

**APPENDIX OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND IDEAS  
FOR  
SNOHOMISH OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APRIL 15, 2016**

**Additional Information on Volunteering (Recommendation 6)**

**Why people volunteer**

To feel needed To share a skill To get to know the community To demonstrate a commitment To a cause or belief To gain leadership skills To act out a fantasy/ bucket list To have an impact	To do your civic duty Because of pressure from friend or relative Satisfaction from a compliment To keep busy For recognition To repay a debt To help a friend or relative	To donate your professional skills Because there's no one else to do it  To learn something new For freedom of schedule paid jobs don't offer
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**Who are we most likely to recruit?**

Retirees High school seniors Interns Professionals Skilled workers	People who wish to do unskilled work Unemployed Senior citizens Existing service groups	Parents Business people Church groups
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**Meaningful work that can be done by volunteers**

- Research
- Professional services
- Design services
- Maintain postings on kiosks
- Neighborhood organization
- Co-hosting City meetings and gatherings
- Public speaking
- Manual labor

**Additional Information on Offering New Venues and Formats that Actively Encourage Greater Levels of Citizen Participaion (Recommendation 7)**

*Conversation Cafés:*

Monthly or weekly conversational gatherings which are held in a popular public setting like a bakery, restaurant, coffee shop or bookstore, where anyone is welcome to join. A simple format helps people feel at ease and gives everyone who wants to a chance to speak.

These events should be co-hosted by resident volunteers and the City who provides coffee. Conversation Cafe should be attended alternately by the Mayor, a Council-member, a staff representative and volunteers who sit and join the group rather than observe or preside. There are no announcements, introductions or agendas and no recruiting of any kind.

The ground rules are laid out by the volunteer, conversations are initiated naturally by call out, when conversation fades a new subject can be introduced. Order is maintained by a talking object, and a resident, everyone has turn to speak if they want to, after the talking object has made two rounds it is up for grabs to anyone who wants it. The ground rules are respect and self limiting turns. Subjects are open to follow natural conversational flow as long as they relate to Community/Civic issues.

#### *Neighbor Hosting Neighbor.*

A small neighborhood meeting, hosted by a resident in their home. When a sign is posted for a project that effects one neighborhood it should include a city contact to organize a neighborhood meeting. The caller can then be recruited to host the meeting or door to door canvassing by a volunteer could be employed to organize the meeting. A *Conversation Café* would be the next alternative however meeting in a neighbor's home will strengthen the neighborhood. Attendees include effected residents and one informed City representative to distribute completed *Impact Comparison Handouts*, answer questions, discuss concerns and alternate solutions.

#### *Community Forums: Specific subject*

#### *Town Hall Meetings: Open subject*

Specific subject semi-informal gatherings could be co-hosted by community leaders from diverse backgrounds (\*official leaders, civic leaders, connectors, catalyts and unaffiliated residents). The more diverse your team is, the more people you will reach.

The use of local experts whenever possible when presenting complex, specialized information may be helpful to gain credibility and show transparency. This would also build a closer community.

Single subject focus allows time for education before QA.

Open subject semi-formal community meeting could be hosted by the city and volunteers. Open subject, dialog sessions allow residents to introduce anything on their minds and get answers rather than stew and imagine the worst. Facts allow them to make intelligent input. Distribute completed *Impact Comparison Handouts* for the full range of current issues.

Follow up Town Meetings with Community Forums as needed.

*\*Official Leaders:* People who hold elected positions, work for government agencies, or are heads of large institutions.

*Civic Leaders:* People who hold recognized civic positions within the community. Examples include leaders of religious institutions, heads of civic organizations, the chamber of commerce head, neighborhood association leaders.

*Catalyts:* Leaders whom people look to in their every-day lives for community expertise, historical perspective and wisdom. They often are responsible for encouraging others to get involved in civic life. Catalyts are the respected neighbors, co-workers, and lay church leaders in peoples lives.

*Unaffiliated Residents:* Members of the public at large from diverse socio-cultural-economic groups.

*Pre-council Forums:*

Formal City meetings and hearings have rigid rules of order which prevent dialog. When dialog and education are available, deeper understanding and meaningful communication are possible. People are more likely to attend when their questions are answered, follow up is permitted and transparent information is provided.

Begin a recurring, informal, public fact exchange and forum to precede Council Meetings. These forums should address the items on the Council's agenda for the evening. Council and Staff will answer questions and discuss issues and alternative solutions.

Printed *Impact Comparison Handouts* should be available for complex issues. Provide scratch paper and pencils to help people order their thoughts for public record comments.

*Transparency Table:*

An across the table question, answer, dialog between City department and protest leaders. After receiving the *Impact Comparison Handout* and links to the *Information File* in advance, the protest group leaders submit additional information requests and questions in writing. The City brings answers to specific questions to the meeting. Discussion separates the current issue from past grievances. Protesters clarify their objections and reasoning. Both parties have an opportunity to explain, in plain language, and discuss alternative solutions.

Times for Transparency Tables are flexible and can be set for the convenience of the protest leaders and the City.

The key is for all participants to be prepared.

Measures of Success:

- The protest is resolved
- The City understands the root of the objection and can act on it.

*Study Circle:*

When a decision will effect one demographic group more than another or may cause conflict between groups, citizen stakeholders and a City representative gather in a City hosted study group to discuss the topic and learn about their different perspectives. The City shares all information available with the attendees. No Powerpoint presentations, rather a human interaction with facts.

Measures of Success:

- Avoids legal challenges
- Improves cross cultural understanding and tolerance

*Community Picnic: Looking backward to move forward.*

*Based on Snohomish History:*

Traditional public celebrations embrace all residents by offering activities for everyone. Education and dialog enable many unheard residents to be heard and build trust.

*Insiders know the stories and traditions that built the culture. seniors lived the old stories, now we are living the new ones.* Sharing history and being "in the know" is part of belonging.

Recreate the atmosphere, update the fun. Both traditional and modern entertainment like pick up sport games, picnics, hot dogs, last dancer standing competition, story telling, soap box, local music of multiple eras and cultures, current City information, Snohomish history, kid crafts etc. Resident community membership cards could be issued entitling *residents* to *free* hotdogs and participation in some special events.

Think, involve, market locally, this is an event for locals, not an economic development opp. Sourcing entertainment locally brings a following to the event. Using only local vendors and talent introduces our community to its assets. Parents and grand parents are motivated by their children, a resource that should not be ignored. Religious communities, service organizations, PTA, and seniors all have a stake in the fun so involve them and they will bring people with them.

Seek out volunteer organizers.

### **Measures of Success**

- Number of attendees and participants
- Amount of literature distributed
- Number of subscriptions to newsletter, list serves, social media
- Quality of interaction between City employees, Council and Residents
- Number of new volunteers

### **Measures of Success**

- Increasing attendance at progressively more formal civic events
- Fewer misunderstandings and complaints
- Accuracy and usefulness of information gathered
- Less animosity and distrust between City Hall and residents.
- *Greater Transparency, beyond legal requirements.*

## **Additional Information on Improving the Website (Recommendation 8)**

### **User Experience**

Improve website user experience for ease of navigation and clear communication. Follow the the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) web standards for navigation and design.

- Use plain, relevant language for links, nothing clever or vague.
- Review the logic of the main menu groupings.
- Use the fewest number of clicks to reach any information
- Direct link to current document, archive link to list
- Use the fewest number of words possible to identify links  
City Manager's Newsletter  
Current Archive Subscribe
- Make sure all linked pages have return links.
- Make all links consistent
- Place all repeating links in same location on every page.
- Use rollover indicator for links
- one indicator plus rollover highlight for colorblind and grayscale readers
- 
- Highlight current page in menu
- Use bread crumbs

- Use pertinent labels in tabs/page names for every page
- Create a site wide glossary page.
- Make all documents text not images or locked PDFs
- Improve search process, reduce the amount of time and frustration required to find information.
  - Remove extra steps, vague links and peak-a-boo searching.
  - *In the list of archived/dated agendas and documents, list the topics covered in each document so the user does not have to open every document to see if it contains what they are looking for.*
- possibly in a drop down menu or list
- Link directly to the indexed information on the document page

### **Measures of Success**

- Longer visits on linked pages
- Fewer visits to intermediate link list pages
- Fewer bounce out page visits

### **Home Page**

Make Open Government the underlying purpose of home page content.

1. Create permanent section briefly explaining how the City and taxpayers benefit by taking advantage of resident volunteers to do meaningful work and link it to a volunteer page.
2. Create a permanent column inviting the public to participate in open public forums and community discussions and gatherings, define meeting types link to a Participation Primer.
3. Create a permanent column to list potential actions which impact: budget, aesthetics, neighborhoods, traffic, community character, planning, parks or other issues of resident concern and as recommended elsewhere by the OGC..
4. Make targeted discussion boards linked to each issue. Check and respond every day.
5. Create an announcement box for alerts and deadlines for the week or month.  
Applications, submissions etc.
6. Reframe slideshow to highlight resident centered activities and reinforce the concept of community: neighborhoods, volunteers, works in progress, recreation...
7. These steps can possibly be achieved by redesigning the Newsletter to include these side columns and returning it to the home page.
8. Link to Participation Primer

### **Measures of Success**

Increase in counted visits to linked pages from the home page.

Increase in the time spent on linked pages.

Reduction in bounce out visits.

Increase in the number of volunteers.

Increase in the number of exchanges or quality of discussion board comments.

Increase in newsletter subscriptions

## Universal Access

Employ Universal Access Standards which can be found at

<http://www.washington.edu/doiit/world-wide-access-accessible-web-design>

<http://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap5toolkit.htm>

World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) has proposed guidelines for all web authors. These guidelines are updated regularly and exceed ADA requirements which lag behind technology.

Current accessibility score:

<http://try.powermapper.com/demo/ViewScan/28bf3c1a-7fd9-49ca-880f-11e7b6739e86>

Level	WCAG 2	Section 508	Key
A	●	●	● Priority A - accessibility users will find it impossible to use some pages
AA	●		● Priority AA - accessibility users will find it difficult to use some pages

Priority	URL / Description
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### Priority 1 Issues (Level A)

- ▶ ● Each A element must contain text or an IMG with an ALT attribute.
- ▶ ● IMG elements must have an ALT attribute.
- ▶ ● No TITLE attributes found for the frames on these pages.
- ▶ ● This LABEL refers to a non-existent control.

### Priority 2 Issues (Level AA)

- ▶ ● Ensure that foreground and background colors have enough contrast.
- ▶ 5 issues on 6 pages

These are some examples of problems encountered by people with different types of disabilities but not a complete list.

- Over-stimulation and seizure:
  - Put an off button on all moving screens or elements
  - Offer grayscale and text only
- Vision:
  - Make website usable in a text only viewer
  - Use color to highlight and clarify hierarchy of information
  - Always use a non color dependent indicator as well
  - Offer text sizing options
  - Offer background/foreground color alternative
  - adjustable contrast, dark on light vs. light on dark
  - Use large self explanatory icons
  - Always use a non-icon indicator as well
  - Consider audio translator / reader
  - Make Icons large with alternate hover text

- When using images
  - Use caption
  - Use detailed description in alternate text of important images, graphs etc.
  - Use null alt text for unimportant images so they do not clutter readers
- include “link:” or “graph:”
- Hearing:
  - Sub-titles on all audio
- Physical:
  - make site completely usable from keyboard, no mouse

### **Measures of Success**

Pass complete evaluation by W3C site accessibility checker.

<http://try.powermapper.com/demo/ViewScan/28bf3c1a-7fd9-49ca-880f-11e7b6739e86>

Meet all ADA and W3C guidelines

<http://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap5toolkit.htm>

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/world-wide-access-accessible-web-design>

### **Web Transparency**

Communicate transparently making information timely, complete, easy to find, accessible and easy to understand. Inform residents how they can be part of the decision-making process and make use of the information. Create an online platform for participation.

The community's number one trust issue is lack of transparency there is a perception of secrecy. Providing complete information removes the veil of secrecy.

Proactive: By posting the information prominently and consistently as it unfolds the City is letting the public decide if they want to have input. Timely information makes it possible for the public to research and contribute to the discussion.

Free of Barriers: One issue discussion boards promote constructive dialog.

- Update the website daily.
- Post alerts when actions of import (see OGC ) are first being considered.
- Provide discussion boards for each issue and monitor daily.
  - Answer and ask questions, share logic, pros and cons, limitations and opportunities.
- Link to from issue list to *Transparency File* (see OGC)
- Use plain language
- Use fewer words that mean more. Content and writing for the web concise.
- Edit content for web publication, make sure all attachments are appropriately placed and linked.
- Make all documents text not images or locked PDFs
- Include contents lists on agenda links with direct page anchor links.

### **Measures of Success**

An increase in the number of citizen and City comments and responses on discussion boards.

A decrease in citizen formal and informal requests for information.

A decrease in citizen complaints on transparency issues.

Citizen response to meaningful volunteer positions

Increase in informed public participation and attendance at City meetings.