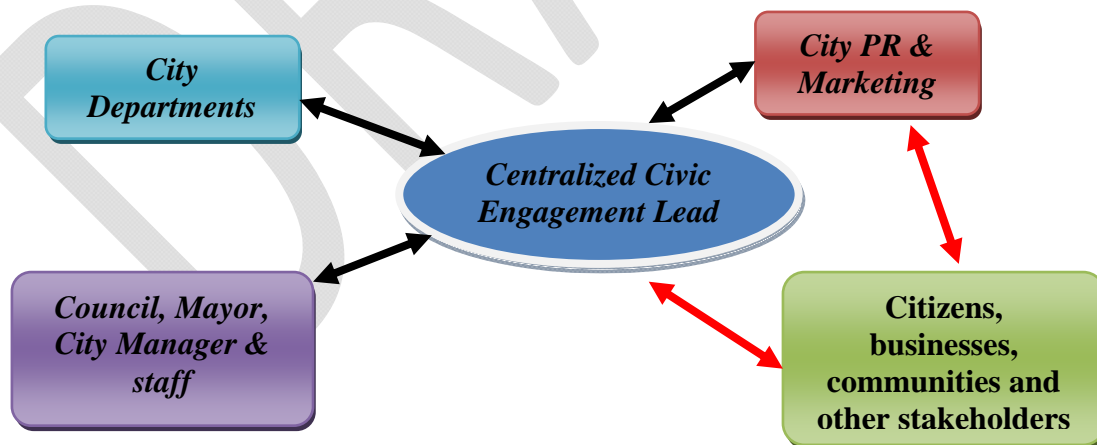
- ensure consistency across efforts,
- create linkages between efforts to create additional value, and
- provide a structure to ensure efficient use of the City’s resources.

TASK 1: Centralized Point of Contact

To ensure a streamlined process and coordinated efforts, the City can benefit from drawing on the current expertise within its communications and PR team to assist in the foundation of a civic engagement program. And because many civic engagement principals are rooted in PR and communication strategies, the synergies between these two efforts should be intertwined within the City’s efforts to connect with citizens, businesses, communities and other stakeholders.

As an established partner with the City of Dunwoody, Jacobs would help create a formalized civic engagement process, utilizing an existing central point of contact currently within the City to lead civic engagement practices and strategies. This will help to quickly accomplish key objectives and jumpstart civic engagement processes (both internally and externally). In addition, by leveraging a current contact familiar with City department outreach and communications, the City can help integrate and promote civic engagement early-on in a department’s program, project or initiative in a manner that is seamless and that does not require a “learning curve” delay. This is an important element of moving Dunwoody from a primarily reactive to primarily proactive position with civic engagement.

Jacobs’ proposed structure for the City to begin the foundations of a civic engagement program is to **leverage Bob Mullen, the City’s current PR/Marketing Director** to lead program development, research, program buy-in, strategic planning, process and structure establishment, and program implementation (see model below).



By working in conjunction with key internal groups and directors, a Civic Engagement Lead can effectively create the messages, goals and best practices to reach targeted community members.

Deliverable(s):

1. Facilitate a kick-off meeting with the City Manager and department heads and/or staff as appropriate to gather input on the proposed structure and approach, further define program goals, and outline the path forward. This meeting will ensure all key internal stakeholders are on-board from the effort's inception, and will allow for any issues to be identified early.
2. Provide a written summary of the discussion, including action items and schedule adjustments if necessary.

TASK 2: Research & Baseline Measurement

The platform for Dunwoody to engage residents, community groups and various stakeholders depends on a number of factors related to the overall civic engagement planning process. By conducting critical research and baseline measurement our aim is to help establish direction as well as a set of strategies that will lead to a set of implementation activities.

Appropriate research and baseline measurement will also help define Dunwoody's civic engagement needs, objectives and measurable performance indicators. The key steps involved in our proposed research baseline measurement include:

- *Interview Preparation:* Work with City Manager and staff to determine critical questions, feedback and information needed from internal and external audience interview targets to establish goals and desired data, as well as to define interview target individuals.
- *Industry, Association and Peer Research:* Investigate and examine sources (Online and published trade journal articles, academic research, etc.) to identify leading established methodologies, procedures and lessons learned/expert guidance which may help guide the civic engagement planning process for Dunwoody.
- *Council & Department Head Interviews:* Conduct individual and group interviews (based on availability, schedules) with council members, and City department heads to secure insight and buy-in on civic engagement definition and goals as well as engagement outreach needs and activities.
- *Tier One Citizen Influencer Interviews:* Conduct individual and group interviews (based on availability, schedules) with key citizen influencers (as recommended by council and staff) to survey and discuss current engagement, areas for improvement, other needs and community engagement opportunities, and to identify Tier Two Citizen Influencers.
- *Tier Two Citizen Influencer Interviews:* Conduct individual and group interviews (based on availability, schedules) with key citizen influencers (as recommended by Tier One influencers) to survey and discuss current engagement, areas of improvement, and other needs and community engagement opportunities.
- *Interview & Survey Highlights:* Analyze interview and survey findings to establish a baseline of where we are today and where we need to go, and to create a consistent methodology for moving forward with a plan.

Deliverable(s):

1. Conduct up to 3 interview preparation meetings with City Manager and staff as appropriate.
2. Provide a written summary of meetings defining critical interview questions, interview targets, and desired data.
3. Conduct industry, association and peer research primarily through online searches, published trade journal articles, academic research, phone and/or email exchanges with sources, etc.
4. Provide a written Research Report to include key findings, and identifying elements of successful programs that should be incorporated into the City's program.
5. Conduct up to 25 individual and group interviews (based on availability, schedules) with council members and City department heads and/or staff as appropriate.
6. Provide a written re-cap report summarizing interview findings, input data, key priority needs and goals.
7. Conduct up to 15 individual and group interviews (based on availability, schedules) with key citizen influencers (as recommended by council and staff).
8. Provide a written re-cap report summarizing interview findings, input data, opportunities and challenges, etc.
9. Conduct up to 10 individual and group interviews (based on availability, schedules) with key citizen influencers (as recommended by Tier One influencers).
10. Provide a written re-cap report summarizing interview findings, input data, opportunities and challenges, etc.
11. Develop a final written report of interview and survey findings to help establish a baseline of existing conditions, and to create a consistent methodology for moving forward with a plan.

TASK 3: Program Process Development

Based on the input received and effort conducted, the next stage of the civic engagement program development cycle includes creating and solidifying a program process, a set of tools, and a schedule/roadmap for civic engagement.

To give structure to the program process, and clearly articulate that process to all impacted City staff, a detailed strategic Civic Engagement Plan will be developed. This plan will include a set of practices and tactics which can be implemented across departments.

Identifying and establishing a set of tools that can be used in a multitude of civic engagement activities and will assist in the civic engagement process. A Civic Engagement Toolkit will be created to include:

- Public Judgment Checklist – Qualifying if an issue fits in the civic engagement spectrum

- Decision & Influencer Tree – A cross examination of decision makers and the decision which needs to be made
- Civic Engagement Matrix – Selecting the level of civic engagement (as outlined in the Engagement Spectrum table)
- Audience/Methods Matrix – Identifying the primary vehicles for effective communications with each identified audience
- Structure & Engagement Program Model - An established Community Engagement band of activities and practices; the practices would be activities and techniques directed at engaging with audiences along their various levels of participation and communication needs (from informing the novice, to involving those already engaged to empowering those that are passionate/stewards), specifically crafted to Dunwoody needs/interests/character.

Deliverable(s):

1. Provide a detailed strategic Civic Engagement Plan.
2. Provide a Civic Engagement Toolkit to include the following items:
 - Public Judgment Checklist
 - Decision & Influencer Tree
 - Civic Engagement Matrix
 - Audience/Methods Matrix
 - Structure & Engagement Program Model

TASK 4: Implementation

The type, scope and frequency of civic engagement initiatives will vary over time. As Dunwoody begins to implement its civic engagement plans and activities it will be necessary to focus efforts and strategies to a certain issue, project or need in order to develop an implementation action plan. The Civic Engagement Plan and the approach outlined there will guide issue and project-level action plans, task breakdowns and evaluations.

Based on the plan and the toolkit, a Civic Engagement Handbook will be developed to provide the City’s centralized civic engagement lead with a guidebook for council and department heads -- a framework to adapt to unique or individual circumstances to help facilitate expectations and activities around civic engagement.

The hands-on implementation of the plan and active engagement with the community will be conducted initially by Bob Mullen. Bob will serve as the conduit and centralized civic engagement lead who will coordinate, organize attend and report back on meetings and community interaction to ensure adherence to the plan and quickly mitigate potential misconceptions or help bring clarity to issues.

Most of the activities in the Civic Engagement Plan will consist of messages, themes, vehicles and elements that are related to, if not already in place for, the activities and deliverables currently

undertaken by the City's PR and Marketing group. We will identify and synchronize communications activities and public involvement outreach to unify messaging, style, themes and content for PR and Civic Engagement.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the civic engagement process is a critical component to help assess whether the civic engagement process not only met its objectives but also if the current tools and activities are beneficial to promote continuous improvement and future success. Implementation feedback and summary reporting will be important to share back with stakeholders as well as City Council and staff. This will provide details on information being collected and will include analysis and the manner in which it will be delivered to internal and external audiences.

Deliverable(s):

1. Develop a Civic Engagement Handbook.
2. Identification of communications activities and public involvement outreach requiring unified messaging, style, themes and content for PR and Civic Engagement.
3. Activate the role of civic engagement lead (Bob Mullen) to begin coordinating and attending meetings (no more than three evening and 10 workday meetings within one month) with critical citizen, business and community groups.
4. Establish a set of evaluation and data capture measurement guidelines as well as a measurement capture template/grid.
5. A "report-in" template and framework for regular measurement capture communications.