Community Dialogue
November 15, 2012
Mayor Euille
City of Alexandria
Welcome
John Porter
ACT for Alexandria
Introduction
What is What’s Next Alexandria?

A City initiative to begin a community conversation about civic engagement and planning for the future.

How Alexandrians can best participate in the public decisions that shape the City.

Principles that will guide civic engagement and planning in Alexandria.
Process

1. Introduction of the What’s Next Alexandria process
   Exploration of civic engagement principles
   Online Interaction and refinement

2. Refine and confirm civic engagement principles
   Create engagement framework and begin to build toolbox
   Online Interaction and refinement

3. Refine and confirm engagement framework and toolbox
   Exploration of planning principles
   Online Interaction and refinement

4. Refine and confirm planning principles

NEXT STEPS
Approach

How will the What’s Next effort will be approached:

We will be reaching out to the entire city

We will be asking the community, not telling the community

We will meet in person to facilitate meaningful conversations among community members about problems and solutions

We will offer alternative non-meeting options for those who can’t come to meetings

We will be learning from experts and what works in other parts of the country
Agenda

7:00 Welcome

7:10 ACTIVITY | A powerful experience

7:25 What is most compelling about what you just heard?

7:30 Report on the Community Poll

7:40 Guest Speaker | Carolyn Lukensmeyer
Executive Director, National Institute for Civil Discourse
Founder and Former President, AmericaSpeaks

8:10 ACTIVITY | Brainstorming Principles

8:50 What is most compelling about what you just did?

8:55 Next Steps | Online and Next Meeting

9:00 Adjourn and Meet Your Neighbors
Activity

A Powerful Experience
Activity | A Powerful Experience

What is something that someone else in Alexandria has done that has deeply touched you?

Share with your neighbors.

What is most compelling about what you just heard?
Activity | A Powerful Experience

What is something that someone else in Alexandria has done that has deeply touched you?

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What is most compelling about what you just heard?
Allen Lomax
Report on Community Poll
Report on Community Poll

- September 18 - October 25
- 1614 completed
- English and Spanish
- Online, in paper
- Full results available online
What’s your connection to Alexandria?

**A:**

- **Live Here:** 1515
- **Work Here:** 515
- **Own a Business:** 177
- **Other:** 62
Q: What’s your age range?

A: 75< (2.5%)  
66 - 75 (11.1%)  
56 - 65 (22.1%)  
46 - 55 (21.8%)  
18 - 25 (1.7%)  
26 - 35 (19.1%)  
36 - 45 (21.5%)
What methods do you use to get information about the City? [Select all that apply]

- City of Alexandria Website or eNews Alert (22.1%)
- Word of mouth, friends, neighbors, etc. (20.3%)
- Newspaper, online or print (20.2%)
- Radio or TV news (11.6%)
- Attending meetings, City Council, Boards, Community, Commissions (11%)
- Social Media (9.7%)
- Comcast Channel 70 Public Access (2.5%)
- Other (2.5%)
- None (0.1%)
How do you participate in the public decision-making process? [Select all that apply]

- 26.8% Voting in elections
- 13.1% Attend civic, neighborhood, HOA/tenants meeting
- 11.1% Attending City-sponsored community meeting(s)
- 9.0% Commenting on a proposed public action/program/policy/plan
- 8.6% Through neighborhood-organized projects or activities
- 7.9% Through local nonprofit organization(s)
- 6.5% Serving on an official board, commission, advisory group or coalition
- 5.2% Testifying at public hearing(s)
- 3.8% Through the local PTA
- 3.5% Serving as an officer or board member for a civic, homeowner or tenant's association
- 3.2% I do not participate in the public decision making process
- 1.4% Other
Q: Would you increase your participation in public decision-making if you had different options for participation?

A: 

- **Yes** (40.1%)
- **No** (13.9%)
- **I’m not sure** (46.0%)
Which of the following community meeting characteristics would make you most likely to attend?

A: Convenient time (of day/week)
   It is clear how my input will be used
   Ample opportunity for public input
   Ground rules for participation
   Interactive, hands-on work
   Small group discussions
   Transportation available or transit accessible
   Childcare
   Refreshments
   Translation services
Q: If you don’t typically attend City-held community meetings, tell us why. [Select all that apply]

A:

- The meeting topics are not relevant to me
- I do not have time. I’m too busy with my career, family or other commitments
- Other
- I’m satisfied with how things are going
- I participate in other ways (City website, social media, local civic association, etc.)
- I’m confident my neighbors will represent my interests
- I am not aware of any community meetings
Q: What do you think are the most important ways to engage the community in public decision making?

A: Invite the community early in the process to identify important issues and opportunities

Easy monitoring through communication methods people already use (social media and email)

“Virtual” participation via the web

Statistically valid surveys

National / local experts and best practices from other communities

Opportunities to express opinions at public hearings or on comment boards

Opportunities for small groups dialogue

Important
Somewhat
Not
As the City works to improve the public participation process, please indicate the level of importance you place on each of the following:

- Provide a broad range of options for public participation so anyone can be involved
- Make it clear throughout the planning process how community input is shaping plan recommendations
- Keep the community informed about trends shaping the future
- Allow the public to have input on the public engagement approach and planning process
- Ensure that decision-makers receive the public’s input verbatim and unfiltered
- Acknowledge all points of view
- Establish common elements to all planning processes and plan documents
- Engage participants in more “hands-on” activities to actively build plans
- Reach out to all segments of the community through community surveys
**Q:** What are the key topics you think we should discuss as a community? [Select the 7 topics most important to you]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>All Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development and redevelopment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Traffic management</td>
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<td>Alexandria City Public Schools enrollment trends, budget, land use implications</td>
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<td>Finances/budget (tax revenue, costs to provide City services and infrastructure)</td>
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<td>Infrastructure maintenance and construction</td>
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<td>Environmental quality</td>
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<td>Open space, trails, recreation</td>
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<td>Trends impacting the city’s future – demographics, business</td>
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<td>Affordable housing</td>
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<td>Non-auto travel (transit, biking, walking)</td>
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<td>Neighborhood preservation</td>
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<td>Healthy communities</td>
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<td>High quality architecture and public spaces</td>
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<td>Arts (econ. dev. &amp; quality of life)</td>
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<td>Community diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Report on Community Poll

- Over 130 pages of written comments were submitted and read
- All verbatim comments are available on the website
Guest Speaker
Activity
Building Engagement Principles Together
Activity | Brainstorming Principles

Step 1
On your own, respond to each of the following questions with a short word or phrase on a post-it note:

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

You have 5 minutes
Activity | Brainstorming Principles

Step 2
Discuss your words and phrases and what they mean to you.

Next, using your post-its, create one or two sentences that encompass everyone’s concepts into a cohesive thought.

Do this for each of the three questions.

You have 35 minutes
What is most compelling about the activity you just completed?
Next Steps and Meeting Evaluation
Next Steps

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4. Refine and confirm planning principles

NEXT STEPS
Stay Connected!
Alexandriava.gov/WhatsNext
Alexandriava.gov/WhatsNextEspanol

Next Community Dialogue
January 2013