

## This WE Believe

- *People have a right to be involved in decisions which affect them and their community.*
- *True community involvement is dependent on: timely notice, transparency, accuracy, access to information, opportunity for input and balanced consideration of the facts.*
- *Trust in City government, which is essential, is built on open, honest, respectful, equitable and inclusive processes and procedures.*
- *Residents have a right to a basic Quality of Life which includes an expectation that government will be responsible for community health and safety, will honor our history and will respect our sense of place.*

**WE** are 48 residents of the City of Tucson. WE represent 25 neighborhoods; WE are active volunteers in at least 44 different arenas. WE are motivated most strongly by our perception that our City government lacks transparency in decision-making. WE also find troubling its land use/zoning policies and procedures, its lack of support for neighborhoods, and its lack of enforcement of the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance. WE are troubled enough that WE met for three 3-hour exploratory workshops in Summer 2013 in search of an answer to a pressing question: **How can Tucson citizens gain a more meaningful voice in City of Tucson decision-making?**

The International Public Participation Association has produced a continuum of Community Participation Levels. The scale begins at *Inform*, and moves through *Consult*, *Engage*, *Collaborate* to *Empower*. During the June 22 Exploratory Workshop, when participants were asked where they felt the City of Tucson's current practices fall on this scale, the response was overwhelming: WE aren't even on the scale! WE aren't even *Informed!!* When asked where they felt WE should be *ideally* and could be *realistically*, the response was identical: ENGAGE/ COLLABORATE.

*ENGAGE—Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.*

*COLLABORATE—Partner with the public on each aspect of the decisions including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.*

WE believe that engagement/collaboration is essential when City of Tucson action directly impacts our neighborhoods or our quality of life. Specifically the City needs policies which mandate early community involvement in any land use changes, be they rezonings; new development; overlays; sale/lease of public space or streets/alleys; or new point of liquor sales. Any change in the land use or neighborhood preservation codes or any granting of exceptions to the code must have meaningful public input before being implemented. WE expect City government to include us in regular reviews and monitoring of the effectiveness of its policies and procedures. WE want to feel confident that our neighborhood area plans, historic designations, and any past agreements will be respected by City staff and any firms contracted by the City.

WE analyzed the “Governance and Participation Policies” proposed in PlanTucson to determine if they adequately address our concerns. Our conclusion: WE have no confidence that incorporation of this important topic into the general plan will remedy the problems. Since there is no codification of citizen participation, no performance audits of governmental effectiveness, no staff accountability required by Mayor and Council, and, unfortunately, no trust that Mayor and Council itself cares, WE see inclusion of this topic in PlanTucson to reflect wishful thinking, not a plan of action.

So what do WE see as the *Needed Behaviors of COT Citizens, COT Elected Officials, and COT Staff* if we are to find a comprehensive answer to our question: **How can Tucson citizens gain a more meaningful voice in City of Tucson governmental decision-making?** It will take a concerted effort by all parties. Below is the compilation of ideas WE have collaboratively written.

**COT Citizens:** participate; become knowledgeable about city procedures and policies (which may or may not be written); glean solutions to problems by researching what works in other communities; articulate clearly our needs, goals, expectations, and values; be respectful and build relationships with the City and other stakeholders; involve other COT citizens; be creative in proposing new solutions to old problems; organize and build networks; get everything in writing when making any agreements

**COT Elected Officials:** insure transparency, clarity, and parity among special interests and other stakeholders by requiring department policies and procedures to be in writing; M/C hold discussions in public following open meeting law (minimize and justify executive sessions, limit items on Consent Agenda), set policies which balance community interests, honor commitments made; engage citizens through diverse public processes, including those which allow for two-way communication; increased opportunity to speak at M/C meetings by more time allotted to Call-to-Audience and public hearings; balance appointments to Boards, Committees and Commissions to represent various points of view; give direction to the City Manager so the community needs are addressed at the departmental level; display desired professional traits by being accessible, honorable, informed, respectful

**COT Staff:** insure transparency, clarity, and parity among special interests and other stakeholders by having department policies and procedures in writing; involve impacted citizens in land use issues as early and meaningfully in the process as humanly possible; increase inclusion when soliciting citizen input by reviewing the existing announcement formats to insure that they are written in language which the general citizenry can understand and later providing the public with the final determinations; improve communication through use of diverse methods, including on-line, printed newsletters, bulletin boards, etc., employing multi-lingual speakers and personnel who are knowledgeable, accessible and respectful of the public; insure staff has a philosophical commitment and the necessary skills to engage in public processes; enforce the ordinances (UDC, NPO); use public processes which treat citizens’ interests as equally important to those of other vested interests; be proactive in identifying potential problems; do not usurp the M/C’s authority

***If WE becomes not just us, but citizens, elected officials and City staff all working together, WE can build a better community.***

***This WE Believe!***