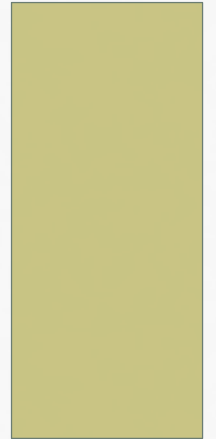CITY OF BOULDER

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WORKING GROUP

FINAL REPORT – JUNE 19, 2017

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THE PPWG REPORT: OVERVIEW

- **THE PPWG CHARTER, CHARGE, PROCESS**
  - *Executive Summary*
  - *Introduction*
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Participation Working Group (PPWG) was formed in September 2016 at the request of Boulder City Council to identify ways to improve public process. This report outlines new ways of conceptualizing effective public engagement and makes specific recommendations to improve decision-making, foster relationships and trust, and build community in Boulder.

The PPWG identified problem areas that impact public engagement in Boulder and reached a conclusion that a change of culture is necessary to address these problem areas. Improved public engagement, as recommended by the PPWG, involves creating a sense of shared responsibility between the city and community. Cultural elements requiring change include a commitment to creating more inclusive processes, transparent decision making, improved communication systems and greater consistency across projects, programs, and initiatives. The PPWG also identified the need to build capacity and co-create guidelines for civil and constructive engagement.

Specific recommendations for Boulder include the use of a decision-making model that will create both consistency and accountability for specific projects/policies. The model is broken into five phases with guidance on key issues and questions to address. The phases are: 1) Planning to Plan 2) Starting the Process 3) Developing and Evaluating Options 4) Making a Decision and 5) Evaluating the Process.

The working group recognizes that any change is difficult and that culture can only be changed through commitment, both at leadership and front-line levels, patience, practice, and allocation of resources—not by just adjusting the way public meetings are run. It is the hope and recommendation of the PPWG that over the next three to five years, the City of Boulder and its community members will assess, plan, and pilot a change of culture. There will be new skills to learn, new ways of working, new expectations and new accountability. The PPWG believes that Boulder can and should work to be a community where people solve problems together and move toward a vision of an integrated, representative, and transparent decision-making culture.

[1] *"Culture:" Learned norms, beliefs, procedures, attitudes and behaviors that characterize ways the City of Boulder interacts with community members to identify and solve problems, create and implement plans and policies, and conduct its duties*

[2] *The terms "public participation" and "public engagement" are often used interchangeably. "Public participation" is a term in laws and regulations to set minimum standards such as public hearings, comment periods and open records. It also can indicate a range of public involvement approaches from informing to partnering and collaboration. The PPWG chose to use the word "engagement" to reflect a more active, expansive relationship between the city and the community that includes any level of public participation.*

[3] *"City:" City Council, City Manager, Boards, Commissions, working groups, staff and contractors associated with the City of Boulder*

INTRODUCTION

The Public Participation Working Group (PPWG) was formed in September 2016 at the request of Boulder City Council. Its goal was to study the city's current engagement practices and make recommendations to improve public process. Fourteen community members volunteered their time as Public Participation Working Group members. These members were: Darvin Ayre, DeAnne Butterfield, Michael Caplan, Carol Cogswell, Sean Collins, Ann Cooper, Sandra Diaz, Lisa Harris, Marjorie Larner, Claire Riley, Brady Robinson, Kristi Russell, Bill Shrum, and Seth Spielman.

City Council Member Lisa Morzel attended PPWG meetings and participated as the City Council liaison and advisor to the group. City staff members, Jean Gatza, planner, and Patrick Von Keyserling, communication director, served as staff advisors and provided technical assistance and support.

The meetings were facilitated by Taber Ward and Jonathan Bartsch of CDR Associates. These meetings were open to the public and included ample time for public comment.

The initial expectations of the PPWG, set by the Boulder City Council were as follows:
1. Review and assess current city processes.
2. Identify best practices and current successes along with lessons learned from previous city efforts.
3. Recommend ways to make improvements to civic engagement processes to foster success for both the city and community members.
4. Make recommendations to City Council about possible modifications to public engagement processes that improve the effectiveness of city decision-making.
5. Make recommendations that promote mutual respect and clarify responsibilities of the city and community members to engage with and listen to each other more effectively.

[4] *Individuals and groups who live, work, study and visit in Boulder*

PROCESS

The PPWG members and subcommittees met approximately 30 times from September 2016 through May 2017 to reach consensus on developing this report and its problem statements, recommendations, and next steps. The PPWG used the following information gathering processes to prioritize public engagement related problems:

1. By examining local background examples and literature about best practices such as the International Association for Public Participation
2. Through Neighborhood Summit discussion and surveys
3. By reviewing reports and summary from the 2017 City Council Retreat
4. By observing concurrent public processes and attending public meetings
5. By gathering public comment during PPWG meetings as well as using relevant personal experiences and interviews

In this process, consensus was defined as a process for reaching agreement that does not rely on voting. Consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity. A consensus, in this case, was reached when all members agreed that their major interests were taken into consideration in the final version of this report.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

- ## OUR CURRENT STATE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: ISSUES & PROBLEMS

  - *The Case for Change*

  - *Current Issues and Problems*

    - *Five Problem Statements*

CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Through its deliberations, the PPWG identified many challenges related to public engagement in Boulder. While there have certainly been successful City-initiated engagement efforts, several themes emerged during this group's research.

These were narrowed to the following **five problem statements:**

1.
- **Some members of the public do not trust city decision-making processes.**

2.
- **Some members of the public do not understand how public engagement and decision-making processes work.**

3.
- **Boards/commissions and working groups have broad discretion over how, or whether, to engage other community members, which further complicates public engagement.**

4.
- **Constructive public conversations do not occur often enough. This can lead to frustration, anger and disruptive behavior.**

5.
- **The city's agenda is too broad.**

PROBLEM STATEMENT #1:

SOME MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC DO NOT TRUST CITY DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

A.
- Some perceive that policy makers or staff have already determined outcomes before the public is consulted, yet they are asked to participate anyway.

B.
- Participants in public processes do not always know how or if their ideas have been heard, considered or used as plans and policies are developed.

C.
- Some participants may have no understanding and receive insufficient follow-up on why decisions were made and why specific alternatives were eliminated or selected.

D.
- There is a perception that some community members' input is more valued than others and sectors of the community are not actively included.

E.
- It is sometimes unclear whether the city acts as a neutral party and/or is vested in a particular outcome.

PROBLEM STATEMENT #2:

*SOME MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC DO NOT UNDERSTAND
HOW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES WORK.*

A.
- Despite well-intentioned efforts by the City, some members of the public do not feel adequately informed about City issues, the decision- making process or the goals of public engagement.

B.
- A significant number of community members do not understand which issues are important, how these issues might affect them, and how best to become engaged.

C.
- People do not understand how to initiate changes to city policies and programs.

D.
- Information can be difficult to access. The city website can be difficult to navigate.

E.
- Sometimes public engagement and planning processes are not adequately outlined and communicated.

F
- The roles of City Council, boards, staff, interest groups, experts, and the public are often not well-defined.

PROBLEM STATEMENT #3:

BOARDS/COMMISSIONS & WORKING GROUPS HAVE BROAD DISCRETION OVER HOW, OR WHETHER, TO ENGAGE OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS, WHICH FURTHER COMPLICATES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.

A.
- Boards/commissions and working groups are not consistent, transparent, representative, and integrated in the overall public engagement process.

B.
- There is frequently a lack of diversity and balance of viewpoints, which makes it challenging for the groups to reflect community demographics. While there is an appearance of transparency, there is a perception that choices are made during back room discussions.

C.
- There is a lack in consistency of understanding the role and responsibilities of being a board member. Members often do not have the training and skills to identify, listen to, and engage the public, especially in highly disputed situations, without unduly favoring the perspective of one individual, interest group, neighborhood, or advocacy group.

D.
- There is a lack of coordination between volunteer boards and City Council. As a result, Council does not receive regular updates, which can lead to undesirable outcomes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT #4:

CONSTRUCTIVE PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS DO NOT OCCUR OFTEN ENOUGH.
THIS CAN LEAD TO FRUSTRATION, ANGER AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR.

A.
- There are few opportunities for participants with different views to talk with each other and work together in safe, productive venues that increase understanding, build relationships, and promote collaborative problem-solving.

B.
- By the time the public is engaged, issues may already be framed in positional terms of FOR and AGAINST, which polarizes public input. Creative problem solving and bridge building are therefore compromised.

C.
- City Council meetings – and public hearings, in particular – are perceived as one of the only ways to influence policies and plans. These occur late in the process, typically just before Council votes on an issue, instead of during the formative stages.

D.
- Lack of effective communication between and among stakeholders and the city results in poor decision-making that is not adequately informed by public input.

PROBLEM STATEMENT #5:

THE CITY'S AGENDA IS TOO BROAD.

A.
- The public, staff and City Council are trying to deal with so many issues at once that deliberation and decisions can be rushed. It can be difficult for anyone, even those involved in the system, to follow or even understand what is going on.

B.
- There is a public perception that there is a lack of internal coordination among projects and departments.

C.
- Big picture conversations that address the fundamentals of what the community wants for its shared future are challenging and often do not occur.

D.
- Staff is too often tasked with responding in a short timeline with their own recommendations, rather than being asked to investigate and analyze the issue and come back with a summary of what they learned and options for the Council to consider. It can be difficult for staff to consider public input on their own recommendations, especially if they are also being asked to be subject matter experts or to manage the project to reach a specific outcome.

E.
- Policy analysis and public engagement are more often than not under resourced.

PRINCIPLES & VALUES

- **CORE PRINCIPLES & VALUES OF GOOD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

  - *Five principles/values that describe "best in class" qualities present in public engagement processes and systems*
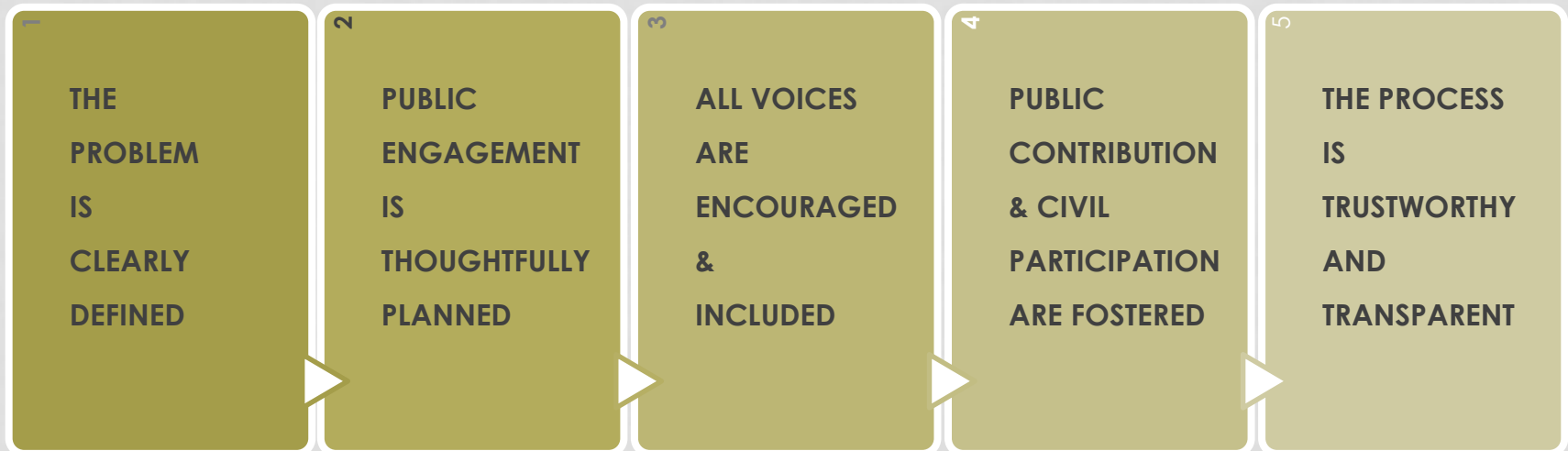
THE CORE PRINCIPLES & VALUES OF GOOD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The PPWG asked, "What constitutes good public engagement?"

Through lengthy discussions, the group identified five principles that describe the qualities present in public engagement processes and systems that are "best in class" from the perspectives of officials, staff and the community.

The PPWG encourages the City of Boulder, through City Council, boards and commissions, working groups, staff and members of the community to adopt these principles as a benchmark for fostering a positive relationship between the city and the community. This requires commitment, learning, risk taking, and willingness to change. The group believes Boulder can and should evolve to be a community where people work together and build a shared vision.

THE 5 CORE PRINCIPLES & VALUES OF GOOD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

1	2	3	4	5
THE PROBLEM IS CLEARLY DEFINED	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS THOUGHTFULLY PLANNED	ALL VOICES ARE ENCOURAGED & INCLUDED	PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION & CIVIL PARTICIPATION ARE FOSTERED	THE PROCESS IS TRUSTWORTHY AND TRANSPARENT

#1:

THE PROBLEM IS CLEARLY DEFINED

The work & its proposed purpose is clearly stated to the public. Ample opportunities are provided for education on & understanding of the problem to be solved or the goal to be achieved *prior* to identifying potential solutions.

#2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS THOUGHTFULLY PLANNED

#2:

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS THOUGHTFULLY PLANNED

As early as possible in the process, a Public Engagement Plan is developed that strategically determines the appropriate level of engagement for the issue & is coordinated with the decision-making process.

The plan creates multiple opportunities for **all stakeholders** to engage, allowing for time to adjust and refine concepts and proposals as necessary.

#3:

ALL VOICES ARE ENCOURAGED & INCLUDED

Proactive outreach ensures that a full range of voices is engaged and represented, including those directly affected and those with communitywide perspectives.

Everyone has broad access to transparent decision-making processes that assure equitable outcomes.

#4: PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION & CIVIL PARTICIPATION ARE FOSTERED

#4:

PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION & CIVIL PARTICIPATION ARE FOSTERED

All parties come to the table with an open mind to hear opposing opinions, explore new ideas, & consider new options.

An environment is created in which everyone can participate, contribute in a meaningful manner, and take pride in the process - even if they disagree with the substantive outcome itself.

#5:

THE PROCESS IS TRUSTWORTHY & TRANSPARENT

Throughout the process, transparency is maintained through an established and consistent system of sharing information.

Opportunities are provided for community members to review materials used throughout the process.

The public is educated about the final decision, including how and why it was derived, and where community members' input was incorporated.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- ## CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
  - *The current culture and systems that are intended to support community engagement are not achieving the desired results.*

- ## UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
  - *We believe there is a need for a structured, scalable, decision-making process that enables community members to play appropriate and useful roles in partnership with City staff and key decision makers.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Public Participation Working Group identified **Culture Change** and **Utilizing a Comprehensive Decision Making Process** as the overarching recommendations for improving the ways the City and its community members interact. The current culture and systems that are intended to support community engagement are not achieving the desired outcomes. Moreover, there is no use of a structured, stepped, decision-making process.

More specific recommendations, tailored to the Boulder community, are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION #1:

CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN BOULDER

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Our democracy is changing. Communications technology has advanced, information is widely shared and populism has elevated the expectations for civic engagement. At the same time, the number and magnitude of "wicked" problems that are complex, interconnected and long term with no clear solutions are increasing. Tradeoffs are inevitable so there are seldom "best" outcomes. In this climate, local leaders worldwide are finding ways to partner with the public to explore issues together and reach agreements on what less-than-perfect steps are best for their communities. Public officials, city staff, interest groups and residents increasingly seek ways to work together respectfully, creatively and productively to find ways to address local problems and improve their communities. While the City Council and City boards and commissions have essential roles in finalizing decisions, they need not shoulder the burdens of solving all the problems themselves. City leadership is needed to help frame issues, inform and invite participation, and provide needed resources of money, information, expertise and staff time. The City's role can be expanded to inspire, convene and support dialogue among all those affected by or interested in each issue. Rather than deciding there is a problem and asking staff to recommend a solution that is then taken to the public for comment, decision makers can recognize or identify a question for consideration and design a process that is appropriate to the issue and suited to those who need to be involved. All participants, not just staff, should be included in and accountable for the analysis, identification and evaluation of options and considering the tradeoffs to create a preferred path forward.

The working group identified themes and recommendations based on input from diverse sources[5] that can lead to positive change in the culture for public participation and engagement in the city of Boulder.

[5] Emails and comments from community members, notes from the City Council retreat including boards and commissions, input from staff and from PPWG members, city hotline emails

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

4 STRATEGIES TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CULTURE CHANGE IN BOULDER:

A.
- Develop inclusive processes and timely opportunities for communication of information, public input, and dialogue

B.
- Build an effective communications and information platform

C.
- Develop capacity among all participants (staff, boards, commissions, Council, public) for productive public engagement

D.
- Set clear expectations for a new culture of engagement by co-developing guidelines for civil and constructive conduct in meetings, dialogue, and decision-making processes

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
4 STRATEGIES TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CULTURE CHANGE

STRATEGY A: Develop inclusive processes and timely opportunities for communication of information, public input, and dialogue.

- **Bring the public into the process early to enable participation in the direction and creation of proposals and policies.** This will require community members to be educated and informed. A well-grounded, evidence-based understanding among participants could lead to innovative ideas and solutions and prevent hardened, polarized positions. Provide opportunities for community members to connect informally with proponents of private projects around concepts, designs and potential waivers as early as possible.

- **Recognize that decisions exist within a 'big picture' context rather than in isolation and consider the cumulative impacts**. Discussions need to include how a decision or policy connects with Boulder's vision, as well as to previous policies and decisions. Continue to extend opportunities for the public to participate in longer-term discussions regarding direction and vision for Boulder. When community members are aware and engaged in larger discussions about the vision and values for Boulder's future, they may be able to move more effectively beyond special interests and polarized positions such as 'growth' or 'no growth.'

- **Employ strong outreach efforts** to ensure sufficient representation across diverse interests and experiences.

- **Provide multiple venues and formats to ensure ongoing dialogue among community members, neighbors, City Council members, staff, boards, commissions, and business community members.** This is necessary for specific projects, broader policies such as master plans and general dialogue about Boulder's future. (CONTINUED…)

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
4 STRATEGIES TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CULTURE CHANGE

STRATEGY A (continued): Develop inclusive processes and timely opportunities for communication of information, public input, and dialogue.

- **Develop a more transparent process and criteria for selection of members of commissions, boards and working groups that includes outreach to diverse interests and advocates who could offer representation across the entire community.** Explore options to engage and perhaps educate a range of community members who represent geographic and demographic diversity, reflecting not only activists and experts, but members of the public who have a community-wide perspective.

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
4 STRATEGIES TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CULTURE CHANGE

STRATEGY B: Communications and information

- **It is vital to communicate complex information in an accessible way, while recognizing the challenges of communicating to members of the public who have varying degrees of time, interest, and ability to navigate dense or complex sites or documents**. A proactive and targeted communication system will require additional resources to conceptualize and manage.

- **The City should implement a one-stop, user-friendly website.** At community meetings, the City should explain how input will be used to influence the decision-making process and what pre-determined policies or constraints will be part of its deliberations.

- **Communications such as newsletters and emails from the City Communications Department and from individual departments and programs should be better coordinated and designed from the point of view of the recipient.** The staff should distinguish between public relations purposes and providing information.

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
4 STRATEGIES TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CULTURE CHANGE

STRATEGY C: Develop capacity among all participants (staff, boards, commissions, Council, public) for productive public engagement

- **Within the existing city structure, create and resource the capacity to implement a systematic public engagement process.** Options include:

  - *A - Detail public engagement responsibilities and expectations in staff job descriptions and performance evaluations.*

  - *B - Designate a public engagement function or office, perhaps a community engagement team approach, that could serve as 1) the champion for the new culture, 2) offer technical assistance to staff, community members, boards and council, and 3) evaluate public engagement programs.*

  - *C - Assign staff to work with neighborhood liaisons and affected neighborhood groups.*

  - *D - Identify criteria to determine when external professional expertise or support is needed for public engagement efforts.*

  - *(CONTINUED)*

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
4 STRATEGIES TO INSPIRE POSITIVE CULTURE CHANGE

STRATEGY C (continued): Develop capacity among all participants (staff, boards, commissions, Council, public) for productive public engagement

- **Consider when and where consistency of processes and materials across city departments are possible for public to know how, when and where to engage.** At minimum, each department could provide the following information to the public:

  - *Who to contact*

  - *How best to contact*

  - *Timelines and calendars for issues discussion and opportunities for public input*

  - *Processes and roles for different types of decisions*

  - *(CONTINUED…)*

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGY C (continued): Develop capacity among all participants (staff, boards, commissions, Council, public) for productive public engagement

- **Provide resources and training for:**
  - city staff to learn tools and skills for planning, facilitating, and interacting with an engaged public, such as the recent IAP2 training.
  - members of the community to learn and enhance advocacy and inquiry skills that include seeking solutions for the common good.
  - city staff and members of the community to participate in a joint training to improve communication, develop guidelines for constructive interactions and build relationships.

RECOMMENDATION #1:
CHANGE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGY D: Set clear expectations for a new culture of engagement by co-developing guidelines for civil and constructive conduct in meetings, dialogue, and decision-making processes

- **The public plays a role, too.**

RECOMMENDATION #2:

UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- We believe there is a need for a structured, scalable, decision-making process that enables community members to play appropriate and useful roles in partnership with City staff and key decision makers.

- The PPWG constructed **a 9-step decision-making model** for use in engaging the community. This 9-step model follows on the next page.
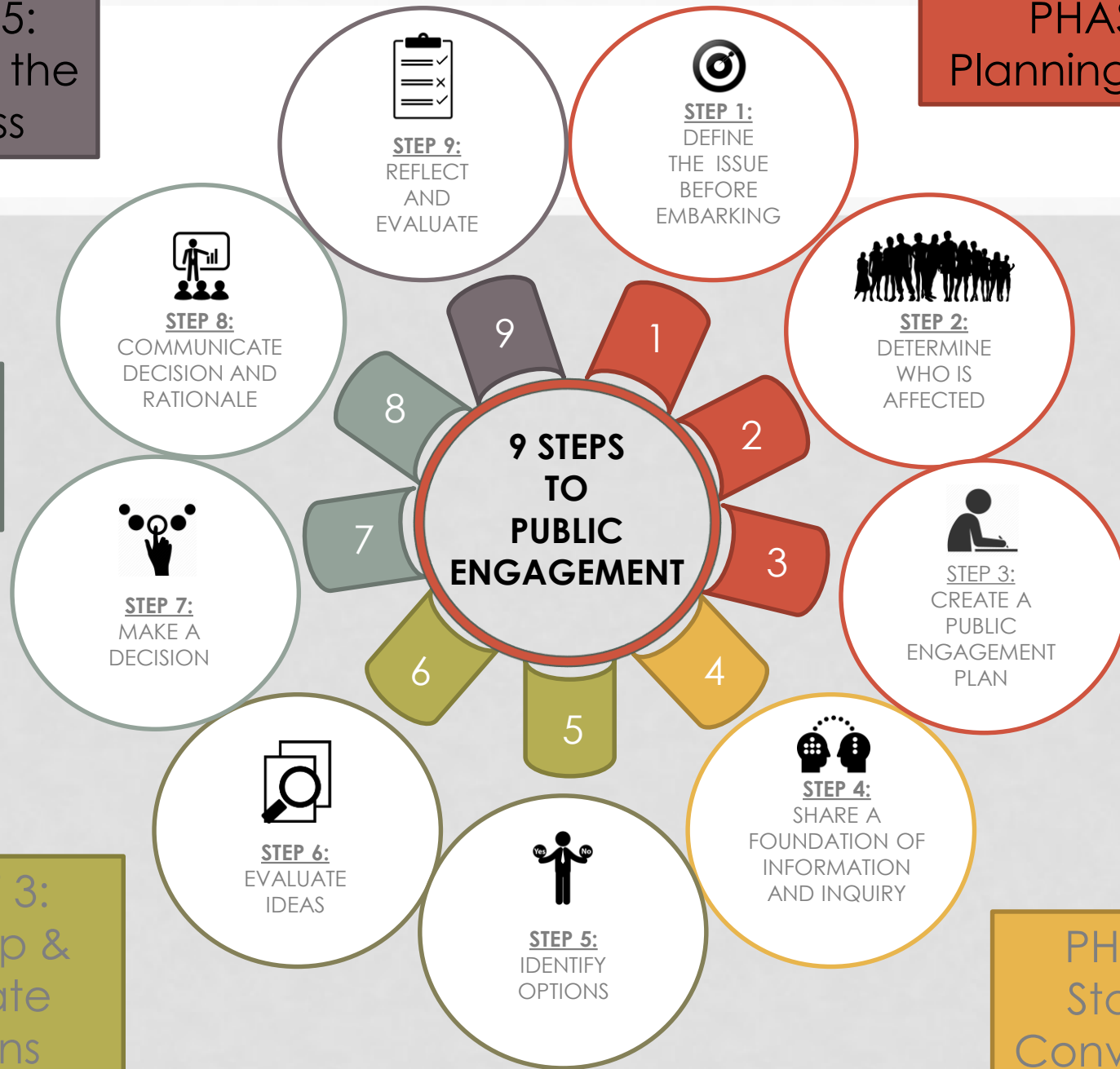
PHASE 5: Evaluate the Process

PHASE 1: Planning to Plan

STEP 9: REFLECT AND EVALUATE

STEP 1: DEFINE THE ISSUE BEFORE EMBARKING

STEP 8: COMMUNICATE DECISION AND RATIONALE

STEP 2: DETERMINE WHO IS AFFECTED

PHASE 4: Make a Decision

STEP 7: MAKE A DECISION

STEP 3: CREATE A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

9 STEPS TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

STEP 6: EVALUATE IDEAS

STEP 5: IDENTIFY OPTIONS

STEP 4: SHARE A FOUNDATION OF INFORMATION AND INQUIRY

PHASE 3: Develop & Evaluate Options

PHASE 2: Start the Conversation

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 1: PLANNING TO PLAN

STEP #1: DEFINE THE WORK BEFORE EMBARKING
- Understand the issue, its scope, scale, context, history, complexity
- Determine if and how it fits into a larger vision or plan
- Ask if this decision needs to be made by Council or could it be delegated to a board/commission or staff
- Determine the desired decision-making process and timeline
- Determine the roles of council, boards, staff, experts, public, organizations
- Determine and announce the project/issue/work

STEP #2: DETERMINE WHO IS AFFECTED
- Identify individuals, neighborhoods and interest groups who may want to be involved.
- Determine whose voices need to be heard/included and why – both those directly affected and those with a community-wide perspective.
- Determine the appropriate levels of involvement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate) *Refer to IAP2 document in Appendix*
- Determine if/how the city may be affected
- Apply lessons learned from past engagement
- Expand notification process beyond property owners, to include community members, businesses, tenants, users/visitors

STEP #3: CREATE A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN
- Identify goals of the Public Engagement Plan
    1. Determine the goals of engagement for each level of involvement, and for each step in the process. (*Refer to IAP2 document in Appendix*)
    2. Inform and educate in early stages for well-grounded understanding of issues rather than later involvement with hardened and polarized positions
    3. Align the plan with the decision-making process and timeline

- Determine how interested and affected community members will be involved, with input from members of the public.
    1. Create opportunities to engage at a variety of times to accommodate work schedules and family responsibilities
    2. Go to where people live, work, play and learn: Parks, churches, community facilities, Farmer's Market, kiosks, coffees, organizations' meetings **(continued)**

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 1: PLANNING TO PLAN (Step #3: continued)

- Chose and utilize appropriate tools
    1. Select appropriate tools and techniques based on the goals for public engagement, the complexity of the issue, the time allocated for decision-making, and the desires/capacities of the participants
    2. Use experienced, neutral facilitators to guide large or complex public engagement conversations Identify goals of the Public Engagement Plan

- Create a related Communications Plan, including strategies for information sharing:
    1. Upgrade the City website to provide timely and robust information about current topics, the decision process and public engagement opportunities. Include graphic information about the City structure, contact information for departments and issues, a central calendar of upcoming events and decisions, searchable documents and archives.
    2. Initiate opportunities for policy-makers and community members to have two-way conversations such as town hall meetings on specific topics, workshops where City and community experts provide and discuss information and ideas, regular informal "coffees" with two or three Councilmembers.
    3. Consider meetings and conversations in a variety of venues, beyond traditional City-hosted meetings, where people live, work, study and play. This might include parks, churches, recreation centers, libraries, farmers' market, coffee shops, schools and neighborhood gatherings. Work with nonprofit partners who have relationships with harder to reach underrepresented populations (Youth Advisory Board, YWCA, PTO's) as well as community-based education and advocacy organizations.
    4. Acknowledge there are other language families in our city and ensure Spanish language access to written and oral information and participation in events. Compose communications in language accessible to the intended audience; avoid use of legalese, technical terms, acronyms and jargon for communications with broad distribution.
    5. Include detailed information in project-specific public notices including upcoming City actions, project descriptions, contact information and engagement opportunities.
    6. Encourage and support ways for community members to talk informally with project proponents to discuss early design concepts.

(continued)

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 1: PLANNING TO PLAN (Step #3: continued)

7. Provide and publicize ways for community members and interest groups to influence Council and board/commission members beyond speaking at Tuesday "citizen participation" agendas. Provide comment forms that are available at meetings and on line that include interests ("why") as well as positions. Compile and summarize comments received prior to a public hearing. Encourage Council and board/commission members to observe official public engagement events as well as neighborhood and interest group meetings.
8. Make use of local media such as the Daily Camera and KGNU for information and discussion about issues, including op-ed columns and paid content.
9. Make use of local professionals in fields such as science and technology, public relations, research, communications, public affairs and survey research to develop appropriate, innovate and technologically appropriate messaging.

- Identify available resources:
  1. Assure adequate staff expertise, time, funds to accomplish the plan
  2. Determine how professional Public Engagement consultants and organizational partners will be used in the process

- Distribute the public engagement plan to the public and affected parties

- Measure demographics of community members who are participating (ethnicity, gender etc.) to ensure a wide range of representation

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 2: START THE PROCESS

STEP #4: SHARE A FOUNDATION OF INFORMATION AND INQUIRY
- Revisit Steps 1, 2 and 3 together
- Build common vision and goals with community members before implementing the pieces. Start with vision, talk about values, create well-formed goals and strategies that can then be implemented through specific projects and programs
- Publicly define the interests of the City—including staff and the individuals and groups involved
- Determine important criteria for the decision
- Apply policy analysis questions and methods
- Define data and information needs and agree on how to address them
- Formulate questions for the public and experts to answer that will be used as part of the decision process
- Engage in two-way communication:
    1. Continue to host open houses where community members can interact with early concepts
    2. At community meetings, explain how input will be used to influence the decision-making process
    3. Provide opportunities for community members to connect with early designs and concepts for private developments
    4. Provide and publicize ways to influence Council members beyond speaking at Tuesday meetings:
        I. Comment forms available online that include interests ("why") along with positions
        II. Have staff compile comments and summarize in packet to be presented at town halls
        III. Council members listen at neighborhood and interest group meetings
- After major public engagement events, compile and publish online summary of what was heard

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 3: DEVELOP AND EVALUATE OPTIONS

STEP #5: IDENTIFY OPTIONS
- Gather ideas from diverse sources, not exclusively from staff, boards, and Council
- Identify citywide vs. more localized concerns
- Foster dialogue
    1. Provide opportunities for community members to engage in dialogue with one another to better understand other perspectives
    2. Use local professionals: scientists, mediators, PR firms, research, local ad and tech agencies to help identify options
- Create opportunities where staff, council and community can try new/creative solutions and risk mistakes from which we can learn: think outside the box.

STEP #6: EVALUATE IDEAS
- Foster dialogue
- Provide opportunities for Q&A, exchange of information and views outside council or board meetings between decision makers and community members
- Include social, economic, environmental considerations
- Be explicit about criteria and tradeoffs
- Move from individual opinions to the common good
- Test ideas broadly

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 4: MAKE THE DECISION

STEP #7: MAKE A DECISION
- Review expected decision-making process from Phase 1
- Summarize what has come from public engagement
- If one clear solution hasn't emerged, consider narrowing options for further discussion
- Solicit further input about consequences of favored decision
- Ensure transparency
- Decide timeline for implementation and how to test solution
- Make letters and emails about issues under consideration public, organized online by topic
- Summarize opinions, information, impacts that were considered
- Summarize demographics of participants; i.e. mapping

STEP #8: COMMUNICATE THE DECISION AND RATIONALE
- Link outcome to public engagement and decision-making process
- Identify information, impacts, tradeoffs, and analysis that informed decision
- Assure deeper communication to those involved
- Work with Daily Camera to create an opportunity for regular contributions from city in op-ed pages, beyond meeting notices (may include purchase of advertising space)
- Publish dissenting views alongside decisions for high profile issues
- Report on public input and how it was used. Address how the decision relates to policies such as the Boulder Valley Comp Plan, intergovernmental agreements, the City's Sustainability Framework and departmental Master Plans.

RECOMMENDATION #2:
UTILIZE A COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 5: EVALUATE THE PROCESS

STEP #9: REFLECT AND EVALUATE
- Who participated and how?
- In what ways did participants influence the outcome?
- How was the public engagement process modified to reflect changes?
- How was the decision-making process modified to reflect participation needs?
- What worked?
- What did we learn for next time?

NEXT STEPS AND APPENDIX

- ## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

- ## APPENDIX

  - SUGGESTIONS FOR SCALE,

  - BACKGROUND EXAMPLES

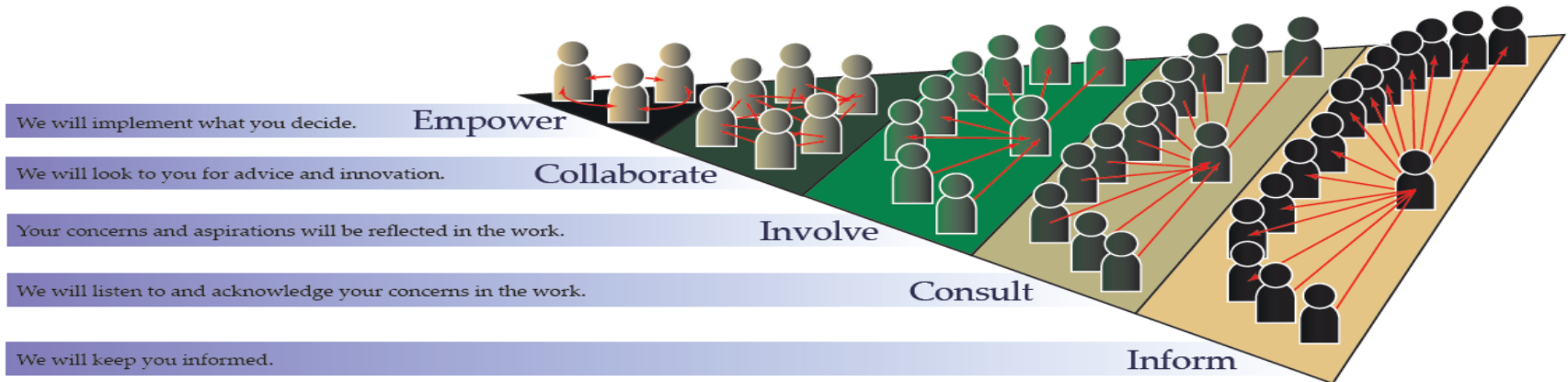 - IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Submitting this report to the city for staff and Council review is just the first step to improve public engagement. Below are **next steps**, identified by the PPWG.

- Recognize that changing the culture of public engagement will take time.

- Allocate adequate resources, time and effort to support, enhance, and deepen the PPWG's work.

- Share or "socialize" these recommendations with the public and civic groups to gather feedback before adoption by City Council.

- Evaluate improvements in Boulder's public engagement culture and activities over time.

APPENDIX 1: SCALE

PPWG Suggestions for Scale

We will implement what you decide. **Empower**

We will look to you for advice and innovation. **Collaborate**

Your concerns and aspirations will be reflected in the work. **Involve**

We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns in the work. **Consult**

We will keep you informed. **Inform**

Promise to the Public   Role of Communication

Sources: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation
Manish, K (2014) - Leveraging New Media Platforms for Civic Engagement In Cities

APPENDIX 2: BACKGROUND EXAMPLES

Background Examples Developed by PPWG

As part of the process of identifying frustrations experienced by the public, and pitfalls in past City of Boulder public processes, a subcommittee of the PPWG researched specific instances in the community. Purposely selecting from the most contentious of recent City initiatives and decisions, the subcommittee researched the situations via Daily Camera articles, Council packets, staff interviews and other methods. The outcome here is not meant to be scientific or political, and is agnostic on the outcome of the project or the decision. Rather, these examples are meant to point to potential gaps in past processes, the differing perspectives and experiences of participants and the frequent occurrence of so-called "wicked problems." They were used to influence the specific Problem Statements in the report. We include them here merely to show our stepping-off point and to show our work in the spirit of full transparency.

A. Affordable Housing Linkage Fees: What was learned from the City's process on Affordable Housing Linkage Fees is that an extensive public process, working group, professionally commissioned study, followed by a staff recommendation, are not always followed by Council when it comes to decisions. In this case, Council twice voted against data provided by Kaiser Marsten Assoc (KMA) that cited costs of growth to the city to be $139-$150 per Square Foot, as well as recommendations by staff, that the fee be raised to at least $15 per Square Foot. Public testimony at the hearing supported higher linkage fees. Council's decision on this matter almost appeared pre-made, as a presenter at an area real estate conference declared victory in favor of the lower fee of $12/ square feet the day before the public hearing and vote. Whether it was due to politics, Councilmembers' independent analyses, one-on-one lobbying or other reasons, the lessons are if there are constraints or preferences that differ this dramatically from the public process, the City Council should have laid them out at the start and certainly explained their reasons for their ultimate votes to the public.

(CONTINUED)

APPENDIX 2: BACKGROUND EXAMPLES
(CONTINUED)

B. Housing Boulder Working Groups: What was learned from the Housing Boulder Working Group is that sometimes, outcomes of Public Process might be pre-ordained by the City, making even the most extensive, intimate process feel like window dressing. In this case study, one of the working groups, "Diverse Housing Options," appeared to have been populated with members chosen for a specific outcome. In this particular case, while there were co-op activists and real estate professionals appointed, there appeared by be a disproportionate lack of neighborhood representatives with concerns about growth and density. Of note, is that discussions regarding the re-write of the existing Co-op ordinance appeared to gain traction out of this group.

Other Housing Boulder Working Groups reported a similar sense of pre-determination in other ways. The "Keeping Our Commitments" group was repeatedly asked to rank pre-determined list of "solutions" and thwarted in its interest in learning about the population to be served and discussing the nature of the problem of low-income housing before being asked to solve it. What seemed to be an opportunity for people to contribute to Boulder Housing policy seemed lost. The report seems to portray a group willing and interested in discussion and ideas, pitted up against a set of predetermined options, lack of discussion time and a facilitator under real pressure to deliver a set outcome. The Group also fell prey to 'chasing shiny objects'—for example, one member of the group loved tiny houses, so this idea used a lot of energy and time and was included in the recommendations without any analysis of whether this solution would work for the population that was being served. The lesson here seems to be that even an extensive public discussion can be shortchanged by lack of neutral facilitation, resources, time and lack of flexibility of possible outcomes.

(CONTINUED)

C. North Trail Study Area: What was learned from the North TSA project was that sometimes lack of staff resources and time are used as an excuse for an inadequate process, even when such a lack was known at the time of the undertaking. In this case, a yearlong process and several public engagements occurred in parallel with the work of the OSBT and city staff. Because the board and staff decision-making process began in spite of a recognition of inadequate time and resources, at times public engagement got ahead of staff work. Some members of the public interpreted staff statements to suggest that their independent planning was already favoring one alternative over another. In a closing memo, staff summarized that they had been "unable to do a detailed analysis," but had kept the input in mind. The lesson here seems to be that even an extensive public discussion can be shortchanged by lack of resources, time and lack of flexibility of possible outcomes.

D. Co-op Ordinance Revision: What was learned was that inadequate public input at early stages of decisions cannot be compensated for by long and extensive process on the backend, and the importance of including a wide range of stakeholders. In the case of the co-op ordinance, council expressed its wish to pursue ways to make co-ops legal based on ideas from the Housing Boulder working group. At the same time there was a tension in the city over occupancy enforcement, fears of density and a desire to provide more affordable housing options yet these tensions were insufficiently acknowledged up front. After being informed by the city manager that there was not capacity in the work plan to conduct an extensive public outreach process within the timeframe expected, council directed the city attorney to write a draft. He then met with co-op advocates to talk about changes to the existing ordinance. Co-op advocates experienced a positive and responsive initial public process. The draft that emerged from these meetings did so without input from many Boulder residents who, while they might have had some level of support for co-ops, felt that potential impacts to neighborhoods were insufficiently considered. The protracted public process seemed to create further division, and many felt disenfranchised. The lesson here seems to be that no amount of public testimony can compensate for a lack of clear articulation of the problem to be solved and inclusive opportunities for input during the early stages of a process. **(CONTINUED)**

E. "Right-sizing" – The Living Lab: What was learned from the so-called "right-sizing" of Folsom was multiple items. First, Go Boulder had conducted what they thought was a reasonable public process for every segment of the Living Labs and the Living Labs concept itself was part of a broader plan. However, none of the other segments of the Living Labs project incurred any public push-back. We learned from the comments that Go-Boulder shared with us that they felt they had failed to take the adequate time to think about how different people affected by the changes on Folsom would react and to consult with them in advance. Second, Go Boulder was confused as to how the goal of Folsom could have gotten so misconstrued. The stated goal of the project was to make transportation safer for all modes--cars, bikes and pedestrians. However, Go Boulder said they were seeing evidence that the public thought that the stated goal of the project was to make driving on Folsom less convenient to reduce driving in favor of other modes. In the discussion, many cycling advocates, including some members of the Transportation Advisory Board, publicly stated that less car travel was in fact the goal.

After modifications, Go Boulder expressed confusion as to why citizens thought the project had been cancelled while it had only been modified. Other lessons were about the appropriate mixture of advocates, experts and regular citizens on boards and commissions and their need for better skills in public process; that the city and its departments need to be clear and consistent to the public about the stated goals of the project; and the importance in both design and implementation of including a wide range of stakeholders.

APPENDIX 3: IAP2

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT →

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	**Public Participation Goal:**	**Public Participation Goal:**	**Public Participation Goal:**	**Public Participation Goal:**
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	**Promise to the Public:**	**Promise to the Public:**	**Promise to the Public:**	**Promise to the Public:**
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Tools:	**Example Tools:**	**Example Tools:**	**Example Tools:**	**Example Tools:**
• fact sheets • web sites • open houses.	• public comment • focus groups • surveys • public meetings.	• workshops • deliberate polling.	• citizen advisory committees • consensus-building • participatory decision-making.	• citizen juries • ballots • delegated decisions.

MEMBERS OF THE PPWG

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