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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Mike Davis, Mayor

**Date:** October 14, 2013

**Subject: Discussion of 2014 Town Hall Meeting Program**

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### **ITEM DESCRIPTION**

Discussion of the program outline and initial plans for a 2014 Town Hall Meeting program.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of Dunwoody is proactively addressing the need to communicate and engage with the public. Through the 2013 Civic Engagement initiative, the Marketing and PR team have helped to improve citizen engagement and knowledge, helped promote participation in public meetings and open houses, particularly around infrastructure and capital improvement projects.

As part of the Civic Engagement program, Dunwoody has the potential to further connect and communicate with residents and community members by offering "engagement opportunities" to help involve residents in the discussion and decision making process.

The primary objective is to help move citizens across the "public engagement spectrum" -- from basic information sharing to involvement and collaboration through to empowerment. The leading objective through the process is to create an ongoing dialogue with residents to help better attain and communicate the collective vision for the city and advance the city's priorities.

### **FOR DISCUSSION**

Reaching out to foster discussion and dialogue and help identify shared community priorities provides the city with an opportunity to augment communications across a wide portion of the community. An effective, proven and measurable vehicle for establishing greater community discourse is the "Town Hall Style" meeting format. The "Town Hall Style" meeting has been employed by many cities throughout the US and has demonstrated to be a valuable means of promoting constructive discourse on relevant topics and concerns.

The proposed "Town Hall Style" meetings would be highly structured and based on an inclusive meeting model which captures and fosters ongoing community dialogue and participation. The Dunwoody "Town Hall Style" meetings would be most successfully implemented on a quarterly schedule with each meeting held at an appropriate equitable facility in the community and outside of City Hall. Potential locations could include a larger public meeting space such as a community building, neighborhood church facility or similar assembly hall.

The quarterly "Town Hall Style" meetings could begin in 2014 with a Mayoral Dialogue (including the entire City Council) and follow a quarterly schedule of District Specific Town Hall meetings in each of the three city council districts, hosted by the elected officials of that district.



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Residents will help prioritize key topics for discussion (through participatory voting which instantaneously compiles and shares attendee topic discussion preferences) and have an opportunity to ask questions on particular topics. By the end of the meeting, city staff and elected officials receive meaningful guidance regarding ideas, views, and priorities from a broad cross-section of the Dunwoody community and the community receives information directly from their elected officials.