

Eugene City Hall Complex

# Master Plan



## Public Involvement Final Report

October 2005 to June 2008

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## **Introduction**

The City of Eugene began master planning a new city hall in October of 2005. During that time, T'NT Consultants engaged the Eugene community in an intensive public involvement process for Thomas Hacker Architects that resulted in a compelling vision of an efficient, sustainable and welcoming civic building.

The intent was to create a project inspired by the community, which required a public *involvement* process, not a public *reaction* process. There was significant public involvement before pencil touched paper, and it was iterative so that people experienced their influence on:

- the public involvement process itself,
- policies set by city council, and
- the architectural conceptual design as it evolved.

The City requested that the process be run using Values Based Decision Making and according to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Values. Both served the public well in creating a fair, transparent, inclusive, accountable, and rational process.

## **Values Based Decision Making**

Though this term has many meanings, for Eugene City Hall Master Planning it meant:

- Develop an inclusive list of criteria for evaluating options
- Explore alternative ideas and approaches thoroughly
- Find and use the most up to date information

From the perspective of public involvement, the practice of values based decision making meant seeking and examining “outlying ideas” and looking for the pieces of solutions that could be viable. This demonstrated to people that the design team was listening and seriously considering suggestions other than their own initial ideas. It prepared the design team to respond thoughtfully and with information as to why some suggestions explored were not workable, and it allowed everyone to see the background process that produced consultant recommendations.

## **IAP2 Values**

To create a vision for Eugene’s new city hall, the public involvement was done in accordance with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values of public participation that:

- is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
- includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision

- promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
- seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
- seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
- provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- communicates to participants how their input affected the decision

## **Key Elements of Public Involvement Plan**

One size does not fit all for public involvement. Each community is unique and each topic has its own challenges for meaningful engagement. In master planning a new city hall and patrol facility for Eugene, the “stakeholders affected” by the project encompass the entire community as users, service providers, and taxpayers. A 2007 public opinion poll conducted by the project found that 75% had heard about the master planning effort through the multiple methods of connecting with Eugene’s communities described in this report. The following are the key elements that were effectively combined in the public involvement efforts for City Hall Master Planning:

- Citizen Interviews
- Community Forums
- Specialized Input Groups
- Speaking Engagements at Civic Groups
- Community Events Outreach
- Affirmative Action: Accessibility, Communities of Color, Youth, Geographic
- Website and Phone Comment Line
- Media

### **Citizen Interviews: Important first step**

Citizen interviews shaped the public involvement process and educated the design team on a breadth of concerns and ideas before we got started. Eighty-eight people were interviewed in small groups in early 2006. The interview list was built from each councilor and the Mayor providing us with ten names. This method of developing the interview list created a knowledgeable and broad community sample, and provided the project with a foundation of people from diverse perspectives with whom we could cultivate ongoing connection. See Attachment A for a report on the citizen interviews.

### **Community Forums: Input connected to decision-making**

The model of using large community forums to collect input was accepted as more representative and transparent than the advisory committee model. Six Community Forums were held between 2006 and March 2008, and took people through an iterative process necessary for complex master planning. Forums

were sequenced between informative council workshops and voting work sessions, so participants were in step with and understood the council policy making process. *Participants could see that their input was timely and relevant, and that there was a direct relationship between their input and council decisions.* It is noteworthy that each of the six Community Forums drew around 100 participants, even though the topic was not a “hot button” issue for the community. Overall, a total of 300 people attended forums including a handful who attended all six.

The use of electronic polling technology to immediately and publicly assess the sentiments in the room, and reporting written comments verbatim made the public’s input reliable and indisputable. The design team issued a Forum Report and a Project Update after each cycle of community forum and council meetings to tell participants what was decided by council and what was coming next. See Attachment B for Forum Reports, and Attachment C for Project Updates.

In 2006, we focused on recruiting representatives of Neighborhood Associations, which resulted in 20% of Forum participants identifying as being from a Neighborhood Association. In 2007, we focused recruitment on under-represented parts of town and demographic groups by going to events and signing people up whom we could then contact directly. We were conscientious to make “new entrants” feel comfortable joining a process in progress and helped people to get up to speed on the issues so that they could actively participate. People were invited by email and phone, in addition to notices in the paper. Newspaper ads tend to draw the “regular meeting goers” where a personal invitation may net different attendees. With support from the city’s Community Relations Manager, the design team also did a “media morning” in advance of each Forum to use TV and radio as ways to widely communicate the current master planning issues. This TV and radio coverage also helped to provide background and context for the wider community to understand news reported in the papers after council decisions. Attachment D includes major news articles about the project.

Many public meetings alienate all but “hard core activists” due to lack of strong leadership and logical meeting structure. We tried to set a warm tone, and used tightly organized agendas. Meetings were designed to make the policy and architectural presentations accessible and were carefully developed to provide time for participants to engage in the complexities and trade-offs and think before giving input. Consistent with IAP2 Values, we were careful not to ask for input on issues they could not influence.

We removed some of the barriers to attending civic meetings by providing food, childcare, assisted listening devices, translation services for those who needed Spanish or American Sign Language, and Braille. Many people expressed appreciation for these accommodations. In addition, Forums were taped and

DVDs and Forum Reports were available for check-out at the three Eugene libraries.

### **Specialized Input Groups (SIGs): Tap local expertise**

SIGs focused the insight and knowledge of local experts on a particular topic to incorporate into the design process. SIGs were designed to be discussions with the design team and twenty or fewer community members about an aspect of the project under development. Invitation lists for SIGs were thoughtfully created with input from staff and community leaders recognized in a particular field. A report of the meeting was sent to participants to ensure accuracy and invite further comment. 170 residents participated in a SIG, and all expressed willingness to continue involvement as needed. See Attachment E for SIG reports.

#### 2006 SIGs:

- Communities of Color
- Youth
- Accessibility

#### 2007 SIGs:

- Sustainability – two sessions
- Accessibility
- Police Facilities

#### 2008 SIGs:

- Visual Arts
- Landscape Design
- Downtown Business

### **Community Events Outreach: Beyond meetings**

A key method to broaden the public involvement process was to go where people already are to give them information and engage in discussion. Visiting neighborhood parks, libraries and community events, the design team used informative displays to bring new entrants into the dialogue. This is much more effective at reaching people than holding a hearing or sending mailings that require a response. The public reaction was overwhelmingly positive to the initiative to bring the conversation to residents in a way that was convenient for their participation. It may have been helpful that the design team was more easily perceived as neutral, and not “pushing an agenda.” We talked to about 5,000 people this way, and built an interested parties list of 1,000 who requested ongoing contact with the design team to stay informed.

In addition to sharing information about City Hall Master Planning, we displayed a large city map showing Ward and Neighborhood Association boundaries, and



councilor photos. We helped residents locate their homes and learn the answer to:

- What's your ward?
- Who's your councilor?
- How can you contact your Neighborhood Association?

The following is a list of community events where the project team engaged the public:

Asian Festival, 2006, 2007  
Campbell Senior Center Holiday Market 2007  
Centro Latino 2006, 2007  
Communities of Color First Friday 2007, 2008  
Downtown Languages 2007  
First Friday Art Walk on 7 occasions  
Green Home Show 2006, 2007  
Eugene Public Library Downtown Branch  
Eugene Public Library Bethel Branch  
Eugene Public Library Sheldon Branch  
Earth Day Celebration 2006  
Eugene Celebration 2006, 2007  
Holiday Market 2007  
Latino Festival 2007  
Multicultural Festival 2006, 2007  
Neighborhood Association Picnics  
    Westside/Jefferson  
    Friendly  
    South Eugene  
    Amazon  
Nutcracker Ballet, Hult Center 2007  
Plaza Latina on six occasions 2007  
Red Barn Grocery  
Riverfest Celebration 2006, 2007  
Sheldon Family Fun Night  
Summer Concerts in the Park 2007  
    Amazon Park x 2  
    Washburne Park x 2  
    Sheldon Center  
    Campbell Center  
    Churchill  
Summer Movies in the Park 2007  
    Petersen Barn  
    Monroe Park  
    Washington Park  
    Churchill  
University of Oregon: Student events 2007  
We are Bethel Celebration 2006, 2007

## **Speaking Engagements: Go where people are already meeting**

Over two and half years, the project spoke at several organizations to inform about master planning and to receive input. Ongoing connection with organizations and their members was maintained through collaborative email efforts, and ability to place information on their websites and in their newsletters. See Attachment F for summary notes from many of the speaking engagements.

The following is a list of organizations where the Design Team made presentations reaching about 1,000 people:

- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees # 1724
- American Institute of Architects, Eugene Chapter
- Bike Coalition Board
- Birth to Three Parent Groups on four occasions
- Centro Latino
- Chamber of Commerce on two occasions
- Citizenship Courses LCC
- City Employees General Meeting
- Downtown Languages
- Eugene Tree Foundation Board
- Human Rights Commission on two occasions
- Human Rights Commission, Accessibility Committee
- Lane Coos Curry Douglas Building Trades
- League of Women Voters
- Mano a Mano en la Comunidad, Eugene Police Department
- Mid -Willamette Valley Rotary
- Neighborhood Associations, various meetings
- Neighborhood Leaders Council
- Northwest Eco-Building Guild
- Planning Commission on two occasions
- Rubicon Society
- Women in Construction
- Young Professionals Network (Chamber of Commerce)
- Youth Action Board on two occasions

## **Diverse Voices: It takes affirmative action**

Broad public involvement doesn't just happen. In most communities, a static group of people, often called the "usual suspects", have the capacity and motivation to attend civic meetings unless authentic affirmative action is taken. This public involvement effort focused on addressing under-representation of communities of color, youth, and Bethel and North Eugene neighborhoods. It is

necessary to develop trusting personal relationships that can help with access to these neighborhoods, communities, and organizations and to sustain them over time to see real results.

### **Communities of Color**

With assistance from the Human Rights Commission staff, the public involvement team recruited a bi-lingual staff person with established relationships to assist with outreach to communities of color, which produced solid results. A Communities of Color SIG was held in September of 2006 to talk directly with the design team, a bi-lingual Leadership Training was held in summer of 2007 for people who have not previously participated in civic meetings, and personal recruitment resulted in record-high attendance at Community Forums. Attachment G includes examples of public outreach documents translated into Spanish.

Our public involvement goals were broader than participation in city hall master planning, and included helping people to learn how the city government works and how to engage in the democratic process. The project conducted a tour of City Hall and a Leadership Training in summer 2007 to educate youth and Latino participants about the city manager form of government, the role of city council as policy makers, and the roles of city staff and of neighborhood associations. This experience also allowed the project team to learn more about how to conduct tri-lingual meetings effectively. See Attachment H for the Leadership Training Report.

90% of the Latinos who participated at Community Forums had never been to a city government meeting. Some participants had even been politically persecuted and considered this opportunity a healing experience. Spanish speaking childcare providers were available for families attending with children, a bi-lingual person was stationed at the registration table to welcome people, and simultaneous translation equipment was employed to make the meeting pace workable for all the Forum participants. By the final two Forums, 20% of the participants were Latino. The great majority of participants said that they had a terrific experience.

Bi-lingual outreach was done around the city with colorful project displays in Spanish, including Plaza Latina, city sponsored events, a church, citizenship classes, and a number of social service agencies. In addition, we had a raffle that exchanged city hall project feedback for an opportunity to have coffee with the Mayor. The Mayor and her staff were very supportive and people jumped at the chance. Overall, the outreach was conducted to give people a thoughtful experience in which they felt heard.

### **Accessibility**

Outreach to the accessibility community focused on the central themes of how can a building reflect all of Eugene and embody universal design principles. An

open attitude and willingness to learn on the part of the project team was necessary to improve the quality of the relationships and input processes.

Prior to the first Community Forum, the public involvement team consulted with community members with disabilities on the best way to remove participation barriers. Suggestions included:

- Braille translated materials delivered early to participants for review, utilizing the Eugene Public Library Braille Translator
- Promotion and provision of assisted listening devices, collaborating with Lane Independent Living Alliance's (LILA) Hard of Hearing Coordinator
- Provision of American Sign Language interpreters upon request, collaborating with Accessibility NW
- Hold any public meeting in a location that is accessible to every level of functional mobility

After using the Braille translation machine at the Eugene Public Library for the initial Community Forum, the team learned that this technology was not adequate. We then switched to 4J School District's Lane Regional Program for Braille translation services. Braille translation became far more difficult and expensive when the project moved into conceptual design. At that point, it was more effective to telephone the visually impaired participants and verbally review the documents in advance of the meeting. Forum presenters were coached on ways to verbally describe the visual materials, such as design images and maps, and not to rely solely on PowerPoint graphics. In addition, materials were printed in larger font for those who requested it.

At the first Community Forum, we learned that the sound system available at the First United Methodist Church, where Forums were held, was inadequate. At future Forums Essig Entertainment was employed for higher quality and to provide additional microphones to be available for audience participation. (Everyone must speak into a microphone when using assisted listening devices for people with hearing impairments.) In addition, LILA helped to recruit participants, provided assisted listening devices (ALDs), and coordinated with Essig for seamless audio translation. This coordination was essential when additional assisted listening devices were used for mono-lingual Spanish speaking participants. The City owns ALDs through the Hilyard Community Center, though currently only a limited number of people are trained in their use.

For those who were deaf, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters were available when requested. Because of the technical nature of the materials, providing PowerPoint materials ahead of time to the interpreters, ASL and Spanish, proved helpful.

Two Specialized Input Groups (SIGs) were dedicated to discussing universal design for the city hall, and additional meetings took place with the Human Rights

Commission Accessibility Committee and other accessibility organization leaders. Based on this input, the conceptual design was revised to:

- 1) Remove any obstruction to the main entrance (e.g. benches).
- 2) Provide a right angle approach from 8th Avenue.
- 3) Make vertical mobility options intuitive for way finding.

There was initial discussion about the potential to use a ramp as the primary vertical mobility option for all users. Further design work indicated that a ramp was not the best option because of the amount of square footage required, and the amount of physical effort needed to travel the long, indirect distances. Further discussion with members of the community, who felt a ramp was essential to Universal Design, led the design team to review and explore other potential ramp locations and configurations. It should be noted that these efforts took place in the master planning stage – relatively early in the design process. The concepts of universal access will continue to be studied and incorporated further in the design process.

## **Youth**

Outreach to youth took place at city-sponsored youth-centered events and 4J high schools. With great help from the City's Recreation Program staff, the *Youth Make it Happen* summer events proved to be successful venues to establish key relationships with younger residents. The public involvement team built on these relationships to garner more youth involvement through their social networks.

The Lane County Youth Action Board (YAB) was a key youth organization for collaboration. The coordinator for YAB greatly assisted the project's outreach by linking the discussion of a potential Eugene Youth Council to the city hall master planning process. Youth gave insightful input on conceptual design of council chambers, community meeting rooms, and the building's sense of welcoming.

The team also partnered with 4J School District high schools' leadership counselors. Presentations were made to high school leadership classes to promote the Community Forums and Youth and Leadership SIGs to identified students. The public involvement team learned that, while teachers tried their best, it is difficult to get anything added into students' already packed curriculum. Having support from the 4J School District Board for engagement of youth in the project may have proved helpful.

## **Website: Flexible, accessible communication**

The project site, [www.eugene-cityhall.com](http://www.eugene-cityhall.com), was set up to be separate from the city's website because we had been advised about problems that were being worked on with the city's website. The project website became an important way for all of the in-depth documents, technical studies, and public and council presentations to be available to everyone at any time. In addition to helping to

ensure a transparent process, the website evolved as the project did and eventually became a way to:

- learn where the public involvement team would be next
- learn when council meetings on city hall would be replayed on TV
- request a presentation for an organization's meeting
- get a snapshot of the issues driving the need for city hall master planning
- submit a comment or question to the Design Team

Well over forty personal letters were sent to residents in response to web comments and questions. Responses were mostly written by the city's project manager and were always timely, respectful and informative. More than one resident contacted the team a second time to express appreciation for the quality of the response, even when it did not affirm their own position. Oft repeated questions also indicated to the project where we needed effort to get information to the public. Above all, taking the time to respond thoroughly to all comments helped to build the integrity of the master planning process.

### **Public Involvement: A core function, not an add-on**

City Hall Master Planning relied on public involvement to develop a vision that would resonate with Eugene. The City required a high quality process and insisted on the integration of public involvement into the project management. This helped to develop a project culture and practice that was accountable to IAP2 Values, and to overcome the common tendency of professionals to consider topics too complex or too time consuming for public input.

The City Hall Master Planning design team whole-heartedly embraced public involvement as a core function. This required the involved architects and engineers to be open to guidance and change language and presentation style for greater accessibility, and for city staff to take on communication roles beyond their normal duties. The Eugene City Council also listened to the reports from Community Forums, other public involvement activities, and public opinion research and considered the information seriously in their decision making. T'NT Consultants experienced true respect for public involvement and genuine collaboration with Thomas Hacker Architects, City staff and the council. Each of those parties was necessary for the success achieved.

Public involvement that will enhance outcomes and build and unify support for decisions is much more than setting up and facilitating meetings. It requires sustained quality investment and pays off dividends in trust that can withstand the imperfections of political processes.