

Citizen Participation and Urban Planning

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Why do we have citizen participation?

- It is the democratic thing to do
- Government policies, grants, legislation
- It serves to educate/inform the public on many topics and build their support on issues
- We need to work with people

Citizen participation

- Continuous two-way communication between public and public agencies
- Has it worked?
- Do citizens understand the issues being discussed?
- Is it expensive?

Objectives of citizen participation

- To inform the public on problems and choices
- To identify needs, values, and goals of the community by letting them ask questions
- To inform decision-makers about possible implications of a decision
- To avoid conflict early in the process
- To build support for a policy

Ethics

- Standards for behavior in a given field; rules of conduct for our profession
- Guides us in how we act
- Fields with Codes of Ethics – associations in planning, architecture, medicine, law, real estate, social workers, engineers, psychology, etc.

AICP Code of Ethics

- Responsibility to the public
 - Concern over long-range consequences of present actions
 - Seek social justice (fairness and proper administration of laws/regulations dealing with equality and human rights)
 - Give people an opportunity to participate in plan development

AICP 2

- Responsibility to Clients and Employers
 - Avoid any apparent conflict of interest
 - Exercise independent judgment

AICP 3

- Responsibility to our professional and colleagues
 - Educate the public about planning issues
 - Continue to enhance education and training
 - Increase the opportunity for members of underrepresented groups to be planners

Brown Act – California Legislation

- California's Open Meeting Law
- Meetings be open to the public, held on a regular schedule, and conducted in accordance with an agenda available in advance of the meeting
- Leg. body cannot take action by secret ballot

Brown Act cont'd

- Applies to bodies which the City Council has a role in creating
- What is a meeting?
 - Any congregation of a majority of the members at the same time and place to hear, discuss, or deliberate on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the board or commission
 - Meetings must be accessible under the American with Disabilities Act of 1990

Public's Right to Attend

- Public cannot be required to register their names or provide other information as a condition of attending meeting (voluntary sign-in is allowed)
- Public has a right to record the meeting with an audio or video tape recorder, or take photographs

Public's Right to Attend cont'd

- Public has a right to review agendas and other writings distributed to a majority of the board

The Commission's Duties

- Acts as an advisory body on all planning and development issues
- Assures implementation of the General Plan by reviewing development applications
- Functions as the decision making body on many applications

Roles in the Planning Process

■ Planning Commission

- Balances staff analysis, including agency goals and policies, with community input
- Makes recommendations to the governing body
- Evaluates land use aspects of projects and leaves more technical issues for staff review and implementation.

Example: San Diego Planning Commission -- Purpose

- The [Planning Commission](#) conducts hearings on all special use permits, all re-zonings, all community plans, the General Plan, considers land use ordinances and such other improvements as Council may, by ordinance, determine.

San Diego Planning Commission -- Appointment

- Appointed by Mayor and confirmed by Council. Whenever the Mayor does not appoint a member within 45 days after vacancy occurs, the Council shall make such appointment.

San Diego Planning Commission -- Terms

- Four (4) years and until their successors are appointed and qualified. The expiration date of all terms shall be January 28.
- Commissioners are limited to two full consecutive terms.

San Diego Planning Commission -- Composition

- Seven (7) members. Each member is prohibited from engaging in any activity which could result in conflict of interest and must make an annual statement of financial disclosure.

Technology and Urban Planning

- New ways to do old things
- New things to do
- Inevitability of change – typewriter to computer
- Will technology ever stop changing?
- Can technology solve everything?

Importance of Change and Technology

- Economy has changed over the years
- We're in the period of a 'knowledge-based economy'

What are cities do with technology?

- Community websites
- Minutes of public meetings
- Providing copies of public documents – General Plans, etc.
- Providing applications of permits you may need
- Having streaming video of public meetings
- Getting citizen input

Cities and technology

- Providing public notices of upcoming meeting
- Providing information on traffic flow and the best routes to take
- Providing interactive mapping
- Providing newsletters

Who is our Competition?

- No longer LA, Seattle, Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta, Boston, Austin, Philadelphia, etc.
- New competition is London, Copenhagen, Sao Paulo, Tokyo, Berlin, Stockholm, Mumbai, Manila, Hong Kong, etc.

Digital Divide

- ‘Gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of uses.’

Dimensions of Imbalance and Inequality of Use

- Gender
- Age
- Income
- Location
- Education/low literacy
- We have developed haves and have nots

Use of Social Media Devices

- What is social media?
- “A social instrument of communication that allows a person(s) to create, share, and exchange information on-line in virtual communities”
- Examples: YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, blogs, Twitter, etc

How can Social Media be used?

- Provide information to residents – KEY ITEM
- Allow residents to comments on proposed
- Watch City Council meetings or other public meetings
- Alert residents to traffic closures, hazardous chemical spills, get electronic copies of permit applications, school closings, etc.

Government Social Media sites

- Generally one individual or department is in control of them
- Rules and regulations on timing and content
- Rules and regulations on what happens if an employee violates the rules and regulations