WHAT'S NEXT ALEXANDRIA
HANDBOOK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
DECEMBER 2013 REVISED DRAFT
– TEXT ONLY VERSION –

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

City Council

Mayor William D. Euille
Vice Mayor Allison Silberberg Councilman John Taylor Chapman Councilman Timothy B. Lovain Councilwoman Redella S. 'Del' Pepper Councilman Paul C. Smedberg Councilman Justin Wilson

City Manager

Rashad M. Young

Interdepartmental City Team

Joanna Anderson, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office
Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Carrie Beach, Division Chief, Department of Planning and Zoning
Tony Castrilli, Director, Office of Communications and Public Information
Margaret Dhillon, Supervisor, Department of Community and Human Services/Center for Children and Families
Laura Durham, Urban Planner, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Tom Gates, Deputy City Manager
Lisa Guli, Health Department
Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning
Val Hawkins, President and CEO, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Stephanie Landrum, Senior Vice President, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Allen Lomax, City resident with expertise in civic engagement field
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning
Aisha O'Brien, ACTion Alexandria
John Porter, Director, ACTion Alexandria
Carrie Fesperman Redden, Health Planner, Health Department
Marti Reinfeld, Division Chief, T&ES/Transit Services
Diana Reynoso, Department of Community and Human Services
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Tom Trobridge, former Director, Information and Technology Services
Tracy Viselli, formerly with ACTion Alexandria

Consultant
Concordia

City Staff
Andrea Blackford, Communications Officer, Office of Communications and Public Information
Katherine Carraway, Department of Planning and Zoning
Craig Fifer, Deputy Director, Office of Communications and Public Information
Richard Lawrence, Urban Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning (Handbook Design and Layout)
Pat Mann, Urban Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning (Photography)
Justin Thompson, Communications Content Manager, Office of Communications and Public Information
Peter Watkins, Division Chief, Office of Communications and Public Information

Community Dialogue Facilitators
Canek Aguirre
Rusty Barber
Owen Barwell
Shane Bechtold
Aurpon Bhattacharya
Mary Breslin
Noraine Buttar
Dave Cavanaugh
Allyson Coleman
Mina Day
Kim Durand
Edith Marybel Enriquez
Craig Fifer
Belinda Goodwin
Ariel Giles
Nathan Imm
Patrice Linehan
Janet Macidull
Anita Martineau
Jennifer Murphy
Eileen Oviatt
Sahr Pombor
Ryan Price
Joyce Rawlings
Diane Ruggiero
Heather Scott
Diane Stoy

Community Dialogue Masters of Ceremony
Chris Lewis
John Porter
Robert Shea

Community Participants
Doris Ablard
Oscar Acastro
Peter Ackerman
Israel Aguilar
Herman Aguilera
Blair Aiken
Jose Wilfredo Aleman
Kelly Alexander
Kathy Allegrone
James Allgood
Safa Al-Obaedi
Marianne Anderson
Mary Lee Anderson
Scott Anderson
Sharon Annear
Margaret Ano
Mohammed Ansari
Jean Antole
Jose Luis Baires
Elizabeth Baldwin
Linda Bankerd
Adrienne Barr
Tricia Bassing
Julio Cesar Basurto Vilchez
Alison Bauerlein
Bonnie Baxley
Kevin Beekman
Peter Benavage
Nancy Benjamin
Janet Bezner
Derek Bibbs
Tae'Von Bibbs
Carol Black
Manrique Blanco
Nadine Boland
Julie Bosland
Lynn Bostain
Anne Bradford
Carla Branch
Elliott Branch
Jack Browand
Delana Browning
Marion Brunken
Don Buch
Esperita Bullard
Don Burke
Semone Byrd
Bob Calhoun
Bill Campbell
Delaine Campbell
Katy Cannady
Bonnie Carlson
Marvin Carranza
Cherie Carroll
Judy Carter
Diane Caskello
Carla Castro
Phil Cefaratti
Margarite Damian Cervantes
Louren Chen
Diana Cisneros
Fred Clapp
Jacqueline Coachman
Carolyn Collins
Gena Collins
Jane Collins
Bill Conkey
Ammie T. Conner
Judy Cooper
Helenmarie Corcoran
Brooke Cullan
Katie Darin
Monica Davis
Erin Dawson
Rose Dawson
Jason Dechant
Helen Desfosses
Ted Dicken
Bill Dickinson
Andrea Dies
Cynthia Dinkins
Sergio Dipp
Marilyn Doherty
Ann Dorman
Richard Dorman
Carol Downs
Joan Dreyer
Ricardo Drumond
Stew Dunn
James Durham
Libby Eife-Johnson
Jason Ellis
Bert Ely
Jeff Epperson
Garrett Erdle
Celia Estrada
Erin Finn
Annabelle Fisher
Rusty Fleming
Carter Flemming
Fredy Flores
Cassandra Ford
Donna Fossum
Seena Foster
Lauren Freeman
David Fromm
Richard Gear
Kristen Gedeon
Father Daniel Gee
C.A. Gerlach
Julie Germany
Ricshae Glymph
Eric Goldberg
J Gomez
DeBerry Goodwin
Susan Amber Gordon
Gail Gordon Donegan
Robert Goss
Harold Gossett
Linda Greenberg

Janet Gregor
Jennifer Greiner
MaryAnn Griffin
Carolyn Griglione
Stephen Haering
Andrea Hamre
Dak Hardwick
Nisa Harper
Bill Harris
Lama Hasan
Andrea Haslinger
Al Havings
R Hawn
Ann Marie Hay
Anne Gray Haynes
Jose Hernandez
Poul Hertel
Arlene Hewitt
Thomas Hickok
Rebecca Hierholzer
Magaly Hirst
Tom Hirst
Michael Hobbs
Richard Hobson
John Hodges
Kathie Hoekstra
Jazmin Gomez Hoffman
Kate Holder
Aimee Houghton
Charles M. Howe
Chanyia Hughes
Robert Hunzinger
Omar Hussein
Derek Hyra
Cameron Icard
Jorge Iglesias
Arthur Impastato
Carol Jackson
Jake Jakubek
Charlene Jeanes
Monika Jones
Jackie Kammerman
Joe Kammerman
David Kaplan
Dana Kauffman
Robert Kaufman
Eric Keber
Susan Kellom
Anne Kelso
Azeb Kifle
Betty King
Janet King
John Komoroske
Becky Kotuby
Joshua Krantz
Robert Kraus
Paul Lachelier
Kenyon Larsen
Diana Lazo
Rachel Leonard
David Levy
Chris Lewis
Jacqueline Lewis
Susan Lewis
Krishna Leyva
Norman S. Lise
Elizabeth Livingston
Mary Longacre
Blanca Lopez
Margaret Lorber
Dianne Lowther
Debbie Ludington
Mary Lyman
Susan Mabazibwe
Kara Macek
Nate Macek
Nataki MacMurray
Bob MacNab
Meredith MacNab
Laurie MacNamara
G. Macone
Laura Macone
Janice Magnuson
Merrick Malone
Ann Marie Maloney
Carlos Maroquin
Miguel Marquez
Brian Marquis
David Martin
Adelaida Martinez
Jose Martinez
Barbara Martinez
Dina Martinez
Israel Martinez
C McBeth
James H. McCain
Sean McEnearney
Ann Cary McLain
Iris Melendez
Michael Menchel
Richard Merritt
Derek Meyer
Carolyn Meza
A. Melvin Miller
Judy Miller
Robert Miller
Jermaine Mincey
Mike Moran
Ana Moreno
Carlos Moreno
Kurt Moser
Mark Mueller
T.V. Mukai
Dorothy Mulligan
Jeff Murphy
Stephen Mutty
Lynn Nelson
Susan Newell
Bryan Noble
Sandy Northrop
Lisa Novakoski
Jennifer Oehme
David Olinger
Kathryn Papp
Mirian Parada
Margaret Patterson
Peter Pennington
Kathleen Pepper
Fred Phelps
Pedro Ponce
Bob Ponichtera
Bea Porter
Alby Marilu Portillo
Silvia Portillo
Kevin Posey
Bill Potapchuk
Roy Priest
Bill Purdy

Jeannine Deem Purdy
Frank Putzu
Rebecca Quarles
Kay Quirk
Juan Ramirez
Brian Reagan
John Renner
Gayle Reuter
Oscar Rider
Linda Ries
Yolanda Rivera
Jim Roberts
Lauren Roberts
Brian Robertson
C Roehrenbeck
Michelle Rose
Rob Rutland-Brown
LaDonna Sanders
Josh Sawislak
Sherry Schiller
Bo Schnurr
William Schreiner
Heather Scott
Barbara Seaman
Kim Sescoe
Eva Shea
Anne Shine
Carol Siegel
Lisa Silverman
Ross Simons
Charles E Simpson
Mickey Simpson
Amy Slack
Fay Slotnick
Michelle Smith
Rev. Leslie Steffenson
Lee Stenberg
Sarah Stott
Ron Sturman
Roger Sullivan
Charles Sumpter
Carol Supplee
Jackie Surratt
Tom Suydam
Ellen Tabb
Kate Theisen
Ajashu Thomas
Amy Thomas
Lisette Torres
James Torretti
Simon Trumble
Samuel Ulm
Crystal Vanison
Daniel VanPelt
Edith M. Vasquez
Santo Vega
Claudia Vita
Paul Vogel
Julie Segal Walters
Steve Walz
Maria Wasowski
Christa Watters
Roger Waud
Carol Weber
John Wedeles
Robert Weigl
Annie Weinberg
Converse West
Latriece Prince Wheeler
Maria Mercedes White
Julia Williams
Nancy M. Williams
K. Taylor Wilson
Danielle Wolf
Bob Wood
Joyce Woodson
Kitty Wooley
Martha Wooten
Elizabeth Wright
Brandi Yee
Nelson Zavaleta

Introduction

What's Next Alexandria is a City initiative to gather information and develop and implement strategies for improving and expanding civic engagement in Alexandria. Through a series of community conversations and online participation starting in September 2012, and ending in June 2013, members of the community collaborated with City staff, appointed, and elected officials to talk about how Alexandrians can best participate in public decision- making processes that shape the City.

We know that collaboration between community members and city government leads to better results than either working in a vacuum. One without the other misses out on a whole range of good ideas. More importantly, public decisions that are developed collaboratively produce better results and better stand the test of time. The *What's Next Alexandria* initiative focused on understanding how to use civic engagement to improve this kind of collaborative give-and-take that will always be more effective than community members or City staff working alone.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) white paper entitled Connected Communities explains that civic engagement is both the "right" thing to do as well as the "smart" thing to do. As the "right" thing to do, effective citizen engagement supports "democratic ideals and our desire to build a sense of community identity and responsibility…with a shared sense of place and purpose." At the same time, it is the "smart" thing to do, knowing that government cannot solve community problems without community input.

This handbook explains how Alexandrians can make their voices and views heard. This is essential to ensure that City government is responsive to those whom it is dedicated to serve. "In the best of all worlds, the right thing and the smart thing reinforce each other in order to promote shared ownership of problems and a willingness to contribute to their solution. Citizen involvement that achieves extensive participation from persons affected by a decision, promotes understanding of the issues involved, and grounds the decision in citizen preferences that help to build support for the principle of citizen engagement."

Why does *What's Next Alexandria* use the term "engagement"? And what is civic engagement, anyway?

As described in Connected Communities, "In any of their interactions with citizens, local governments should look for the opportunity to encourage engagement rather than simply seeking an exchange of information." The term "engagement" implies more than simply hosting or attending a meeting. Engagement involves conversations, debates, deliberation, and creating new relationships with neighbors.

SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

What's Next Alexandria Process: How we got here.

Online Poll

1. November 2012 Meeting – Search for Principles

Online Participation – Analyze, Review, Revise

2. January 2013 Meeting – Confirm principles, Design Framework

Online Participation – Analyze, Review, Revise

3. April 2013 Meeting – Present Final Principles and Framework, Design Strategies for Implementation

Online Participation – Analyze, Review, Revise

4. June 2013 Meeting – Present final Principles and Framework, Discuss Communication Strategies

Online Participation – Analyze, Review, Revise

5. September 2013 – Release Draft Civic Engagement Handbook for Public Review & Comment

The most powerful tool for planning for the future and solving problems is community members providing their own perspective and actively listening to different points of view. Civic engagement rallies community members, City staff, and elected and appointed officials to engage and collaborate with one another on public policy, planning, and development decisions that affect the lives of all Alexandrians.

Community collaboration over the course of the *What's Next Alexandria* process resulted in three key elements:

- **Principles** for civic engagement.
- **A Standard Framework** for civic engagement.
- **Tools and Strategies** for communications and engagement.

Together, these important pieces make up Alexandria's Civic Engagement Handbook, which will serve as a guide for future public decision-making processes in the city.

This document focuses on just one aspect of civic engagement, but there are many other important avenues for participating in civic life, such as serving on Commissions, volunteering in the community, and of course, voting.

This Handbook is for community members and City staff who will work together to improve or expand:

- **Understanding** about how to participate in public decision-making in Alexandria.
- **Knowledge** about planning and development in Alexandria.
- **Skills** to participate in civic engagement processes in a meaningful way.
- **Participation** to include a broad representation of our diverse city.
- **Solutions** for cooperative, productive, and sustainable public decision-making.

A chart has been added to the appendix of this handbook and to the implementation plan to clarify how the civic engagement framework and principles apply to the range of projects the City undertakes. In general, projects initiated by the City will be expected to apply the outcomes of *What's Next Alexandria*. Projects initiated by others, such as development applications, will still require community outreach and feedback as always, but not at the level required of City projects.

SECTION 2 | FOCUSED ON OUTCOMES

To effectively meet the current and future needs of its residents, organizations, and businesses, the City must productively engage community members in decision- making processes, including planning, operations, development and implementation. Successful civic engagement helps to ensure that every action the City takes is well-informed and maximizes benefits to the community.

Productive engagement is not an easy task, nor is it the task of local government working alone. The community is a partner and shares responsibility, as they know best the issues affecting their neighborhoods. A process that invites ongoing public engagement in policy, resource and planning discussions is the hallmark of a healthy community.

The primary goal of the What's Next Alexandria initiative is to improve the quality of Alexandria's public participation process so that members of the community are actively, constructively, and meaningfully involved in the public decisions that affect their lives and see outcomes as reflective of their input.

The process by which the community is involved must by its nature be realistic, transparent, and representative. Providing neutral and accurate information to groups of residents coupled with their collective understanding of the impacts of their participation pays off when projects are implemented that benefit the whole community and align with their vision.

What does success look like?

With the goal of improving Alexandria's public participation process in mind, this Handbook is a tool for pursuing, achieving, and measuring positive outcomes for civic engagement. Desired outcomes for improved civic engagement are straightforward:

- **Improved understanding** of the value of working together to solve common problems.
- **Fully informed public** that knows how its city government works as well as its public policy process.
- **Increased Participation**, representative of the City's demographic diversity.
- **Public which regularly vote**s in elections and has knowledge of their elected officials.
- **Active Leadership** by community members in organizing their community to participate in civic engagement processes and help shape broader goals of the City.
- **Ownership**: Members of the community endorse decisions and actions by the City because decisions clearly reflect public participation in a transparent process.
- **Consistency** across City departments, Boards and Commissions in the application of civic engagement principles and process.
- **Confidence** in the equity of the public decision making process.
- **Mutual Trust** between the community and its government.

By achieving these outcomes, Alexandria will thrive as demonstrated in the quality of the daily life of its citizens and their participation in shaping the city's future.

SECTION 3 | PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Alexandria's Principles of Civic Engagement were developed by those who participated from the community during the *What's Next Alexandria* process to guide the City and its residents in how Alexandrians can best participate in public dialogue for decisions that shape the city for years to come. In the first year of implementation, staff will develop performance measures for each principle to inform any necessary improvements.

The following Principles serve as the foundation for civic engagement in Alexandria and will be posted in all appropriate locations throughout the city:

Respect
Inclusiveness and Equity
Early Involvement
Easy Participation
Meaningful Engagement
Mutual Accountability
Transparency
Sustained Collaboration
Evaluation

Actions and Outcomes shown represent an initial list; many others may develop.

Respect

Alexandria values a process of engagement where participants demonstrate respect in words and actions and approach decisions with open-mindedness so that everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinion regardless of differences.

Actions

- Clearly articulate participation ground rules based on mutual respect from the beginning of the project. (Ground rules can be found in the appendix.)
- Recruit and train staff and community facilitators to assist with and manage productive meetings.
- Support facilitators and the project team and share responsibility for maintaining respect of all participants in the projects.
- Demonstrate active listening.
- Respond to all input.

Outcomes

- Participants feel they have been heard and their ideas fairly evaluated.
- Participants build relationships and focus on the work to be accomplished in each project.
- Participants see the outcome as reflective of the common ground reached through the community process even if they do not agree with all recommendations

Inclusiveness and Equity

Alexandria reaches out to and encourages the participation of all members of the community in dialogue and decision-making processes, including those who will be affected by the issue as well as those who have not historically been engaged. All members of the community are informed and empowered to participate; all views are equally heard and inform the outcome; and all impacts and benefits are fairly distributed.

Actions

- Develop a communications and engagement strategy for each project outlining a plan to reach out to all community members with emphasis on ensuring engagement of population most affected by project, especially those traditionally under-represented.
- Recruit and involve people most impacted by a project.
- Design agendas and other materials to facilitate easy understanding of issues for all participants.
- Respect cultural and language differences; provide translation and interpretation when appropriate.

Outcomes

- Increased participation by under-represented constituents and those constituencies impacted by the project.
- Understandable, meaningful process seen as worthy of community participation.

Early Involvement

Alexandria identifies and involves stakeholders early in decision-making processes. Community members are involved in framing issues before any conclusions have been drawn, requiring early and ongoing communication with participants through each phase in the process.

Actions

- Begin community outreach well before the project begins so that residents have ample time to prepare for active participation. This should include developing a project website and beginning outreach through volunteer communicators and via digital and print flyers (or other on-site methods) in the affected neighborhoods.
- Provide an opportunity for the community to shape the project's definition (validate/expand issues involved), scope, expected timeline and strategy for engaging all sectors of the public well before the project begins.
- Clearly delineate and broadly communicate the community's opportunity for involvement.

Outcomes

- Community members, especially those most affected, participate from the beginning and throughout the project.
- Projects are better defined and scoped.
- Early identification and resolution of community's issues of importance so that resources can be applied toward resolving them.
- Planning and completing the project is highly collaborative.
- Broad support for the completed project.

Easy Participation

Alexandria promotes open and readily accessible government. Communications and information are timely, easy to understand, and offered in a variety of formats, appropriate to a given process. The City will provide clarity about the public decision-making process, including milestones and

a defined endpoint. Participants will have the flexibility to participate in a variety of ways, including online and in person.

Actions

- Share project scope, deliverables and timeline with the community well in advance of the project start date and first public meeting.
- Develop public materials to be clear, concise, and easily understandable by a wide variety of constituents.
- Conduct a robust and coordinated communications process prior to and throughout the project, using multiple communications tools.
- Foster cooperation among all partners (City, community, individuals, community organizations, and businesses) to invite and increase awareness, participation, and engagement.
- Ensure that multiple opportunities for both online and in-person participation and input are available throughout the project.

Outcomes

- Civic participation is robust. A variety of stakeholders demonstrate sustained engagement in the process in numbers that exceed expectations.
- Participants generally represent the demographics of the City or the project area.
- Meeting evaluations or community polls demonstrate that barriers to participation (such as too many meetings, limited notice or inaccessibility of meetings, lack of online information or opportunities for input) have decreased, and satisfaction in civic engagement has increased.
- The number of residents from the community invested and participating in civic engagement processes grows.

Meaningful Engagement

Alexandria provides opportunities for all community members to participate in an open and unbiased process, free of predetermined outcomes, to consider and deliberate feasible options. The City authentically solicits, acknowledges, incorporates, and responds to community input.

Actions

- Invite input from stakeholders at each phase of the process from issue definition to conclusion before any conclusions have been drawn as demonstrated in the materials and activities for each project.
- Present multiple feasible scenarios based on community input for the community to consider; Make it clear what issues are on and off the table and why.
- Demonstrate how research, analysis and community input shapes decision points and recommendations at each phase in the process.
- Utilize ongoing evaluation to inform whether processes should change and how they should be modified.

Outcomes

- Community members understand and accept the purpose of proposed projects.
- Projects proceed with less conflict; where there is no consensus, each alternative is given fair consideration, and stakeholders perceive a fair process.
- Participants clearly see the impact of their participation throughout the process.
- Results of projects are beneficial to the community and the city overall.
- Increased confidence in the process and project outcomes.

Mutual Accountability

The City and community are mutually accountable for a fair process, honest and respectful participation, informed and fact-based discussion, outcomes that reflect input, and acceptance of the result. City processes will include meaningful assessments to measure progress, implementation of improvements as needed, and effective communication of both.

Actions

- Demonstrate respect for all participants' time and effort by following the engagement principles and conducting productive meetings and online activities.
- Conduct a meaningful process and encourage each other's efforts with positive reinforcement and constructive criticism.
- Apply resources for civic engagement appropriately.
- Provide opportunity to evaluate the process – participate in evaluating the process.

Outcomes

- Outreach, engagement and decision making is improved.
- Increased trust in City government.
- Process documentation and outcomes illustrate that members of the community are assisting the City with community organizing and participation.

Transparency

City government will act with integrity in an open process, and will provide timely access to clear, trustworthy information, presented and employed by all parties from the beginning to the end of the process, including the reasoning that leads to and supports policy conclusions.

Actions

- Share background information and meeting materials with the community at least one week in advance of public meetings via eNews, Email distribution, or on the City's webpage.
- Design materials that are clear, simply expressed, informative, impartial, and easily understood.
- Share publicly all public input from all sources, whether from meetings, online polls, online comment boards, in person polls, etc., as well as City response
- Demonstrate how input will shape recommendations.
- Post completed evaluations online.

Outcomes

- Participants understand the purpose of the project and their role in the decision-making process.
- Community members have access to all of the information that is used to make a decision in a form that is easy to understand.
- The City understands the needs of community members for productive participation.
- The community has a clear understanding of how public input shaped the final recommendation.

Sustained Collaboration

Alexandria promotes a culture of community engagement that enhances public decision making processes and invests in long-term working relationships, learning opportunities and ongoing, open collaboration among community members, community groups, City leaders and staff.

Actions

- Community members volunteer to serve in supportive roles such as community organizing, meeting facilitation, and evaluation committees.
- The City actively recruits leaders of organizations, businesses, associations and clubs as active partners in civic engagement.

Outcomes

- The tools for recruiting community members to engage in City projects are improved and executed.
- Community organizations, businesses, associations and clubs agree to active participation in projects as appropriate.
- Civic engagement principles and practices are widely known and understood, therefore residents know how to participate and increase their degree of involvement.

Evaluation

The City will work in partnership with the community to periodically assess the application of civic engagement principles. The evaluation will quantify participant feedback, document lessons learned, and identify strategies for refinement.

Actions

- Participants complete an evaluation form at the end of each public meeting or at least once during each phase of a process, or if more suitable, via an online survey. City staff works collaboratively with residents to address concerns in a way that does not impede the project schedule.
- Share evaluations with the community via the project webpage.
- Conduct annual reviews of civic engagement performance following the first year of implementation of the *What's Next Alexandria* process and the utilization of this handbook, including the outcomes of each principle, and recommendations for improvement and revisions to the Civic Engagement Handbook, if needed.
- Share recommendations with the public for a round of comments, review and agreement.

Outcomes

- Increased participation.
- Meeting evaluations or process surveys indicate that principles are being met. (If not, the engagement strategy will be modified to be more effective before the project is completed).
- The annual review ensures that "lessons learned" are applied to future projects.
- Trust in the civic engagement process increases.

SECTION 4 | FRAMEWORK

The purpose of establishing a standard Framework for the civic engagement process is to ensure consistency in how the City engages the community in different projects. The Framework establishes a shared understanding of what to expect in every process, and will be used by City staff at the outset of all City projects that require and benefit from public participation. Beginning each project with a shared understanding of the four standard phases and the proposed engagement strategies, tools and deliverables of each, builds trust and transparency in public participation. As a tool, the Framework provides a realistic and achievable way of unifying community engagement efforts across departments.

Projects will start with the menu of options shown in the framework template and will be tailored to fit the needs of that project. Before any major work begins, City staff will fill out the proposed engagement framework and share it with the community for review and feedback.

The Framework will be posted on the City's webpage and paper copies provided in key locations as appropriate.

The Framework will include the following information about the project:

- Goal(s)
- Timeline
- Deliverables for each phase
- Activities required to accomplish deliverables
- Anticipated number of meetings and/or other engagement opportunities needed within each phase. (Some projects may require few public meetings, and more complex projects may require more than one meeting per phase)
- Tools to be used for each phase

The framework will be refined based on community input as the project gets started. Any changes will be shared with the community by keeping a current version posted on the web page and sharing it at each opportunity for community input. The project can move on to the next phase when the participants are satisfied that the current phase has been completed. In addition, each phase will be evaluated to assess whether goals are being met and principles have been observed and allow for adjustments along the way.

Adhering to the established project timeline is an important step in establishing credibility and trust in the process, as well as respecting participants' time and making efficient use of City

resources. While it is not always possible and some factors can't be controlled, it is important to set the expectation that staff will always strive to adhere to the project timeline.

A Tour of the Framework
See page 19 of the Full Color Version of the draft handbook.
For the Complete Civic Engagement Framework worksheet, see Appendix D on page 72

SECTION 5 | SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The entire community shares the responsibility of working toward broad and inclusive participation in decision-making that impacts how the city sustains and improves the quality of life of Alexandrians. Community members have an important role to play in encouraging a representative group of people, as many as possible, to participate.

While City staff can facilitate this work, community members are most effective in engaging their neighbors in decisions that reflect the best interest of all Alexandrians.

Many Alexandrians have expressed a willingness to partner with the City and other organizations/ institutions in expanding civic engagement through an informal network of community volunteers. The City will build on this volunteer spirit as well as continue to strengthen its partnership with the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), Leadership Alexandria, and the Citizen Academy to "deputize" graduates in filling this important community role.

Volunteer Community Organizer

Staff will utilize this important and growing community resource as needed and appropriate to enhance outreach, expand understanding about a given project, and call on community facilitators if needed.

Below are the key roles of a volunteer community organizer to expand community capacity for engagement and the empowerment of individuals to influence decision-making in Alexandria.

Communicator

Share information about city government or decision- making processes; use your personal network to disseminate information; attend and provide updates at neighborhood, school and faith-based meetings; post or distribute flyers at neighborhood gathering spots or shopping centers; knock on doors, or find other effective avenues for information sharing. The communicator serves as a bridge builder, forming partnerships between the City government and Alexandria's institutions, organizations, businesses, and individuals.
Educator

Empower others to participate by providing fact- based information about plans or projects and how to participate in government processes. This requires stepping back from personal areas

of interest to attract the broadest base of constituencies possible. Providing facts about projects also results in increased community capacity to participate, increased understanding of city issues, and emergence of new local leaders to support project implementation and future efforts.

Facilitator

Serve as an impartial discussion leader for a small group table at a large community meeting to ensure that all attendees have an equal opportunity to make their opinion heard. Facilitators attend training sessions in order to be well-prepared and to understand the project content. Volunteer facilitators send a message to community members that civic participation is important and valuable to the City and that no decisions have been determined in advance of the engagement.

SECTION 5 | ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

There are many strategies for engaging the community in the public decision-making process, some better suited to particular projects than others, and some better suited to particular phases in the process than others.

Included in the appendix is a civic engagement toolbox, which provides a comprehensive list, description and suggested use for many tools available.

Regardless of the strategies used, there are some fundamental guidelines to follow as projects are carried out:

- **Keep** a written and visual record of the process documenting ideas put forward and evaluation of options, as well as decision points along the way.
- **Respect** individual points of view.
- **Be mindful** of participants' time. Engagement opportunities (online or in-person) should be constructive and meaningful, contributing to the overarching process goal.
- **Provide feedback** results in verbatim and summary form.
- **Prioritize the transparency principle** at each step of the way.
- **Show** how input in each phase has led to the next phase.
- **Always ask** participants how the process can be improved.

Engagement Process

This graphic (page 24 of full color version) shows the continuous and iterative nature of the civic engagement process.

- Meet

Identify problems
Brainstorm solutions

- Draft

Proposals for projects based on meeting

- Meet

Discuss proposals
Make changes

- Revise

Incorporate changes
Hone details

- Meet

Final review of project proposal
Establish timeline

- Implement

Carry out project as planned

- Meet

Evaluate project implementation
Make suggestions for future

- Review

Review entire process
Document and make public

Meetings

As explained in Section 4 describing the Framework, an overall civic engagement plan (including number and type of engagement opportunities) should be established and published prior to initiating a public engagement process.

While meetings are certainly not the only way to inform and hear from the community, they are often an important component at some stage in the process, and therefore warrant detailed description. It should be emphasized that the community's preference is for fewer, more efficient meetings based on feedback received by the City. This section reviews primary meeting types with information about when and how each is appropriate. The value of a single meeting process cannot be over- emphasized. The advantages over multiple separate small group meetings are significant, including:

- Most efficient for City staff to conduct.
- Avoids multiple conversations on parallel tracks that are difficult to bring together.
- Greater clarity and transparency, and therefore trust- building, rather than divisive.
- Achieves forward movement without being derailed and losing focus.
- Fewest opportunities for special interest groups to exert outsize pressure and influence.

Meeting Types

1. Facilitated, Small Group Dialogue & Feedback
   - Best meeting tool for allowing transparent participation in a public project.
   - Designed to be iterative, which means that the results from one meeting are used as a starting point and built upon in subsequent meetings.
   - Provides opportunity to share information with the group as a whole and take advantage of the ability to work in small groups.
   - Capitalizes on the natural human tendency for conversations. Activities take place in small group tables of 6-10 participants. Participants share experiences, solve problems and answer questions by working together. Group facilitators guide the collaborative discussion to make the meetings as efficient and productive as possible.
   - Allows opportunities to hear divergent points of view while still encouraging every participant to express an opinion. Small groups can quickly report out to the larger group and explain the work the table or group was able to complete.
   - Can work well with simultaneous online participation to accommodate community members who can't attend in person. If the meeting activities are suited to online work, the online group participates in a "Virtual Table," viewing the meeting in real time and participating with others in moderated online discussion.

2. Mobile Workshop & Non-traditional Meetings
   - Meet people where they are. Host meetings or informal dialogues in coffee shops, parks, or other neighborhood locations, to engage those who don't typically participate in night meetings on topics directly related to their neighborhood.
   - Attend or host a table at community events, festivals, or farmers markets to provide information and gather feedback through surveys.
   - Arrange bus tours, site visits, or neighborhood walks with City Staff and community members to view project sites and discuss issues.

3. Open House

   - Typically suited to the beginning or end of a project.
   - Open to the public to drop in when convenient and visit tables set up with information in a standing and browsing format.
   - Informative as opposed to working meetings.
   - Generally not appropriate for gathering feedback, actively involving meeting participants or encouraging interaction and collaboration between attendees.

4. Separate Small Group Meetings
   - Used sparingly during engagement processes. They can build distrust by sending the message that certain organizations deserve an audience while others do not.
   - Require significant additional staff time and pose the risk of duplicating the engagement process or creating multiple tracks that are difficult to bring back together.

- Primarily serve as an information-sharing tool and secondarily as an engagement tool, if used.
- Can be effective as one-time meetings in the beginning of a project in order to engage key constituents who might not otherwise attend larger community meetings.
- Only used as a tool for bringing outside groups or hesitant organizations into the larger meeting process. The larger Community Meetings must drive the process.
- Stakeholder Advisory Groups are a type of small group meeting tool that can be effective in specific circumstances, such as engaging participants in highly technical projects or projects which require ongoing focus/monitoring of a particular issue over a long period of time. Successful past examples of Advisory Groups include the City's 2009 Infill Task Force, the Beauregard Corridor Stakeholders Group, Beauregard Rezoning Advisory Group, and Small Area Plan Implementation groups. The benefits are having a consistent group of engaged participants over the long term, as well as a membership that has a particular technical capacity.

  Avoiding process duplication, emphasizing transparency and providing clarity about how members of the public can meaningfully participate are crucial issues to be addressed if an advisory group is selected for a public decision making process.

5. Town Hall
   - Attendees voice opinions one-at-a-time and/or ask questions of staff or elected officials.
   - Allows a limited number of people to participate in the discussion and excludes most attendees from providing their opinion. Not an effective means of gathering meaningful input from community members in a sustained way, and should be used sparingly.
   - Most productive at the end of a planning project that has involved robust community participation. If participation in the planning process has not been robust, and/or when residents don't feel their voices have been heard, a Town Hall meeting can devolve into a personal venting session that is highly adversarial, rather than productive in terms of collecting feedback.
   - Participants from past meetings should speak or present to mitigate the potential for adversarial meetings. A diversity of viewpoints is best expressed when past participants are present to counterbalance angry voices.

Before a Meeting: Gather Information

Gather and present concrete background information and data as a foundation for each project.

- Trust & Transparency
  Participants should see that the City has spent time reviewing past plans, feedback, history, and current events that may affect the project under consideration.

- Brevity
  Presentation of this information should be kept to a reasonably short period of time during the meeting.

Determine Accessibility Needs

- Meeting venue
  Select a meeting venue that is a neutral place where all people feel comfortable going. The venue should be easily accessible by transit, accessible to persons with disabilities, and conveniently located within the project/ planning area. If the project has citywide impact, meetings should be centrally located or be held in multiple sections of the city over the course of the process.

- Language barriers
  Is there a high percentage of foreign language speaking residents in the project area? Providing simultaneous language translation at the meetings and translating all materials, including online, will go a long way to engaging those who don't speak English. It is important that this be built into the project budget at the beginning.

- Childcare
  Is it likely that the meeting will benefit from better attendance if the City provides childcare? Does the project relate particularly to families with children? This is a relatively low cost investment in encouraging parents with children who might not otherwise attend to get involved in their community.

- Online participation
  Live Internet video engagement is an excellent way to include members of the community who don't have time or ability to attend in person. This option serves as a "Virtual Table," allowing participants to watch the meeting in real time and participate with other viewers in group exercises through a moderated live chat. While this tool may not be cost effective for all City meetings, it provides a great option for people who cannot attend meetings.

Determine Facilitation Needs

Determine if the meeting would benefit from small group facilitators.

- Role of the Facilitators
  The facilitators' role is to explain things clearly, keep participants on track, and ensure that everyone at the table has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

- Volunteers
  Staff managing each project will have access to a growing cadre of community volunteer facilitators. The list of volunteers will be maintained by City Manager's office. Staff will conduct a brief facilitator training prior to each meeting so that facilitators have a basic understanding of the project and fully understand the meeting objectives and activities. Advanced review is critical in order for facilitators to provide a productive meeting experience for participants. Facilitators should arrive early to review table set-up and meeting materials, and greet participants at their table as they arrive.

- Staff
  In some cases, when community facilitators are not available, staff will need to perform the facilitator role, either at small group tables or in front of the large group. In order to perform this role effectively, staff must also be well prepared and should attend the City's facilitator/ civic engagement training.

- Master of Ceremonies
  Some community meetings should be led by a volunteer Master of Ceremonies (MC) in order to keep the meeting on track and ensure impartiality. This MC may be a leader or director of a known organization or institution and should be recognized as a neutral party.

  A volunteer MC may not be necessary for every meeting process, but should be especially considered for citywide meeting processes or projects that might benefit from a neutral party leading the meeting. A volunteer MC also demonstrates the importance of participation in civic life of the City.

Developing a Meaningful Agenda and Conducting a Meeting

Focused Agenda

Agendas should be simple, straightforward and provide clear objectives about how the meeting will produce meaningful results to inform each project.

It should be clear from each agenda how the meeting will move the discussion forward by soliciting discussion and feedback from the community. This is one of the most important components of a successful process.

- Aim for quality in the work and experience of the participants.
- The agenda should be focused on the work to be accomplished, removing extraneous tasks and presentations.
- Remove politics from the process as much as possible.
- Brief introductions of public officials are sufficient.
- Presentations to the larger group must be short, engaging and to the point.
- Respects participants' time by starting and finishing on time and sticking to the agenda.

Activities

- Prepare one or two hands-on, creative, and engaging activities per meeting.
- Meeting activities should be simple enough for newcomers to quickly understand while simultaneously addressing a specific component of the work or project at hand.
- Avoid the use of similar activities from one meeting to the next. Meetings over the course of a process should provide a variety of ways that people will be engaged.

Group Work

- Participants must spend most of their time doing meaningful work and/or participating in meaningful conversations with fellow community members.
- Participants should work in small groups (between 6 to 10 persons) so that they can build off of each other's ideas and all have a chance to contribute.

Report-Outs

- After each activity (or at the end of the meeting), the facilitator should invite groups to stand and report out to the larger group what they discussed or accomplished.
- Report-outs should focus on sharing overall ideas of the group's work.
- Report-outs should be kept to 1-2 minutes per report.
- Total reporting time for meetings should be kept to 10 minutes or less. At the conclusion of report-outs, acknowledge that all work will be posted online in verbatim and summary form.

After the Meeting

Openly communicate engagement results from public meetings and online activities in as many ways as possible. Post/distribute engagement results within as short a timeframe as possible following the meeting (preferably less than 10 days).

Communications

Avenues for communicating post-meeting results should include the City website, eNews, project email lists that develop, community listserves, and social media. Notice of where the community can access post-meeting materials and project information should be included on meeting flyers provided to libraries and newspapers. Posted information should be widely accessible as JPEG images, publicly accessible Google maps, or PDFs.

Reiterate at Next Meeting

At the beginning of the next community meeting, share the results of the previous meeting (and online work, if applicable). Ensure that participants at subsequent meetings understand that their work has been acknowledged and synthesized. The hallmark of an iterative community meeting process is that participants know how their work informs the progression of the project.

Be Concise

The presentation of results should be short and to-the- point. However, it is a crucial part of transparency and trust-building that overall themes of participant work are covered with reference to verbatim or raw data available online (or in the appropriate place).

Meeting Process Checklists
Use these checklists during the process as a way to measure your progress

Before a Meeting

- Provide concise background information demonstrating that the City has spent time reviewing past plans, feedback, history, and current events.
- Provide advance notice of meeting date. While it is not always possible given multiple factors, the City's goal is to provide 3 week notice of meeting dates. Meeting agendas should be provided 1 week in advance.

- Present this information concisely.
- Determine accessibility needs: meeting venue, childcare, language barriers, online participation.
- Determine facilitation needs.
- Train and prepare facilitators.
-

Developing a Meaningful Agenda & Conducting a Meeting

- Meeting agenda should be simple and produce meaningful results. It should be clear from each meeting agenda how the meeting will solicit discussion and feedback from the community.
- Aim for quality in the work and experience of the participants.
- Participants must spend most of their time doing meaningful work in small groups.
- Remove politics as much as possible.
- Speaking and presenting to the larger group must be short, engaging, and to the point.
- Prepare one or two engaging, hands on, simple activities per meeting. Avoid the use of similar activities from one meeting to the next.
- Use 10 minutes to invite groups to stand and report out on what they discussed or accomplished. These should be 1-2 minutes each.
- Respect participants' time by starting and finishing meetings on time and sticking to the agenda.

After a Meeting

- Communicate engagement results from public meetings and online activities.
- Use all appropriate methods of communication.
- Share previous results at next meeting.
- Be transparent yet concise.

Online Engagement

Online community engagement is now part of the norm nationwide, and regularly expected of public processes by young and old participants alike. Websites, blogs, online forums, social media and other platforms provide easy and accessible opportunities for communication and process documentation.

For those individuals who are unable or unwilling to physically participate in a community meeting, online platforms provide a crucial option for engagement.

There are many digital engagement tools available today, including smartphone apps, text message tools, online town halls, and many others. Many are briefly described in the Engagement Toolbox provided as an appendix to this Handbook. The City already utilizes a broad spectrum of online communication and will continue to evaluate the benefits and constraints of online tools as new options are developed (including how resource-heavy they may be from an implementation standpoint). Below are some guidelines for online engagement:

Do not consider online participation the primary method for community engagement. Although it can be efficient, it is less successful at building the kinds of relationships formed during in-person meetings which allow participants to understand each other's' point of view, to brainstorm together, and to reach consensus.

Consider which kinds of activities are appropriate for online engagement. The previous section on engagement strategies emphasizes the importance of designing meaningful and creative meeting activities. In some cases, these collaborative group activities don't translate well to the digital realm. However, these activities can be accommodated through live-streamed "virtual tables," where people can participate via live moderated chats in the same activities as those attending in person.

Online engagement can be an effective and efficient resource for interim work done between in-person meetings. Consider using *synthesized* feedback from an in-person meeting as a starting point for interim online participation. Polling, voting, confirming or *augmenting* community work during the previous meeting is a great way to allow online participants to contribute.

> *"Synthesizing" typically involves eliminating duplicity, correcting spelling errors, or simplifying large volumes of data in order to make meeting results easily understandable for the next meeting.*
>
> *"Augmenting" the results of a community meeting is deeper than synthesizing. Augmenting typically involves using synthesized meeting results, but re- organizing the information into categories useful in the next meeting, or adding to the community-generated information with research or visual aids.*

Online activities between in-person meetings should not edit work that took place during those meetings. Instead, online activities should build on past work in ways that respect the work of in-person participants.

Opportunities for online interaction should be free and readily accessible to the public. Tools that are hidden behind pay walls and special accounts are discouraged.

Social Media & Virtual Meetings

Social Media

Social media is an effective and valuable tool for quickly disseminating information to a wide audience (and second-tier networks), and reaches community members that might not typically attend meetings or know about City projects.

- As it doesn't reach everyone in the City, it should be viewed as a supplement to other channels of communication.
- Use the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts to promote upcoming projects or meetings and direct people to project websites with more detailed information.
- Before creating a dedicated Facebook page or Twitter account, consider the amount of time required for consistent production of fresh material and rapid response requirements.

- Use Twitter as a platform for an interactive Town Hall, which has proven to be an engaging tool that may capture the attention of individuals who don't typically attend community meetings.
- Use other social networking/sharing tools such as Tumblr, Flikr and Pinterest to engage the community by inviting them to share images of places and things they think the City could emulate in new projects or development.

Virtual Meetings

- There are myriad options for hosting "virtual meetings"- meetings that can be video recorded and Livestreamed on the Internet for people to watch and participate in real time via a live chat, offering a "virtual table" addition to the in-person tables at the meeting.
- Can be used for real-time polling, voting, and live chat sessions.
- Requires a trained facilitator and camera operator/ technology aide.
- Uses widely accessible technology – video, City's
- Livestream account, and an Internet connection. Add a smartphone, Twitter, email and people can participate on the go.
- Recorded meetings can be posted on the web or Channel 70, with options for commenting.
- For more information about how virtual participation can be integrated into an engagement process and when it may or may not be appropriate, see "Meeting Types"

Online Comment Boards & Virtual Town Halls

Online comment boards and virtual town halls can be a useful tool for supplementing in-person engagement because they allow people (with computer access) the flexibility to participate any time or place.

There are many commercial vendors that provide "town hall" type online platforms for an annual subscription fee. (See the engagement toolbox in the appendix for a listing of these tools).

Staff pose specific questions asking for public feedback on a particular project or question and participants respond, with the ability to view comments from fellow community members, and conversation threads on a particular topic that can spark useful dialogue.

The benefit? The easy to read presentation of the dialogue, and the ability for responses to be analyzed and presented in user friendly formats.

The success of comment boards or virtual town halls is dependent on the following ingredients:

- A strong marketing campaign encouraging the community to use the tool, with links from the City's website and to social media to engage a broader audience.
- Clarity about the objective of the forum and how input will be used.
- Dedicated staff resources to develop questions, provide monitoring and ensure a timely response.
- Clear rules of engagement and comment monitoring.
- Avoid platforms that allow anonymous comments.

- Easy to use, and, easy to find.
- Suited to the group that the City is trying to reach, particularly with regard to computer/Internet access and potential language barriers.

Online Polls

Online polls are a quick and convenient option for residents to share their concerns or ideas; they are effective for staff because of the ease of compiling, analyzing and sharing the feedback.

Online polls are especially valuable when it's important to get feedback from a broader group than those who can attend meetings in person.

Some things to keep in mind when considering use of an online poll:

- Online polls are typically not considered a statistically valid measure of broad public opinion, but simply record the opinions of the group that chooses to respond.
- Questions must be well written so as to be clear and balanced.
- Respondents should understand how the poll feedback will inform the process.
- Polls can be conducted out in the field where community members already congregate; using iPads or smartphones, staff can get information from community members who might not otherwise know the City wants their feedback.
- Consider polling platforms that rely on text message surveys on smart phones. It combines old-fashioned outreach (posters, fliers with a QR code) with smart phone technology, capturing the community's opinion right where they are.
- For those without technology access, printed polls can be mailed or shared through libraries, recreation centers and schools. Telephone polls are also still a useful alternative, even in an age of cell phones and unwanted phone solicitations. Community members are often willing to answer a phone poll that directly affects their neighborhood.

Visual Aids

Visual art can both improve public understanding in a project and create opportunities for informal community engagement. Some examples are listed below; see toolbox in Appendix for more information.

- Interactive public art projects allow people to express their unfiltered opinions (through art) in the public realm. The process of expression provides an opportunity for the community to interact and also creates an intelligent piece of temporary public art.
- Public art projects in schools or at open houses can be used as a tool to engage families through their children, occupying and educating children while parents have an opportunity to learn more about the topic at hand.
- Illustrative plans, models, graphic renderings, blocks and Legos provide an opportunity to illustrate planning concepts and projects in a way that is visually appealing and engaging, and can level the playing field by reducing the importance of literacy and written language translations.
- Short informative videos on basic planning principles or current projects convey information and engage public interest. They can be informative and inspiring simple

enough for kids to understand, but profound in the message they deliver. Videos are posted on the City's YouTube Channel and links can be shared broadly.
- Storytelling can be coupled with visual arts to shape and inform neighborhood revitalization plans and development projects by sharing stories of the community and aspirations for its future.
- Well-designed maps are a useful tool for telling the story of a particular project, visualizing data associated with various options or recommendations, showing change in an area over time, etc.

SECTION 5 | COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

It is clear that no one method of communication will suffice in successfully reaching out to the broadest possible audience. Continuous, multiple forms of communication are necessary.

Regardless of the type of communication used, information must be provided early in a decision-making process, consistently throughout, and in simple, understandable ways. This requirement is memorialized in the civic engagement principles and the framework, and cannot be emphasized strongly enough.

The following pages describe many methods of communication suitable for civic engagement.

Communicators

There is no substitute for person- to-person information sharing.

Being encouraged to attend a community meeting by your well- informed neighbor who can explain why your participation is important is much more likely to get you to a meeting than an email from the City.

Therefore, having a cadre of informed communicators on a given project is critical to increasing participation and ensuring a productive process that stays on track.
Communicators are volunteers who bridge communications and information gaps between government and the community, and expand the number of participants.

- Communicators can include anyone – community members, civic leaders, elected officials, and decision makers.
- City staff must provide accurate, timely and clear information so that communicators are well informed and able to respond intelligently to questions from stakeholders.
- It is essential that communicators remain engaged and active throughout a project in order to be effective.
- While communicators serve an important function, they will not have greater influence in the process than any other community member.

Partnering with Existing Groups

In some cases, staff does not have adequate social capital to be effective in engaging communities without assistance. *It is critical to forge appropriate partnerships with organizations and trusted leaders within the organizations to share information and solicit participation from their members.*

- Community leaders can provide key information at meetings of their respective groups (cultural, advocacy, or faith groups, civic or Parent Teacher Associations, among others), where the message will carry more weight when delivered by someone known to the group. Attendees can in turn share the information with their own personal networks.
- Effectiveness depends on factors such as meeting attendance, flyer distribution/translation, and ability to clearly communicate the connection between the project at hand and quality of life issues for the people in the room.
- Social service providers are an excellent channel for Information sharing.
- Face-to-face contact works best for some populations within the city, reaching people who might not have email or access to computers, and can negate language barriers.

Print: Posters, Bulletins, and Flyers

Today, many cities experience a digital divide impacting populations without Internet access. Even as Internet access increases, on smart phones and in public facilities, many people are still not reachable by Internet, which is why offline communication is still important.

Flyers in neighborhood locations and word of mouth are often the only way many community members hear about upcoming meetings.
For those populations whom the City has not yet successfully engaged in public decision-making, and until more effective tools are successful, print materials will continue to provide an important communications link and send a positive message about the City's goal to expand participation. Therefore, print communication should be an integral part of project communications, and should be taken into consideration when developing a project budget.

- Flyer distribution is time consuming and can be a major drain on staff resources; a volunteer force of communicators willing to distribute flyers in neighborhoods can divide the task into manageable pieces and encourage further neighbor-to-neighbor connection.
- Print materials can be distributed using existing City infrastructure, including libraries, recreation centers, other City facilities and school distribution systems, as well as at religious institutions, local shops, restaurants, gyms, bus stops, and waiting rooms. Flyers should be considered for any place that residents congregate, spend time, or have to wait.
- Materials should include project and meeting information, including ADA compliance, transit accessibility, language translation, and childcare, if applicable, and a Quick Response (QR) code, which, when scanned by a smartphone, links the user to the project website.

Print: Mail

Print materials can also be distributed by mail, but this is a significantly more expensive approach. Its reach can be broad or targeted but its effectiveness can be partially undermined by the volume of junk mail. Staff needs to consider cost and frequency when establishing a budget for this engagement tool.

There are some items that are better suited for mail distribution:

- Printed items with a longer shelf life than a meeting notice, such as the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services' Spring Cleanup bulletin – items that might get posted on the refrigerator.
- Initial flyers or postcard that announce the kickoff of a new planning process and providing the project website, scope, timeline, and opportunities for community participation.
- Updates to residents summarizing key city-related information, major upcoming projects, and how to participate in public decision making processes.

Important Print Communications issues to consider:

- Consistency in branding/ identity – are City materials easily recognizable?
- Do the materials clearly address the issue, why it's important and for who?
- Are the materials for citywide distribution or specific to a neighborhood?
- Should the flyer/postcard be translated into multiple languages?

The City's eNews subscription service offers a way for residents to sign up to receive email or text message updates on projects that are important to them.

City eNews & Email

The City will continue to promote this tool widely to expand the number of residents who subscribe.

While staff needs to avoid inundating the community with too many email and eNews updates, they are basic, easy tools for sharing information, taking the following into consideration:

- Ask community members to share emails and eNews with their own networks.
- Provide regular updates and information to relevant eNews groups as well as to the email contact list of stakeholders specific to that project.
- Respond to emails from the community in a timely manner. Delayed response or unanswered emails lead to lack of trust and uncertainty that comments have been considered. If time constraints don't allow for responses to multiple messages on the same topic, summarize the email communication – such as listing responses to frequently asked questions or noting frequently suggested policy or actions.
- Use community listserves for periodic updates of planning processes, public hearings, and upcoming event information. Alexandria boasts many neighborhood and professional listserves that can be used by the City or communicators.

Project Website

The City's dedicated project webpages should provide consistent, detailed information about projects and issues, and serve as an effective and accessible public record of the process.

Webpage checklist:

- Ensure that information is always up to date, easy to navigate, well organized, and comprehensive.
- Designate a staff person to manage each project page.
- Provide an easy way for the new or infrequent visitor to get a quick summary of the project goals, purpose, current status, timeline, and what remains to be decided.
- Take feasible steps to provide information to non- English speaking residents.
- Include staff contact information.
- Highlight important upcoming dates.
- Demonstrate how community input will be or has been incorporated and how decision-making will occur or has occurred throughout the process.
- Provide links to audio and video recordings of past meetings.
- Provide Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet, with answers and brief explanations to common questions.
- If there is an area on the site for feedback make it clear how feedback will be responded to and how it will shape the process.

News Media

Many community members rely on local print and online news sources for their information. There are a number of ways that the City can utilize these resources to help communicate important information:

- Media advisories through the City's Office of Communications can provide news agencies (including local radio and TV channels) with fact- based information about projects.
- Information about meetings for inclusion in local calendars, such as the Thursday insert in the Washington Post.
- Letters to the Editor.
- Advertising – this can be an expensive option and will require consideration about budget and target audience. City staff is continuing to test the effectiveness of targeted online advertising.
- It may take longer to publish information in print media due to time constraints associated with the medium. Using daily online news can be faster and may reach a broader audience.

Phone

While using the telephone might seem antiquated or inefficient as an outreach tool, there are limited situations in which it may be appropriate and worthy of consideration. The simplicity of the tool means that it is accessible to many.

- Particularly suited to short timelines, connecting with individuals who don't have computer access, and when a personal contact is needed in order to engage people in a project.
- Phone calls to personal friends can be an effective way of encouraging neighbors to participate in a given process.
- Communicators, or even City staff, can kick off an informal, old-fashioned phone tree that has the power of personal contact which eNews or flyers do not.
- Robo-calls can be targeted to specific areas to notify residents of an upcoming planning process.
- Telephone town halls provide a way for community members to call into a massive conference line to hear a brief update and ask questions.

SECTION 8 | REACHING THE COMMUNITY'S FULL DIVERSITY

Alexandria is fortunate to have such a diverse community. However, a common concern of staff and community members alike is the lack of diversity in engagement from all parts of the community. The City has consistently had difficulty successfully engaging certain segments of Alexandria, particularly racial/ethnic minorities, low income residents, immigrants/foreign language speakers, renters, people who live in condominiums, persons with disabilities, parents of young children, and young Alexandrians (younger than 30).
Reaching all community members can prove challenging for a variety of reasons, common among them are:

- People are busy with jobs and families and are unable to attend meetings to learn about issues affecting them.
- People don't know about opportunities to participate, or they can't easily tell what the issue is or how it affects them.
- Lack of Internet/computer access.
- Many residents do not speak English or are reluctant to participate, because they are not U.S. citizens; however, involving noncitizen residents is strongly encouraged.
- Many people do not have cars or have physical disabilities that prevent them from going to meetings.
- Country of origin does not have a culture of civic participation.

Reaching Diversity: Strategies

Staff will continue to work on improving outreach to segments of the community who do not typically participate and will develop an action plan to reach these community members. In order to encourage first time participation, it is important to identify community leaders to engage these populations, engage people where they are, personalize the communications, and improve the accessibility of information and events. Below are strategies to assist in this ongoing effort:

Develop relationships with formal or informal community leaders who are already known and trusted by the community and can best convey potential impacts or the importance of getting involved in a particular issue.

Hold group discussions after religious or community gatherings to reach those residents who are normally unable to attend meetings during the week or evenings. Use the opportunity to solicit suggestions on the best ways to communicate with the group.

Utilize digital communication. Not everyone has access to computers, but most people have access to a cell phone. Texting, Twitter, Facebook, community listserves and email alerts are effective tools for making multiple connections quickly. Translating brief alerts can be more feasible than disseminating entire documents in several languages.

Distribute flyers at neighborhood businesses and gathering places like grocery stores, Laundromats, gyms, schools, clinics, coffee shops and religious institutions. Get permission to post flyers in condo and apartment buildings on bulletin boards or in elevators, or in workplaces. Usually flyers can be easily/quickly translated into multiple languages.

Contact local radio and TV stations to focus outreach on particular groups: Spanish-speaking channels (AM/ FM); religious stations (AM); ACPS channel; local access channels.

Provide translation services and translated materials during meetings. Doing so makes everyone feel welcome and encourages participation. People do want to be involved in what is happening in their city – our job is to make that as simple as possible.

Consider transportation. Many residents rely on public transportation, which does not run frequently in the evenings; others cannot drive at night or have other restrictions precluding them from driving to meetings. Individuals with mobility issues or other special needs face great barriers in arranging evening transportation.

Provide childcare at key meetings to encourage and make it possible for parents with young children to attend.

Meet people where they are, in parks, recreation centers, community or school events, neighborhood businesses, even bars.

Reaching Diversity: Summary

Expanding participation in decision-making in the City will require a multifaceted communications and engagement approach. Because residents get their information in many different ways, multiple channels of communication are necessary, from low-tech to high-tech, and everywhere in between.

Staff time and resources are limited, so the process will work best when the community shares in the responsibility for outreach. Communication needs to occur early and then consistently throughout all City planning/decision- making processes.

Finally, communication must be clear and understandable so people know what is being asked of them and how they can participate.

SECTION 9 | IMPLEMENTATION

This Handbook sets forth the policies and procedures for consistent implementation of the *What's Next Alexandria* civic engagement work, an effort that spans City government. Application of the principles and framework must be fundamentally consistent citywide, but the level of effort may vary from project to project to be realistic and achievable.

An effective organizational structure is necessary for successful implementation. The City will utilize a hybrid structure, with some elements centralized and others decentralized to ensure both consistency and cost- effectiveness/efficiency.

The City Manager's Office will provide oversight to ensure that expectations are clear, resources are adequate to meet expectations, and staff is held accountable for results. A key element of this role will be management of resources to provide facilitation training to staff involved in civic engagement work throughout the City. Facilitation training for staff and members of the community will help embed this new approach – and in some cases, culture shift – in everyday work in a consistent way.

Staff training will consist of two parts: skill building and content.

The skill-building piece will focus on how to run productive meetings, facilitate small group discussions, and manage difficult situations. The content element will train staff in Alexandria's new civic engagement "way" – how to apply the principles, use the framework, and run a meaningful and constructive civic engagement process.

In order to create staff ownership of the new approach, trainers will help staff understand why this effort is important to the City as a whole and what the benefits are to them in their work. Training will be accompanied by a short staff manual (essentially the appendices of this Handbook) outlining the policies and procedures. Training will be followed up by regular communication to the departments about expectations.

The individual departments will integrate the new standards and framework into their existing operations. All of the planning efforts included on the City's Interdepartmental Work Program will follow the principles and guidelines established in the Handbook.

Having the departments lead the implementation effort, rather than through a centralized administrative function, allows the civic engagement approach to meet the needs of the specific

project. It also encourages ownership of implementation, which speeds the internalization of the new civic engagement approach.

Because the projects are of different scales, from a Small Area Plan process to a more focused technical study, each project's civic engagement framework will be distinct, but the common threads will be the principles and the agreed upon phases of the process overall.

Examples of City projects that will require a civic engagement framework and the most comprehensive levels of outreach and public participation include the City Budget, Small Area Plans (SAPs), and Citywide Chapters of the Master Plan. SAPs tend to provide an opportunity for a great deal of public input and discretion in the beginning of the process, because they establish a long term vision for an area. SAPs must also remain consistent with the City's strategic plan, funding capacity, and develop contributions. At the other end of the continuum is development review, where applicants have existing property rights for development and an obligation to comply with a previously adopted Small Area Plan, which the public has presumably already participated in developing. The community can weigh in on a project's consistency with the Small Area Plan, zoning, and a variety of details, but the major issues such as use, scale, and density have already been established by the community in the Small Area Plan.

An interdepartmental working group will monitor civic engagement implementation across departments and provide guidance on refining the organizational structure as needed. This group will develop a set of guiding criteria to serve as a threshold for understanding when a City project requires a civic engagement plan or when the Handbook is simply a reference document for general engagement on smaller projects. Performance accountability will be managed by the City Manager's Office following recommendations from the interdepartmental group.

See graphic on page 57 of full color version.

SECTION 10 | EVALUATION

City departments, led by the Civic Engagement Interdepartmental Working Group, will conduct ongoing assessment of civic engagement performance by project.

Staff will develop a brief summary of each project's civic engagement process and outcomes as well as a brief evaluation. Staff will consider the following data points and performance to develop the evaluation using the project evaluation template provided in the appendix.

- Track and review data on participation. It would be intrusive to ask participants to report their demographic characteristics at every civic engagement event, but it is still possible to gauge the diversity of the participant group. For example, it is possible to report on data such as how many families used the provided childcare, or how many individuals used the translation services. Some questions can be added to the sign in sheet to help track participation, such as "is this your first time participating in a City process?" One

way of tracking geographic diversity is to ask participants to place a dot on a map where they live and work.
- Assess the organizing and communication process: Which outreach methods were used, how frequently were they used and how did they succeed in garnering participation?
- Review and assess use of the Framework: Was it shared with the community in advance of starting the process? Was it used properly and followed? Was it updated if needed?
- Review meeting evaluations for further insight into department success. Participants may have the opportunity to evaluate each meeting, as in the *What's Next Alexandria* Process, or each phrase, or the project as a whole.
- Assess project accountability and transparency: Did departments make the Framework available prior to each project? How quickly were meeting results and summaries posted for the public?
- Assess performance of each principle, using the actions and outcomes checklists.

Annual Evaluation

During the first year, the Interdepartmental Working Group will develop a proposed plan for future annual review of civic engagement performance. While the benefits of an annual review are clear – ongoing assessment and refinement of the City's Civic Engagement performance – the staff resources to conduct such an effort could be significant. The City should not devote resources to assessment at the expense of doing the actual civic engagement work well. Therefore, the Working Group will need to carefully consider and weigh the most efficient and effective model for evaluating performance and holding the City accountable for its commitment to civic engagement.

The proposed plan will be shared with the community for comment. An annual evaluation would consider the following elements based on input received from community evaluations and identify areas of improvement:

- Evaluate use of the framework; Was it used consistently by all applicable City processes? Does it need to be revised?
- Evaluate departmental use of the Handbook: Is the Handbook being frequently used and referenced when designing community engagement processes? Are certain elements of this Handbook out of date and in need of being updated? Is there anything missing?
- Evaluate Communications/ Outreach success and update the City's understanding of communications networks; Have new communications avenues become more popular? Which organizations and networks are the best up-to-date tools for outreach and communication? How can the City reach into spaces where the public is already active?
- Evaluate new and emerging online and digital engagement techniques: Have new forums for online engagement become popular or free?
- Celebrate small victories: Increasing public engagement across the City will require years of sustained, collaborative, and considered progress.
- Define the process for revising the Civic Engagement Handbook when necessary.
- Assess the City's implementation structure. Is there a problem with consistency or has the effort become too administratively onerous? Does the hybrid approach need to be

adjusted to gain more consistency or to allow for more flexibility based on workflows? Portland, Oregon, which underwent a similar civic engagement process to Alexandria's, established a Civic Engagement Advisory Commission to perform the evaluation assessment, five years after completing the original civic engagement initiative.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A *What's Next Alexandria* Process
  Learn about the progression of the *What's Next Alexandria* initiative from concept through completion, including a timeline of community engagement opportunities and plans for implementation.

- Appendix B Resources
  Resources and background information collected on public participation throughout the United States.

- Appendix C Civic Engagement Meeting Ground Rules Community meeting ground rules utilized during the *What's Next Alexandria* process.

- Appendix D Civic Engagement Framework Template
  Process framework template to be utilized by staff at the outset of all City projects that require and benefit from public participation.

- Appendix E General Threshold Applicability Guidelines for Civic Engagement Process
  Matrix clarifying how the civic engagement framework and principles apply to the range of projects the City undertakes.

- Appendix F Communications and Engagement Toolbox
  Matrix of suggested community engagement and communication tools with descriptions, resource requirements and applications.

- Appendix G Meeting Evaluation Template
  Sample evaluation form to be completed by participants of community meetings.

- Appendix H Project Evaluation Template
  Sample project evaluation form to be completed by staff upon completion of city projects.

- Appendix I Community Engagement Strategy Evaluation Template
  Sample project evaluation form to be completed by participants of community meetings.

APPENDIX A: *WHAT'S NEXT ALEXANDRIA* PROCESS

Summary

What's Next Alexandria is a City initiative to gather information and develop and implement strategies for improving and expanding civic engagement in Alexandria. Through a series of community conversations and online participation starting in September 2012 through June 2013, members of the community collaborated with City staff and City officials to talk about how Alexandrians can best participate in the public decision-making process that shapes the City. Opportunities for engagement included four community dialogues where participants worked together in small groups, four opportunities for online engagement, some of which supplemented dialogue work; and three opportunities for real time online video engagement during the dialogues. The final product is Alexandria's Civic Engagement Handbook, to guide the City and the community in future public participation efforts.

A hallmark of the process was modeling the civic engagement principles that emerged from the community's early input in the first community poll and as they developed over time, and responding to community suggestions and concerns. At times, this meant making changes that ultimately enhanced the process and the end product. The overarching effort was to establish standard practices to build trust and increase transparency, and expand the opportunities for participation. This included: asking the community for feedback before issues have been framed and decisions made, posting verbatim feedback and summaries on website, providing significant advance notice of meetings, offering online opportunities to participate and review, using members of the community as facilitators, and offering Spanish interpretation and childcare at meetings.

The City of Alexandria team involved in *What's Next Alexandria* spanned multiple departments, including the City Attorney's Office, the City Manager's Office, Communications and Public Information, the Department of Community and Human Services, the Virginia Health Department, Information Technology Services, Recreation Parks, and Cultural Activities, Planning and Zoning, and Transportation and Environmental Services, as well as ACTion Alexandria, the Alexandria Economic and Development Partnership, and a city resident/Civic Engagement practitioner to provide subject matter expertise.

September 2012-June 2013

Online poll (Sept. 18 – Oct. 25) on ACTion Alexandria in English and Spanish

- Topic: health of civic engagement in City, community preferences for getting information/providing feedback on public decision making processes.
- Received 1,614 responses, some in Spanish, most in English

Community Dialogue #1, November 15, 2012, First Baptist Church

- 165 participants defined optimal civic engagement and City/ community roles

Online poll (January 4-14, 2013) on ACTion Alexandria

- Topic: Confirm the categories for Principles of Civic Engagement.
- 130 people responded, majority confirmed the 8 principle categories.

Community Dialogue #2, January 29, 2013, First Baptist Church

- 120 participants crafted principle statements, planning process framework.
- City piloted live streaming video and online chat – allowing remote participation in same activities as those attending the meeting.

Online poll (March 19-April-9) on ACTion Alexandria

- Topic: Review/affirm synthesized principle statements.
- 160 people responded.

Community Dialogue #3, April 30, 2013, First Baptist Church

- 120 participants heard feedback on final draft principle statements and process framework and discussed concrete steps for applying the principles/framework.
- City offered live streaming video and online chat Online Comment Board (May 9-May 23) on What's Next Alexandria webpage
- Community had the opportunity to review and comment on the civic engagement process framework.

Community Dialogue #4, June 24, 2013, First Baptist Church

- 90 participants reviewed community achievements to date and outline of content that will be included in the Civic Engagement Handbook as well as the process for developing the final draft and community review of the document; Participants also collaborated to expanding the City's partnerships and outreach capacity and citizen participation in engaging the broader community.
- City offered live streaming video and online chat. Online Comment Board (June 26-July 30) on What's Next Alexandria webpage
- Community had the opportunity to review and comment on the preliminary draft outline of the civic engagement handbook.
- 5 people provided comments

Note: All materials collected during the What's Next Alexandria Process, including small group work from the community dialogues, meeting evaluations, and responses to online polls, can be found in summary and verbatim form on the project website: alexandriava.gov/whatsnext.

Narrative Summary

a. Community Poll Launches *What's Next Alexandria* Process

In September 2012, the community participated in an online poll on the future of civic engagement in Alexandria, addressing community preferences for getting information and providing feedback on public decision-making processes. The poll was the first step in the *What's Next Alexandria* initiative to collect input on the community's thoughts about civic engagement, both in terms of personal experience and suggestions for improvement.

The poll was available online on the ACTion Alexandria website and on paper at various locations throughout the community including recreation centers, libraries and through community organizations. It consisted of 10 questions about civic engagement and planning for the City's future. In order to reach as many residents as possible, news of the survey was

distributed via the City's eNews service, City website, media advisories, by email to City Boards and Commission members, community and civic organizations, past participants in planning processes, ACTion Alexandria email list, and to several neighborhood listservs.

Poll results were shared at the first Community Dialogue on November 15 and on the *What's Next Alexandria* website.

b. Development of the Principles of Civic Engagement

Alexandria's Principles of Civic Engagement were developed by the community to guide public participation in the City. The process for developing the principles began in the first Community Dialogue in November 2012, and continued through the succeeding dialogues as well as online engagement opportunities supplementing the work completed in those meetings.

At the first Community Dialogue, participants answered the following three questions individually and with their tables:

- What does ideal engagement feel like?
- What is expected of you as an engaged community member?
- What do you expect in return for your effort?

All responses were catalogued and synthesized following the meeting and brought back during the Second Community Dialogue for participants to review and craft principle statements, which were then further distilled by community facilitators collaborating with City staff. Finally, the draft principles were presented online for the community to affirm. Once confirmed, the Final Principles of Civic Engagement were official.

c. Development of the Framework for Civic Engagement

The Framework for the civic engagement process was initiated in response to concern that there was a lack of consistency in how the City engages the community in different projects. During the second Community Dialogue on January 29th, participants began developing the Framework to establish a shared understanding of what to expect in every process for how, when, and where the community should be engaged. Staff consolidated feedback received from dialogue participants and posted it for public comment on the website. No comments were posted, and so the Framework was further explained at the third Community Dialogue to serve as a basis for a discussion about how it will be implemented.

Following feedback received from the third dialogue, the community was again given the opportunity to provide online comments on the Revised Draft Civic Engagement Framework from May 9th through May 23rd. No comments were received. There were a number of suggestions from the volunteer facilitators to simplify the language in the framework. Staff collaborated with the facilitators to make the framework easier to understand for people who are not experience in civic engagement. These changes were presented to the community at the fourth community dialogue and the revised Framework is incorporated in this handbook.

The Framework will be used by City staff at the outset of all City projects that require and benefit from public participation.

(See Appendix D for Framework Template)

d. Live Internet Video Engagement

During the second Community Dialogue, the City of Alexandria tested and evaluated live Internet video engagement. This online option served as a Virtual Table, allowing community members who could not attend in person to watch it unfold in real time, participate with other viewers in group exercises through a moderated live chat, and tell us what they thought of this tool for future use. The community again had the opportunity to participate in the City's Virtual Table during the 3rd and 4th Community Dialogues. The Virtual Tables were met with positive response from the community and opened a door to another avenue for public participation. While this tool may not be cost effective for all City meetings, it provides a great opportunity for people who cannot attend meetings.

(See Appendix F, Communication and Engagement Toolbox)

e. Community Facilitators and Communicators

In response to participant feedback from the first Community Dialogue, the City asked community members to serve as facilitators during the subsequent dialogues. *What's Next Alexandria* facilitators attended training sessions and invested as volunteers in the community to expand and improve civic participation in Alexandria. A core group of community facilitators grew and were well received by participants, illustrating the effectiveness of community volunteers in the civic engagement process.

Over the course of the *What's Next Alexandria* process, many participants indicated a willingness to volunteer in some capacity – whether as a facilitator or communicator – to help the City expand civic engagement. Community members and staff advocate building on the foundation established in *What's Next Alexandria* by forming an informal network community volunteers that will result in a growing community capacity for pursuing shared goals and the empowerment of individuals to influence decision-making, strengthening contact between residents and City government.

f. Communication

Throughout the *What's Next Alexandria* process, participants made many suggestions for improved communication between the community and the City, as evidenced by the initial community poll and subsequent engagement opportunities. During the fourth Community Dialogue, participants assessed the value of various methods of communication and how they could be used to support community networks. People consistently stressed the importance of early and clear communication, delivered through as many channels as feasible.

Many *What's Next Alexandria* participants mentioned that they heard about the dialogues via email from groups they are connected with or individuals they know who forwarded a

City eNews. Others indicated they wouldn't have known about the meetings unless they saw the flyers posted around their community. What became clear based on all feedback is that people get their information in many different ways, and in order to reach the broadest possible audience, the City needs to communicate information in many ways.

(See Appendix F, Communication and Engagement Toolbox)

g. Draft Civic Engagement Handbook

The culmination of the community's efforts is the completion of this Handbook for Civic Engagement in Alexandria, which pulls together all of the community's work developing the following:

- Principles of Civic Engagement, including concrete action steps and indicators of success.
- General framework for public decision-making processes.
- Recommendations for implementation and evaluation.
- Strategies and toolbox for communication/engagement.
- Documentation of *What's Next Alexandria* process.

During the fourth Community Dialogue, participants reviewed the draft elements of the Handbook. Following the dialogue, community members had an opportunity to review and comment on the preliminary draft outline on the City's online comment board.

The complete draft Handbook is posted online and has been circulated in hardcopy for community review. Printed copies have been distributed to community/rec centers and libraries across the city. Staff briefed Commissions in September, and City Council will consider the Handbook at their public hearing on January 25, 2014.

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

Links to all of these references can be found by visiting the *What's Next Alexandria* Resource webpage: www.alexandriava.gov/67950.

APPENDIX C: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MEETING GROUND RULES

In response to community feedback received in the first community poll, and consistent with the civic engagement principles established through *What's Next Alexandria*, the following ground rules should be shared with participants at the outset of all meetings.

√ Treat each other with respect.

√ Only one person speaks at a time.

√ Give everyone a chance to participate equally; avoid dominating.

√ Listen as an ally, not an adversary. Everyone should feel comfortable expressing their opinion regardless of differences.

√ Ask for clarification, don't assume you know what someone means.

√ Do not characterize other people's views in or outside a group's meetings.

√ Turn off or silence all cell phones and mobile devices.

SEE THE COMPLETE COLOR VERSION OF THE DRAFT HANDBOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING APPENDICES.

Appendix D: Civic Engagement Framework Worksheet
Appendix E: General Threshold Applicability Guidelines for Civic Engagement Process
Appendix F: Communications and Engagement Toolbox
Appendix G: Printable: Meeting Evaluation
Appendix H: Printable: Sample Project Evaluation
Appendix I: Printable: Community Evaluation for Engagement Strategy Process

---

For more information about *What's Next Alexandria* or the City's civic engagement process, please visit our website, www.alexandriava.gov/whatsnext, or contact Carrie Beach, carrie.beach@alexandriava.gov / 703.746.3853.

Other avenues for staying connected:

eNews: Sign up for eNews https://enews.alexandriava.gov/index.php?CCheck=1to receive the latest information on all City initiatives.

The City of Alexandria's eNews service lets you sign up to receive information on more than 100 topics, including vital emergency alerts. The messages, ranging from news releases and department newsletters to public meeting dockets and payment deadline reminders, can be sent directly to your e-mail account, PDA, pager, cell phone, or BlackBerry. You can even receive alerts from other national and regional organizations, such as Amber Alerts, airport delays, and Metrorail service disruptions.

There is no cost to sign up for Alexandria eNews, although your wireless provider may charge you to receive e-mail or text messages on your mobile device. If you already use e-mail or text messaging, Alexandria eNews messages will work the same way. Contact your wireless provider if you have any questions about the fees they may charge.

Call.Click.Connect. http://request.alexandriava.gov/CCC/ is the City's customer service initiative that places "Your Government @ Your Fingertips". Community members can submit and track

service requests, report problems, search for information, or find the right contact to call for various issues and topics of interests.

Call 703.746.HELP (4357), or click the Web portal on alexandriava.gov to easily access information and connect with their City government.