

**Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Amendment
Community Services Element Review
October 4th, 2011 Key Stakeholders Meeting Notes**

Engaging the Community

1. Forum participant expressed gratitude for being part of the process here tonight.
2. People are more involved and voice their opinion when they beloved program/service is being cut. Feel participation is issue driven.
3. Suggestion to take meetings "on the road" to illicit more opinions.
4. There is a feeling that members of boards and commissions are from a "certain part of town" and that representation does not reflect current demographics of the City.
5. Mentor people to be involved in boards and commissions from underrepresented groups.
6. Homeowners Associations needs to be involved more in community decision making.
7. Another expressed an opinion that the City was already involving homeowners associations more with decisions that affect that association's part of town.
8. Limited English is language barrier for some to participate.
9. Residents that hail from Asian countries may be less inclined to participate as they are not used to participatory democracies in their home countries.
10. Need to establish people/organizations that will serve as a "bridge" to certain communities. How can youth help break the barriers for their parents?
11. City should consciously seek diversity in appointments. Have this be City Council Goal.
12. There is a feeling that the City still needs to work on issues of welcoming and inclusion for all. There is less contact between neighbors and people tend to not know each other as well as in the past.
13. City should use local established neighborhood associations and agencies as their "communication arm" to get the word out in the community about things.
14. The City was urged to have sensitivity about knowing a person's "story" before making a judgment about them....i.e. homeless people...not all want a handout, look at the staff of the Downtown Streets Team working to clean up the downtown and other areas of the community.
15. Barriers to engagement – Limited bus and shuttle services in certain parts of town. People would use these types of transportation to be involved in city issues and programs. Certain populations don't drive...seniors or homeless who can't afford, the disabled, visually impaired.
16. Need to have better relationship with VTA and Marguerite. There needs to be equity of service throughout the City. There should be public transportation to get students to afterschool programs.
17. Reach out to schools/students for their Community Service hours. Tell them about "full story" of how their help impacts the community (i.e. not just feed the homeless but home about the issues that cause homelessness and the problems homeless people face.) The thought was that this would create more engaged volunteers.

5. Engaging the community

5a)

1. Small group discussions
 2. Special focus councils
 3. Online forum/ Facebook for open interests
 4. Concerns of appropriateness
 5. Safe place
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1.1 Engaging the Community

1. Community involvement is a hallmark of Palo Alto. How can the City better engage its residents in community decision-making process?
 2. Palo Alto is a welcoming and diverse community that is tolerant of all our voices and interests. How can the City be more effective in promoting these values?
 3. Discuss "barriers" to City services and strategies for reducing communication, physical, social and economic barriers.
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1. City needs more systematic ways to communicate with its residents. Require Palo Alto Online newspaper to register its online users.
 2. Improve the City of Palo Alto's website.
 3. The City's Comprehensive Plan website needs to be more meaningful, useful and user friendly.
 4. City should arrange more events to make its community stronger. Neighborhood cities do a lot more than Palo Alto. Palo Alto is falling behind.
 5. Involve the "Friends Group" in a systematic way.
 6. General feeling is that City does not respond, so why get engaged in City activities.
 7. Need to engage more people who are passionate about certain issues, people feel disenfranchised.
 8. City Ombudsman?

VALUES OF PALO ALTO

1. Schools
 2. Youth
 3. Arts/Science
 4. Cultural Life
 5. Green Space/Recreation
 6. Libraries
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ENGAGING COMMUNITY

1. Good transportation is needed: Some have no car or are senior
2. Language: Use simple English or provide interpreter / translated material
3. Move public meetings away from City Hall. Move to where people gather, in neighborhoods

- a. Some residents won't go to City Hall. Not viewed as a friendly nor welcoming location
- 4. Gain trust of Public (example: move Human Relations meetings away from City Hall)
- 5. Need sensitivity to immigrant community (example: outreach/grass roots efforts to Spanish speakers in Ventura)

INCOME SEGMENTS COMMUNITY

- 1. Lower economic group does not feel connected to community → lack voice
 - a. City image is one of wealth. But not true.
- 2. Go back to "us", not them
- 3. Engage other cultures
- 4. Renters are marginalized, yet are a large portion of city population