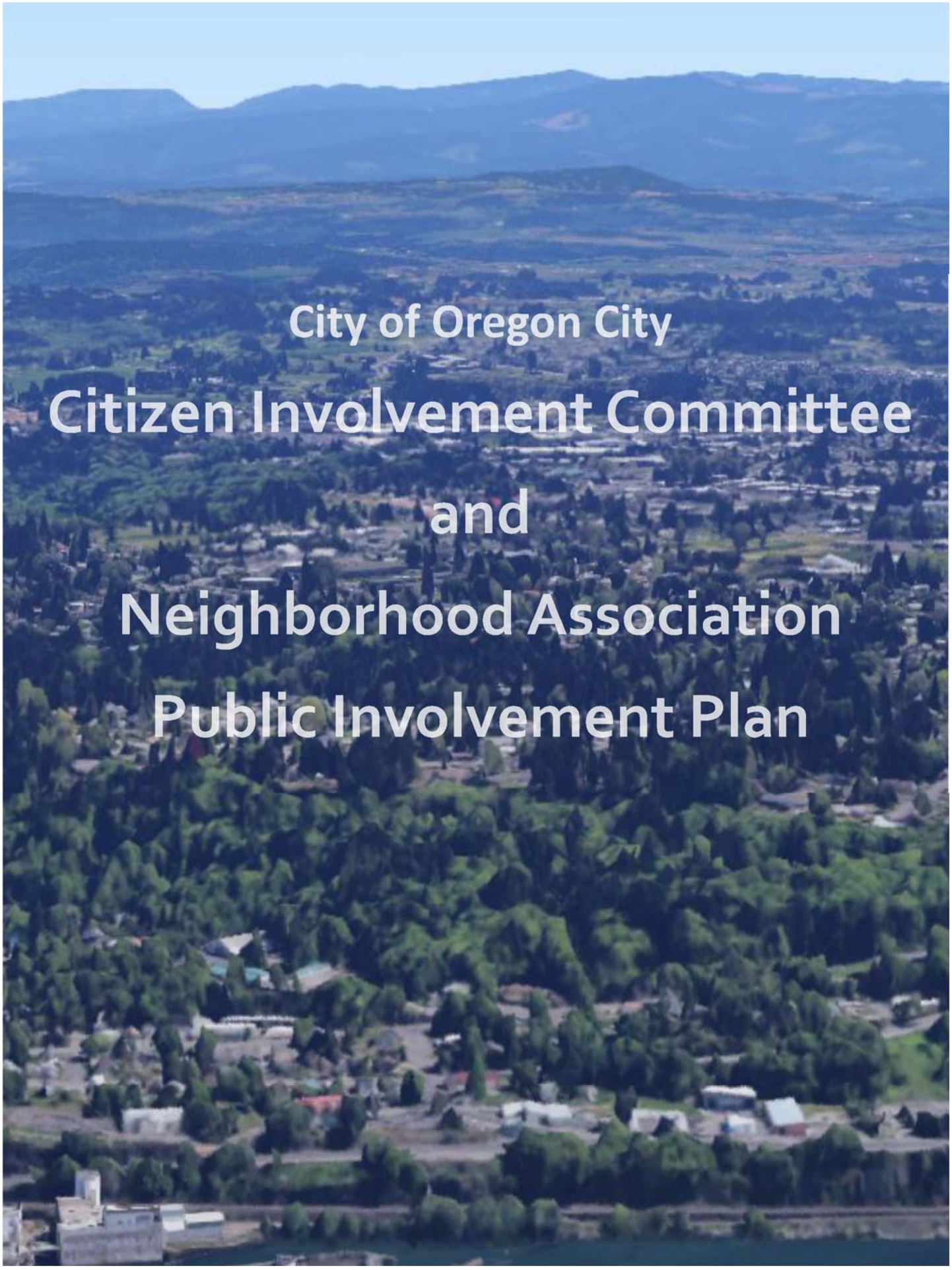

City of Oregon City
Citizen Involvement Committee
and
Neighborhood Association
Public Involvement Plan

Introduction

Effective public participation is essential to building a sense of community and an effective government. Participation is functional when it helps create better decisions and a more thoughtful community plan. Participation is meaningful when the public has opportunities to participate in decisions and feels a sense of ownership for the community plan. A Public Involvement Plan (PIP), establishes a model for effective public involvement and contains written procedures for increasing public participation. This PIP is intended to be used by the Oregon City Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) and by the Oregon City Neighborhood Associations (NA) that are interested in promoting citizen participation in their neighborhoods.

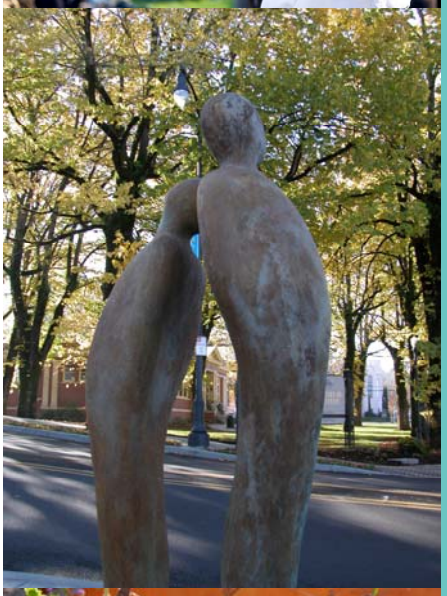
The CIC and the NAs are essential to a healthy, thriving community. They provide the grassroots, participatory forums for residents to participate in civic affairs and are important to furthering good government in Oregon City. From public safety to land use, sustainability to parks and open spaces, our CIC and NAs help shape how Oregon City works for all of us. The credibility of the CIC and the NAs depends on healthy levels of participation and robust efforts to engage residents of every neighborhood. This plan provides suggested methods to encourage the participation of a broad range of citizens reflecting the diversity of our City.

Framework

The highest priority of the 2015-2017 Citizen Involvement Committee goals was the creation of a public involvement plan to increase public participation in the CIC and NAs. To meet this goal a subcommittee of the CIC was formed in early 2016. The committee met five times over a series of months to brainstorm ideas and craft the plan. The committee worked by sharing ideas that have worked in their NA, reviewing information from other jurisdictions and by soliciting input from others. An outline of ideas to improve communication with residents and increase the visibility of the NAs was created by the members. These ideas were then grouped into five categories:

- Goals of Public Involvement Plan (PIP)
- Benefits of Involvement in the CIC and NAs
- Audience
- Barriers and Ways to Overcome Them
- Ways to Reach Out

The Public Improvement Plan provides a variety of methods to increase public participation in the CIC and NAs, which when adapted to the needs of each unique neighborhood will provide for a more informed citizenry and improve the two-way communication between our residents, city staff and elected officials.



Goals of the Public Involvement Plan

Increased participation at CIC and NA meetings, attendance that reflects the diversity of the NAs and better communication among residents and City staff evolved as the major themes of the sub-committee discussions. Goals were established to address the need to solicit meaningful input from a broad range of neighbors as well as inform them of the land use process and government activities.

Participation

- Increase attendance at meetings
- Increase diversity of participants (age, gender, ethnicity, renters/ homeowners, income, language)
- Advocate for neighborhood issues such as land use, transportation, public safety and social services
- Create NA identity

Education

- Increase awareness of issues, public processes, City services and elections
- Inform neighbors of historical issues and processes
- Transparency

Communication

- Improve communication between neighbors, NAs, CIC and the City
- Make technical issues more understandable and accessible
- Presentations by City staff and partnering agencies
- Informative updates from each NA at CIC meetings
- Obtain feedback from citizens
- Tracking citizen comments to verify they are directed appropriately

Benefits of the Citizen Involvement Committee

The Neighborhood Association program was established in Oregon City to meet the requirements of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Goal 1 of the Oregon Land Use. Since that time the community has worked together to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement. This has resulted in long-term collaborative relationships and learning opportunities with community partners and stakeholders. The NAs provide a forum for collecting neighborhood concerns and successes and relaying them to the proper City offices as well as keeping their members informed about the work of the various City departments. To be effective the NAs require a cross-section of residents representing the neighborhoods' various interests, ages, genders and ethnic identities. The CIC brings together representatives from each NA to share information and ideas to help improve the city as a whole and to maintain open communication with City officials.

Benefits of the Citizen Involvement Committee (Continued)

Information/Communication
- Education on land use law, government operations, opportunities for public input, which result in better land use planning and government
- City or private developments may be presented to the NAs for feedback
- The CIC provides an avenue for information between NAs and government agencies
- NAs may share challenges, successes, and current events

Comfort level
- Appearing before the CIC, rather than the City Commission may be less intimidating
- The CIC members provide a less formal liaison between the City and the residents of the NAs

Access to City staff
- Staff provide access to their expertise and resources and provide presentations at meetings
- The NAs may build relationships with City staff

Camaraderie/Solidarity
- CIC brings all of the NAs together
- CIC makes the NAs themselves more transparent
- Networking with community

Benefits of Involvement in the Neighborhood Associations

Information/Communication
- NAs receive information from the City and CIC and communicate that information to their members
- NAs provide information to the CIC and the City
- Presentations on topics of interest to the NA
- Proposed development in the NA
- Access to designated staff from Planning and the Police Departments

Friendships/Community
- Neighbors can bring problems in a relatively informal setting
- NAs can be the nursery of ideas, community projects
- Meet new people, some of whom have similar interests
- Create empathy, care and concern for your neighbors
- Build community fabric
- Provide input on proposed development
- No cost to appeal of land use decisions to the City Commission
- NA provided longer speaking times at City public hearings

Audience

To be truly representative, the CIC and NAs need to encourage the participation of a broad range of residents reflecting the demographics of Oregon City. Becoming familiar with the diversity of the city and the individual neighborhoods will assist in identifying under represented groups when assessing participation in NA meetings and activities. Active participation by members who reflect the neighborhood's mix of ages, genders, national origin, marital status, employment, housing, education, length of residency and other demographic factors will provide a broader view of issues facing the neighborhood.

Total population: 33,834
- Male: 16,616
- Female: 17,218

Average age: 37.4 years
- 74.9% of total population ≥18 years
- 13.9 % of total population ≥62 years

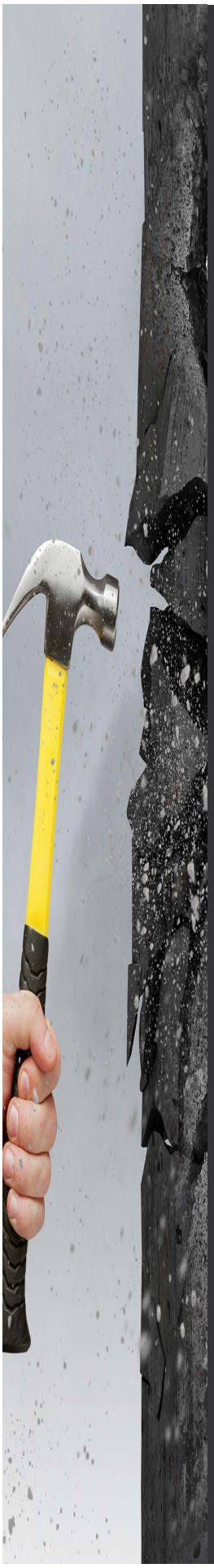
Race (97.5% self-identified as one race):
- White: 90.8%
- Hispanic or Latino: 7.1%
- Black or African American: 0.7%
- Asian: 1.7%
- American Indian/Native Alaskan: 0.9%

Income:
Median Household Income: $59,429
Approximately 30% under $35,000; 50% $35,000-$100,000, 20% over $100,000)
Households receiving income from employment: 78.6%
Households receiving income from retirement benefits: 16.6%
Households receiving income from Supplemental Security Income or public assistance: 9.7%

Employment of population ≥16:
- 65.3% in the labor force
- 6.4% of this percent unemployed
- 34.7% not in the labor force

Occupancy:
- Owner Occupied: 63.7%
- Renter Occupied: 36.3%

(2010 Census) Household types:
- Two-parent family: 50.7%
  - 22.7% with children under 18
- Single adult family: 17.8%
  - 10% with children under 18
  - 31.5% without Children:



Barriers to Participation and Ways to Overcome Them:

It is critical to recognize the barriers to participation in the CIC and NAs. Attendance at meetings, participation in neighborhood activities and communication with residents can be improved by addressing special needs specific to each NA. Accessible meeting places, communication in a resident's primary language, information provided in a manner that can be accessed and understood by all need to be addressed on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis. After the unique needs of the neighborhood are identified solutions can be crafted to overcome these barriers.

Barrier: Lack of Transportation
Solutions:
- Hold meetings in locations accessible by multiple modes of transportation
- Carpooling
- Bike racks at meeting location
- Remote access: online or televised

Barrier: Need for Childcare
Solutions:
- "Sugar and books", snacks and quiet play material in a location at meeting site
- Telling people children are welcome
- Supply a list of local babysitters
- Provide on site childcare

Barrier: Work Schedules and Competing Activities (Sports, etc.)
Solutions:
- Vary times of meeting
- Publish minutes early for those who could not attend
- Encourage other ways of interacting
- Use existing organizations (e. g. clubs, schools) to get neighborhood information out
- Post information on an NA website

Barrier: Language/Education
Solutions:
- Speak/written communication in understandable terms
- Avoid acronyms (e. g. CIC, TAC, SDC)
- Identify and accommodate the local need for language(s) other than English
- Provide access to translators

Barrier: Hearing or Visually Impaired
Solutions:
- Use microphones to improve sound level for hard-of-hearing attendees
- Help find access to a signer if needed
- Describe visual presentations for low-sighted/blind attendees

Barrier: Embarrassed to Speak in Public
Solutions:
- Provide comment/feedback forms
- Provide an organized method to allow each member to be heard

Barrier: Improve Communication
Solutions:
- Improve content/quality/variety of printed communications
- Postcards, fliers, brochures, posters, newsletters, table-toppers
- Determine ways to communicate better and/or more efficiently
- Be proactive and send out information before major events/holidays
- A variety of modes of communication such as e-mail, surveys or polls

Barrier: Hostility in Group and/or Lack of Respect
Solutions:
- Encourage respect
- Train leaders
- Provide service opportunities to promote camaraderie

Barrier: Lack of Information and Follow Up
Solutions:
- Respond promptly to inquiries
- Collect e-mail addresses
- Provide information sheets summarizing the meeting for neighbors

Barrier: Poor Meeting Planning
Solutions:
- Organize agenda prior to the meeting
- Use Robert's Rules of Order

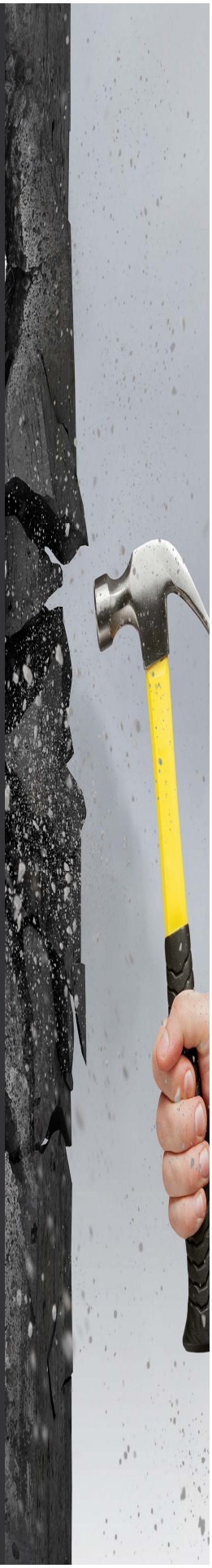
Barrier: Keep Topic Relevant
Solutions:
- Ask for feedback
- Provide ways to suggest topics
- Suggestion box at meeting

Barrier: Accessibility of NA Leadership
Solutions:
- Publish up-to-date e-mail address/phone number for NA contacts
- Provide annual training for NA leadership

Barrier: Location
- Lack of meeting space in neighborhood
- Need for liability insurance
- Making certain all people feel comfortable coming to the location

Solutions:
- Network with others for possible meeting locations
- Change meeting location if unable to purchase liability insurance
- Add directional signage to meeting room

Barrier: Funding
Solutions:
- Neighborhood fundraisers, such as an annual hanging basket sale
- Tie NA fundraisers to existing events, such as a Sno-Cone booth.



Ways to Reach Out

It is important to reach out to everyone in the neighborhood to encourage the broadest representation of ideas and opinions on local issues. Rapidly changing technology and the ability to use it present an ongoing challenge in disseminating quality information in the most user-friendly format. Age, ability and access may limit the usefulness of electronic communications, but computer or smart-phone accessible information may be the best means of reaching out to a growing number of residents. To meet the goal of open communication with your NA members and receiving feedback on what is important to them it is important to consider using more than one mode of communication. Also, adding diversity and incentives to NA meetings might be considered to increase attendance.

Print:

- Postcards
- Newsletters
- Article in Trail News
- Flyers
  - Posted in public places, library, stores, restaurants
  - Distributed door-to-door
  - Handed out through local businesses/realtors
- Door Hangers
- Bus placards
- Utility bill insert
- Advertisements or inserts in local newspapers
- Media releases
- Business cards
- Signs - meeting tonight, etc.

Venues/means of outreach

- School events
- City events, e.g. National Night Out
- "Tabling" at local store or other business
- Door-to-door contact in neighborhood
- Work with local realtors to identify new residents
- Welcome wagon

Electronic

- E-mail reminders, e-blasts
- Social Media (e. g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, NextDoor, etc.)
- Website and/or Blog
- Surveys/polls
- Local Access television
  - Public Service Announcements
  - Video of meetings
  - Promotional videos
- Skype
- Post meetings on online calendars
- Ads on other websites
- Posting on local business outdoor reader boards

Incentives/Activities

- Raffles - collaborate with other NAs to solicit coupons/free offers from local merchants
- Field Trips
- Workshops

Conclusion

Every neighborhood is different and not all solutions will be appropriate to everyone. This document is intended to present a starting place for a conversation in your neighborhood as a means to increase attendance at meetings and to improve your outreach to your neighbors. Getting to know the unique qualities of the individual NAs is the best preparation for providing neighbors with information on the City and projects that will affect them. Although individual NA outreach may supplement information already provided by the City, it is more likely to reach the largest number of people by crafting the delivery to the needs of the members of your NA. Neighborhoods from the basic fabric of society, offering friendship, support, knowledge and comfort. One of the reasons Oregon City is a wonderful place to live is because of our neighbors, businesses and families that have worked together to build a community we are proud to call home.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has- Margaret Mead

Committee:
Amy Wilhite, CIC Chair
Barbara Renken, CIC Secretary
Karin Morey, CIC Vice-Chair
Jesse Buss, CIC member
Steve VanHaverbeke, CIC member
Gary Fergus, CIC member

Appendix: History of the Neighborhood Associations

City Commission meeting of May 21, 1997:
"In 1976 the City of Oregon the Citizen Participation Process was formalized through the Citizen Participation Goal in the Land Use Policies for Oregon City (the Comprehensive Plan). The city determined that the formation of a neighborhood program would provide the best means for citizens to become involved in the planning process. With this policy in mind, Oregon City established (1) neighborhood associations; and, (2) a Citizen Involvement Committee Council (CICC).

In January 1988, the Citizen Involvement Plan was amended to allow the planning commission along with seven citizens from neighborhood areas to serve as the Citizen Involvement Committee during the periodic review process. By the early 1990s, both the Citizen Involvement Committee and neighborhood association became inactive. The City Commission renewed its commitment to citizen involvement in May 1994 by creating the position of Community Involvement Coordinator to re-establish a citizen involvement program. Since that time the City Commission has actively encouraged and participated in various neighborhood activities." (*City Commission meeting, May 21, 1997)* Though the Coordinator position has been suspended, the City Manager's Office and Planning Division work together to support the CIC and neighborhood associations.

In the past decade the participation in the individual NAs has fluctuated, resulting in at least one merger and periods of time when several NAs were inactive. In 2015 the Citizen Involvement Committee was codified in the Oregon City Municipal code and the membership was restructured with a primary and secondary representative nominated from each NA and appointed by the Mayor. The newly constituted CIC adopted goals, including a commitment to increase participation in the NAs and in the activities of the CIC.