
A LAND USE APPLICANT'S TOOLKIT FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



**CITY OF SILVERTON
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INTRODUCTION

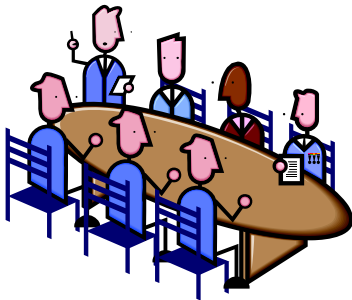
The City of Silverton strongly encourages all land use applicants planning a project that requires a public hearing to conduct citizen outreach efforts with neighbors of the proposed project before submitting a formal application to the City. Citizen outreach also is encouraged for all projects that have major impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.



Typical outreach methods include mailing written information, contacting affected individuals directly, or holding a neighborhood meeting, open house, or design workshop. The most common outreach method is a neighborhood meeting. This document provides some recommendations to applicants regarding how to conduct citizen outreach, with an emphasis on neighborhood meetings.

An applicant who undertakes citizen outreach may experience the following benefits:

- Early citizen participation allows you to be familiar with neighbor concerns and ideas early in your design process- you won't hear about issues for the first time at a public hearing after your plans are prepared.
- You may learn about historical or long-term site issues, such as standing water problems in the winter.
- You will have the opportunity to provide information to neighbors about land use rules and issues that apply to your project.



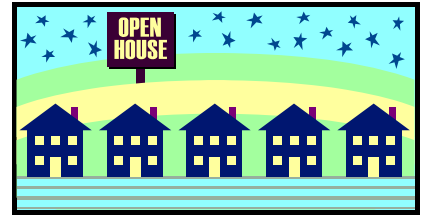
- You may have the ability to direct issues that are inapplicable to your project, or not under your control, to the correct forum.
- You will be able to address City concerns about incorporating neighborhood feedback into your proposal. This meeting will provide a record of your efforts.
- You may reduce the likelihood of a project appeal by an unhappy citizen or other delays by fostering an atmosphere of concern and trust.
- This process may result in a better design for your project, as it is more likely to be responsive to local conditions and concerns.

This process of conducting a neighborhood meeting consists of planning, preparing for, and holding the actual meeting. The following suggestions may help you succeed with your neighborhood meeting.

PLANNING FOR YOUR MEETING

- Fully research all of the codes and restrictions which apply to your site. Schedule your meeting so that you have time to clarify what your project objectives are, but before finalizing all of the solutions or decisions.

- ☀️ Set a meeting date that does not conflict with holidays or other important events. Check with City staff or the “City of Silverton’s Events Calendar” on the City’s web site to find out when other City meetings are scheduled.
- ☀️ Find a location that is convenient for residents of the project site. The facility should be comfortable and large enough for your audience, with parking and accessibility for the handicapped.
- ☀️ Hold the meeting at a convenient time, usually in the evening or during weekend mornings or afternoons.
- ☀️ Send out a meeting announcement 10 to 14 days before the meeting to property owners and, if possible, residents in the area adjacent to the project site. Property owner mailing labels are available at no cost from title companies. Send a copy to the City’s Planning Division. Notify relevant neighborhood association contacts to identify other options for publicizing your meeting.



Note: You may want to send a meeting announcement to the City Councilor for the ward in which project is located or to a member of the Planning Commission. However, members of the City Council and the Planning Commission will probably not attend. Land use law requires all decision makers to make decisions based on the information available at the public hearing. Individual contacts or attendance at informal meetings carries the potential liability of a challenge of the decision maker’s participation in the hearing. Contacts outside the hearing are know as “ex parte” contacts and are generally discouraged. If ex parte contacts do occur, the contact and the nature of the information exchanged must be disclosed at the public hearing

- Allow for other modes of communication if someone is unable to attend the meeting. Provide your contact name and phone number, mailing address, e-mail address, in your meeting announcement.
- Post a meeting announcement sign on the project site in a prominent location.
- Contact interested parties or organizations likely to have an interest in or support for your project.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING



- Think about how your project is likely to be viewed by neighborhood residents. What concerns are they likely to have? Thinking about this ahead of time will help you discuss difficult issues with citizens. City staff may be able to help you in this regard.
- Prepare a land use map and site plan of your proposal. Avoid a polished, detailed presentation that will appear as if the proposal is already finalized and that citizen input is unnecessary. Save alternative conceptual plans if you have developed them; it may be helpful to show you’re your proposal has evolved to the current solution.
- Consider utilizing visual aids. Many individuals learn primarily through visual means, whereas verbal messages can be misinterpreted.

- ☑ Practice your presentation ahead of time, making sure that all of your visual or computer aids are working properly.
- ☑ Post the meeting site so attendees can find you easily.
- ☑ Have an attendance roster for names, addresses, e-mail, and phone numbers near the entrance.
- ☑ Provide an agenda and other handouts so that attendees can follow your presentation.
- ☑ Have copies of relevant City Code requirements and other Community Development Department guidance materials available for interested citizens.
- ☑ Provide refreshments if possible.
- ☑ Dress appropriately for your audience. Be accessible – this will help to demystify ‘the applicant.’ Any consultants that represent you at the meeting also should be approachable and able to discuss the proposal in a clear, direct manner.
- ☑ If you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with running a public meeting, you may consider hiring a facilitator. Facilitation by an individual who is knowledgeable in land use matter but has no stake in the actual proposal is recommended to keep the meeting flowing.



HOLDING YOUR MEETING

- ▶ Open the meeting with introductions and a clear presentation of the purpose of the meeting. Note that you are conducting outreach voluntarily – citizens generally will appreciate this effort. Be succinct and clear while giving your presentation. Use the language of the participants; avoid the use of specialized jargon or acronyms that may be confusing.
- ▶ Establish ground rules from the start. Open and honest but non-personal and non-threatening dialogue is essential. Attempt to establish a dynamic whereby everyone is treated with respect. Create an atmosphere in which you and citizens can learn from each other.
- ▶ Align expectations of what is to be accomplished. Describe what development is allowed for the property, and how you are proposing to conform or deviate from the City’s land development regulations. Highlight the areas in which the neighbors can have influence. Know what you are trying to accomplish, while remaining open to good ideas.
- ▶ Strive to understand what concerns are present. This is best done in an inclusive, non-critical manner where all ideas are recorded on a flip chart using participants’ exact language so that their input is validated. This will provide a written record of the meeting to which you can refer and provide a report to the city.



- ▶ Refer questions about underlying concerns that are not part of your proposal to the right authority for an answer. If you are unsure of an answer, state that you don't know but will research the questions. Utilize other Community Development Department guidance materials.
- ▶ Provide a comment book, a site plan for sticky notes, or other tools for eliciting feedback. Some individuals may wish to provide comments anonymously or in writing,
- ▶ Summarize the meeting, thank the neighbors for attending and describe how you intend to follow up on the issues generated by the meeting. State when your proposal will go forward for review by the City. Note that the proposal may change based on citizen feedback, and on the City's review of the application and imposition of Code requirements.

FOLLOW UP

Follow up is important so that citizens can feel that their concerns and ideas are being heard and utilized. Follow-up prior to the public hearing is particularly important for complex or controversial projects. Some ways in which this may be accomplished include:

- ◆ Hold one or more additional meeting(s) in which proposals for solutions are discussed.
- ◆ Post revised plans for public review and comment.
- ◆ Mail replies or revised plans to citizen groups.
- ◆ Respond to unanswered questions or issues to appropriate individuals or groups.



TRACKING CITIZEN OUTREACH EFFORTS



The City of Silverton is interested in tracking the citizen outreach efforts that are being utilized in order to learn what is working well – and what may not be working so well. As part of your land use application, you will be asked to identify your outreach efforts. It is hoped that this will identify the “best practices” that can be recommended to applicants in the future. This information will be part of your formal application.

SUMMARY

The City of Silverton strongly recommends that land use applicants engage with citizens through one or more neighborhood meetings. Such meetings are held before an application is submitted to the City and offer the opportunity to identify neighbor concerns early in the process.

This outreach can promote a sense of community partnership between the neighborhood and the development community. The preliminary meeting is intended to result in an application that is more responsive to the special circumstances of the property and surrounding neighborhood. Neighborhood outreach can expedite and lessen the expense of the review process by avoiding needless delays, appeals or denials. The City encourages you to make use of this opportunity to proactively design a development that is responsive to local conditions and community concerns and ideas.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Community Development Department

The Planning Division processes land use applications that are reviewed at a public hearing. Some other land use applications are processed at the staff level by the Planning Division.

City of Silverton

Community Development Department

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