

Public Participation
in the
Land Use Development Process
City of Orem

Legal and Traditional Process

- Applicant files a land use application for general plan amendment, annexation, zone change, subdivision approval, conditional use permit, site plan approval or any variety of other issues.
- City staff reviews the plan and negotiates changes with the applicant.
- Public notice is provided in the newspaper for public hearings or through posting of the agenda.
- The Planning Commission reviews the application and takes action or makes a recommendation to the City Council.
- The City Council holds a public hearing when required and then makes a decision.

Challenges with the Traditional Process

- The public and the nearby neighbors feel that they do not have a chance to provide meaningful input in the process until the public hearing. There is a feeling that by the time the applicant appears before the Planning Commission and the City Council that the developer has already negotiated the project and there is little chance to make any significant changes.
- When there is significant public input during the hearing process, the Planning Commission or the City Council may try to negotiate significant changes in the meeting. Such changes are done in haste and mistakes are made.
- Many times the applicant and the neighbors are required to attend several meetings before the application is acted upon.

Orem's Approach

- Before the application is reviewed by staff, those applying for general plan amendments, rezones, commercial site plans adjacent to residential zones, and nonresidential uses in residential zones are required to hold a neighborhood meeting to present their project to neighbors. Notice is sent to neighbors within 300 feet of the project or in some cases to the owners of the nearest 15 residential parcels. Participation at the meeting is not limited to only the neighbors who received notice. It is intended that the neighbors receiving notice will notify other neighbors and invite them to the meeting.
- At the neighborhood meeting, the applicant presents his project to neighbors and seeks their input. This is where the neighbors see the project and share their thoughts and concerns with the applicant. The applicant does not have to have approval from the neighbors. He can choose to ignore their input. City staff members do not attend this meeting. The applicant prepares a brief written report on the meeting and submits it to the staff.
- Staff reviews the project for compliance with the ordinances and discusses changes with the applicant.
- Notice is provided to neighbors again notifying them when the item will be on the Planning Commission and City Council agendas.

Results

- This approach has been in place for several years.
- Neighbors appreciate the opportunity to participate in the project early on.
- Applicants are aware of neighborhood issues at the beginning of the application process and can respond to the neighbors and make changes as appropriate prior to a public meeting.
- Discussions before the Planning Commission and the City Council focus on the issues and not on complaints about the process.
- There is less controversy regarding projects when the applicant has listened to the neighbors and their suggestions.
- The City Council appreciates being aware of the issues when the project is presented to them.