

Budget Civic Engagement in the City of Durham

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How can the City of Durham’s Budget and Management Services Department improve civic engagement in the budget development process? What opportunities exist to coordinate budget engagement with the city’s other civic engagement efforts? This paper explores these questions through an overview of Durham’s budget engagement, a case study of the pilot Community Conversations, and mapping of city wide communication channels and engagement efforts. Interviews with city staff as well as with community organizations provide the bulk of the information for this analysis.

What is Civic Engagement

Civic engagement refers to the “in person and online processes that allow members of the public... to personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas, concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into governmental decision making” (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014, 655). Types and formats of civic engagement range along a spectrum, including levels of i) information (where the government provides one-way information), ii) engagement (where the government engages in two-way communication flows), iii) participation (where government and residents collaborate on solutions), and iv) ownership (where residents have the power to make final decisions) (Next Century Cities 2017).

Durham Experience

Durham’s Budget and Management Services Department conducts civic engagement through resident satisfaction surveys and a strategic planning process. For the budget process itself, the city conducts two public budget hearings during City Council meetings. This year, the city also collaborated with Durham County and Durham Public Schools to introduce three Community Conversations, public discussions about resident priorities to inform budget decisions and long term strategic planning. The Community Conversations succeeded in building

relationships, prompting civil discourse, and increasing resident knowledge and awareness of municipal services. However, the conversation lacked any framing in terms of limited resources or trade off effects and still had the common engagement concerns around access and representation.

These concerns mirror challenges facing civic engagement efforts in other city departments. City departments must compete to make residents aware of and interested in the civic engagement opportunity amidst other priorities. Even if residents are aware and interested in the civic engagement initiative, access barriers may still prevent their participation (J Johnson). From a city viewpoint, it is difficult to capture the opinion of residents who do not attend meetings (Filter). This reality highlights the importance of tackling access challenges to ensure that everyone can take part in the discussion. Otherwise, the self-selected nature of participation raises issues with the representativeness of the engagement.

On the city side, limited resources can hinder civic engagement through both staff and budget constraints. Effective civic engagement also requires time, which can prolong project cycles and leave residents unsure about how their input influenced city decisions. City departments therefore must manage expectations and be very transparent in the scope and next steps regarding the issue in question.

Recommendations

The below best practices arose as themes to help improve civic engagement efforts broadly across departments:

1. Take time to plan civic engagement efforts
2. Market civic engagement efforts in the community
3. Bring civic engagement out into the community

4. Provide multiple communication channels
5. Make engagement creative and fun
6. Manage expectations
7. Follow up on civic engagement efforts
8. Build partnerships to increase resources and representation
9. Strengthen neighborhood networks

In terms of the Community Conversations specifically, community feedback and insights from the interviews and participation in the event suggest that Durham's Budget and Management Services Department should:

1. Increase efforts to advertise and communicate about the event
2. Increase the budget for access amenities, including full meals, childcare, and transportation vouchers
3. Continue to consider transportation when choosing event locations
4. Track participants' addresses to measure representation
5. Adapt questions for each year's events
6. Share collected information and feedback with relevant departments
7. Update residents when city decisions or programs use the information shared during the Community Conversations
8. Supplement the Community Conversations with follow up surveys or focus groups
9. Introduce resource constraints and trade off discussions to the event
10. Continue to frame budget questions in terms of impact

INTRODUCTION

The City of Durham uses civic engagement to gain a better understanding of residents' needs and to build a sense of community ownership within neighborhoods. The Budget and Management Services Department specifically uses civic engagement to inform budget and strategic planning decisions. How can the City of Durham's Budget and Management Services Department improve civic engagement in the budget development process? What opportunities exist to coordinate budget engagement with the city's other civic engagement efforts?

This paper defines improving civic engagement as a combination of four factors: including the right people to ensure equal representation, asking the right questions to get the required information, incorporating feedback in decision making, and improving residents' sense of involvement, generally by using the appropriate level and format of engagement.

To address the above policy question, this paper includes:

1. A literature review to define civic engagement, engagement costs and benefits, and types of civic engagement
2. An overview of the City of Durham's budget engagement
3. A case study of Durham's pilot Community Conversations
4. Mapping of city wide communication channels and engagement efforts
5. A summary of challenges and best practices
6. Recommendations to improve Durham's engagement efforts

Information for the overview of the City of Durham's budget engagement comes from discussions with budget staff as well as the official city budget. Similarly, information on Durham's Community Conversations comes from discussions with budget staff and participation in the events. I sat in on several of the community conversation planning meetings and acted as a facilitator during each of the events.

Interviews with city departments and community organizations provided the information used to map Durham engagement as well as the summary of challenges and best practices. Department interviews focused on city departments with outward facing services that directly interact with residents. Internal service departments like audit, finance, or technology solutions were not included. City department interviews included discussions with the following individuals:

- Jillian Johnson: at large City Council member
- Bo Ferguson: Assistant City Manager, City Manager's Office
- Laverne Brooks: Senior Executive Assistant, City Clerk
- Chris Iannuzzi: Deputy Chief, Fire Department
- Jina Propst: Assistant Director, General Services
- Laura Biediger: Program Manager, Neighborhood Improvement Services (NIS)
- Jacob Lerner: District 1 Coordinator, NIS
- Brian Smith: Senior Economic Development Coordinator, Office of Economic and Workforce Development
- Amy Blalock: Public Affairs Manager, Office of Public Affairs
- Cynthia Booth: Public Affairs Specialist, Parks and Recreation
- Jason Jones: Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation
- Matthew Filter: Senior Planner, Planning
- Hannah Jacobson: AICP Senior Planner, Planning
- Scott Whiteman: AICP Planning Supervisor, Planning
- Wil Glenn: Public Affairs Manager, Police Department
- Tasha Johnson: Assistance Director Engineering Services, Public Works

- Bryan Poole: Transportation Planner II-Bicycle and Pedestrian, Transportation
- Kirk Butts: Senior Public Affairs Specialist, Water Management

Interviews with community organizations focused on entities involved in local communities and representing distinct populations in the community. Organizations with state or federal advocacy missions were excluded. Organizations with local political platforms or endorsements were also excluded due to the city’s legal limitations preventing engagement with political groups. Community interviews included discussions with the following individuals:

- Jourdi Bosley: Development Coordinator, Church World Services
- Reverend Spencer Bradford: Executive Director, Durham Congregations in Action
- Eliazar Posada: Community Engagement and Advocacy Manager, El Centro Hispano
- Ethel Simonetti: Partners Against Crime (PAC) founder
- Zion Tankard: PAC 2 co-facilitator
- Harold Chestnut: PAC 4 co-facilitator

I was not able to conduct interviews with the InterNeighborhood Council, Durham CAN, or the Durham Center for Senior Life due to difficulties in contacting staff at each organization. Future research should continue to gather information on the perspective of community organizations as they can often act as partners connecting residents to city departments. Future research could also explore residents’ perspectives on the city’s outreach, particularly to gauge resident knowledge, interest, and opinion of existing city channels and programs.

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

DEFINING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement can mean different things to different people. Moreover,

numerous terms denote civic engagement (i.e. public engagement, public participation, stakeholder involvement, deliberative democracy, etc.), sometimes interchangeably but often with slight nuance in meaning and understanding (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014).

Defining civic engagement using the “who” and “how” involved in the process provides some clarity (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014). *Public* refers to the general population; *citizen* refers to eligible voters; and *resident* refers to individuals who live in a certain locality. Likewise, *engagement* refers to a “general term for assembling individuals to address an issue;” *public participation* refers to the legally required forms of resident feedback; and *deliberation* refers to a specific communication method used during engagement (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014, 655). The understanding of public engagement as “in person and online processes that allow members of the public... to personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas, concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into governmental decision making” most closely matches the City of Durham’s conceptualization of civic engagement and will be used for this project (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014, 655). The City of Durham uses the term civic engagement in reference to how it communicates information to the public as well as how it connects with residents in seeking feedback and making decisions.

VALUE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Ideally, public engagement supports the ideals of democratic participation, provides social justice, and increases transparency and fairness of decision making (Bryson and Quick 2012, Nabatchi 2014). Public engagement improves social capital and the relationships between citizens and government (Arnstein 1969, Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004). Budget engagement specifically may increase accountability and transparency for public funds, which in turn may improve residents’ trust in local government (Kim and Schachter 2013).

On a more practical level, public engagement allows the city to meet legal participation requirements or inform the public.¹ Engagement also allows the city to use resident feedback to increase its understanding of the problem, improve the quality of content and data for city staff, cultivate support for the issue, and manage uncertainty (Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004, Godwin 2014). With this better understanding of problems and citizen preferences, cities can provide more equitable outcomes and “align budgetary decisions with actual citizen priorities and values” (Kim and Schachter 2013, 457).

Results from surveys of local government officials in Great Britain and the United States indicate that local officials clearly see the benefits of the more pragmatic purpose of information gathering and developing a better understanding of problems and resident priorities (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001, and Barnes and Mann 2011). Officials do not see as clearly the more idealistic benefits of community spirit and increased sense of involvement.

CRITICISMS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Public officials believe an apathetic public prevents effective public engagement (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001, Barnes and Mann 2011, Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004, Nabatchi and Amsler 2014). Even if the public indicated interest in the issue, public officials report skepticism that residents would have the appropriate capacity to engage effectively. This knowledge barrier becomes even more relevant for budget engagement. City budgets involve complexities and specialized terms and knowledge that the average resident does not have the time or interest to learn (Kim and Schachter 2013, Miller and Evers 2002). For example, budget allocations include complex structural elements like multi-year decisions, spending required by law, trade-offs, planning through separate capital budgets, or non-negotiables like existing salary

¹ For example, Durham is required to hold a public hearing on the budget prior to the budget’s adoption (City of Durham 2017a).

levels (Miller and Evers 2002). Learning this nuance would require a significant amount of time beyond what residents typically are willing to devote to engagement efforts.

Another concern about civic engagement involves the issue of representation. Within the literature, officials reported concern that results from public engagement would not represent the entire community (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001, Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004, Nabatchi and Amsler 2014, Desouza and Bhagatwar 2014). Instead, they worry that civic engagement can result in a self-selection process where only certain types of highly vocal and involved residents participated, allowing “interests or opinions of a few [to] dominate those of the majority” (Desouza and Bhagatwar 2014, 46). Participants may not represent the community, which could be especially troubling for resource decisions like those involved in budget engagement (Ebdon 2000, Kim and Schachter 2013).

Public engagement itself requires additional resources on the part of the participating local government, both in terms of time and resources. For complex questions like those for budget engagement, additional time and effort is required to simplify and present the information to participating residents. Public engagement can slow down the decision-making process by adding additional steps and facilitation periods. (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001, Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004, Desouza and Bhagatwar 2014). For budget engagement, officials fear that civic engagement may increase conflict as competition ensues between different participants and interest areas (Ebdon 2000, Kim and Schachter 2013).

Public engagement can also raise unrealistic expectations on the part of citizen participants who may expect that the city will act on feedback in a timely and visible manner (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001 and Nabatchi and Amsler 2014). Budget engagement likewise might increase residents’ “spending expectations beyond the affordable level” (Ebdon

2000). Local governments often struggle to integrate public engagement results into final decision making (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001, Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004).

LEVELS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation introduced one of the first organizing framework for understanding different types of civic and public engagement. The International Association for Public Participation updated Arnstein's gradation with their Spectrum of Participation (Godwin 2014, Bryson et al 2013). Both frameworks rank civic engagement based on the involvement and decision-making authority of the participating resident.

A simplified version of the spectrum condenses the levels to i) information (where the government provides one-way information), ii) engagement (where the government engages in two-way communication flows), iii) participation (where government and residents collaborate on solutions), and iv) ownership (where residents have the power to make final decisions) (Next Century Cities 2017). Regardless of the nuance in the framework, such tiered levels prove helpful in understanding the level of resources required and potential benefits available with the engagement. Lower level engagement processes will have a lower cost but will likely result in weaker relationship building benefits. Higher level engagements will require more resources but will build partnerships and empower the community.

This variation in terms of level of civic engagement emphasizes the importance of context in designing public engagement. Local governments need to use the right level and method of engagement for their goal (Next Century Cities 2017). Context in terms of social, demographic, and political trends as well as with available resources and stakeholders determine which engagement methods would best address the issue in question (Bryson and Quick 2013 and Barnes and Mann 2011). Part of this process involves clarifying the purpose of participation

and taking time to determine the correct approach (Bryson and Quick 2013). In some cases, multiple methods might prove beneficial. As Ebdon and Franklin 2004 note, “Cities that use more than one method...might be more likely to attain effective participation, by offsetting the weaknesses of one method with the advantages of another” (36).

BUDGET ENGAGEMENT

A city’s budgeting process involves important public decisions, making it “an important opportunity for meaningful citizen participation” (Ebdon 2000, 383). Like other civic engagement, methods of budget engagement range across the engagement spectrum. Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses (Ebdon and Franklin 2004, Kim and Schachter 2013).

Informational forms of budget engagement can include efforts to increase resident understanding of the budget through open budget initiatives (i.e. revision of budget documentation to make reports more accessible or online dashboards), brief presentations on the budget process, or more in-depth citizen universities to teach residents about city budgeting (Miller and Evers 2000). Transparent budgeting might also indicate a city’s willingness to engage the public throughout the budget process. Millers and Evers 2000 find that “the more information the budget contained, the more likely the governments used other citizen participation methods” (252).

Citizen surveys, like Durham’s Resident Satisfaction Survey, can also allow cities to collect information from residents. These surveys can be designed to be representative and allow cities to track trends over time (Ebdon and Franklin 2004). However, they may not ask the right questions or allow cities to determine the why or how behind resident opinions or priorities.

Engagement methods like public hearings and focus groups create two-way communication between a city and its residents. Low attendance may prevent representativeness in these forum, while a lack of knowledge on the part of residents may limit resulting dialogue.

Citizen advisory committees and more formal deliberation provide budget engagement methods in the participation level. Both allow participants to develop a more in depth understanding of budget questions. Yet, both require more time and effort on the part of participants and local officials. Cities may also struggle to ensure that the committees remain representative of the entire community.

Voting through budget referenda represents the traditional method of resident ownership in budget engagement (Kim and Schachter 2013). Participatory Budgeting has recently provided another avenue for resident ownership. Participatory Budgeting allows residents to “decid[e] how specific parts of the public budget should be spent” (Participatory Budgeting Project 2016, 9). After the city sets aside the specific budget amount, residents brainstorm ideas in public meetings. Resident volunteers work with city agencies to develop some of those initial ideas in terms of logistics, feasibility, and cost. When finalized, the ideas go to a vote by the entire community. Winning concepts receive the allocated funding and government commitment to implement the program. However, participatory budgeting usually only involves a small percentage of funding compared to the overall budget. Programs from participatory budgeting do not create structural change in larger city priorities or decisions.

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), a nonprofit that works to expand implementation of this civic engagement method, recommends evaluating Participatory Budgeting based on its impact on civic and political life, its inclusion and level of representation, and how the government follows through on implementation (Participatory Budgeting Project).

Similarly, Gomez et al 2013 suggest measuring engagement success based on if the initiative maximizes relevant information and information exchanges, maximizes the number of participants and representativeness, maximizes fairness in resource distribution, and minimizes how long the process takes. Ebdon and Franklin 2004 use a related definition of success that likewise highlights representativeness, participation, and two-way communication. They additionally emphasize the importance of conducting budget engagement earlier in the budget process and ensuring that cities use resident input.

DURHAM EXPERIENCE

Durham Context

The City of Durham occupies 110 square miles and as of 2016 had a population of 254,620 residents (50% white, 37% black or African American, and 13% Hispanic) (City of Durham 2016). From 2010 to 2016, the city's population grew by 10%. Estimates project another 35% population growth over the next 20 years. Median household income in 2015 was \$52,106, slightly higher than the North Carolina average of \$47,830. Durham operates under a council-manager form of government with a seven-member city council, including the mayor (City of Durham 2017a). The city's 23 departments employ 2,492 full time and 99 part-time employees. The City uses a fiscal year from July 1 – June 30 and operates under an annual balanced budget. The 2017-2018 budget was for \$429.4 million, including \$189.4 million for the General Fund.

Durham's Budget Engagement

In the budget process, civic engagement initiatives “give residents the opportunity to provide direct feedback to council members on budget priorities” (City of Durham 2017b). Historically, five “Coffee with Council” meetings provided participating residents with face-to-face meetings with council members. Each session took place in a community space and

included a presentation on the city's budget outlook. Participants could respond with ideas or comments. The city replaced Coffee with Council in the 2018/19 budget cycle with the new Community Conversations initiative discussed below. Although community groups can still invite city council members to present and discuss the city budget, city resources and staff time focused on developing and coordinating the joint Community Conversations.

The city also conducts two budget public hearings during City Council meetings. The first meeting occurs in March and gives residents the opportunity to provide "input on priorities" (City of Durham 2017a, I-2). The second hearing takes place in June for residents to provide feedback in response to the proposed budget. The city ensures that a notice of both hearings is published in the local newspaper, the Herald Sun.

For the FY 2017-2018 budget, the City developed an additional budget survey asking residents to rank seven specific city services (City of Durham 2017a). The Budget and Management Services Department presented the survey to 21 community groups and shared the survey online, which resulted in 2,139 responses. Responding residents prioritized sidewalks, trails/greenways, and parks.

Beyond the budget cycle, the city conducts civic engagement to determine long term priorities through the resident satisfaction survey and strategic planning process. The city partners with Durham County and Durham Public Schools for its annual resident satisfaction survey. Durham's Budget and Management Services Department manages the survey and coordinates question input from across departments. A national citizen survey contractor, ETC Institute, conducts the survey and provides a final, high level report. Departments can also analyze survey results further, including for performance measurement and determining community priorities (City of Durham 2017a).

The representative survey measures resident satisfaction with municipal services and opinions about Durham’s livability over time (ETC Institute 2017, City of Durham 2017a). 735 city and county residents completed the survey in 2016, giving the survey a 95% confidence level with a +/- 3.8% margin of error. Residents rated public schools, street maintenance, traffic, and police protection as the highest priorities. 59% of residents responded that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the quality of services provided by the city, although breakdown for specific services showed the lowest satisfaction rankings for traffic, street maintenance, and pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

From 2009-2010, the city underwent a strategic planning process to create the 2011 – 2013 strategic plan (City of Durham 2010). The strategic planning team collected and analyzed feedback from 700 city employees, citizens, and stakeholders. The city updated the plan for 2016-2018 and started another update process in 2017 for the 2018-2020 strategic plan (City of Durham 2010, City of Durham 2017a). Historically, updates included additional rounds of civic engagement, usually through another survey or focus group discussions. This year, the budget team will use data from satisfaction survey responses to shape city goals. The team has identified both existing survey questions and questions to add to hone the city’s five priority areas. Follow up engagement through the Community Conversations and with specific interest groups may supplement information gaps.

Community Conversations

Origins and Logistics

Although the previous Coffee with Council format allowed residents to interact with city decision makers, several issues limited its effectiveness (J Johnson). Residents frequently came with questions unrelated to city operations. While the city could provide contact information for

the responsible county or school board representative, it could not provide concrete answers or explanations to residents' inquiries. Residents therefore could feel bounced around and dissatisfied with council responses.

Another concern involved the organization and management of Coffee with Council. Each of Durham's 5 district-based Partners Against Crime (PAC) organizations had control over one Coffee with Council meeting. However, this approach led to a varying level of quality in the resulting discussions. Some PACS also limited comments to frequent PAC members, which raised questions about representation in the engagement.

The city therefore switched to the Community Conversations as a more comprehensive approach with the city taking a lead organizational role to standardize the process. The city partnered with Durham County and Durham Public Schools to ensure that residents could have all questions addressed. Elected officials, relevant department managers and staff from each organization attended all meetings to provide context and responses to residents. The Community Conversations also switched from a geographic to a thematic focus. Each of the three meetings had a key theme for discussion: 1) public safety; 2) affordable housing, transportation, and human services; and 3) education and economic development.

The city organized logistics for the first meeting (public safety), while the county organized logistics for the second meeting (human services) and the school system organized logistics for the third meeting (education). Meeting organization involved finding the location, providing refreshments, and ensuring appropriate supplies (markers, easels, flipcharts, dot stickers, name tags, audio/visual equipment, etc.). Each organization coordinated on the facilitation and management of the events. This structure provided an easier way to share the cost of engagement without having to transfer funds between the municipalities.

The three Community Conversations occurred in late January/early February, before the city council's budget retreat and budget discussions. Resident feedback would "help shape the City and County budgets and give insight to strategic plans" (City-County Community Conversation Facilitation Guide). Locations were chosen based on their proximity to downtown and parking availability to help with access concerns. Similarly, times were chosen after normal work hours to encourage resident attendance. The first meeting took place on a Saturday morning, while the remaining two took place on Tuesday evenings from 6 – 8 pm. Light snacks and drinks were available at each event.

The city advertised the event with a press release circulated through the normal city public information channels. Post card invites were also distributed during Durham's Week of Peace and at each Community Conversation. Neighborhood Improvement Services advertised the event through their contacts with neighborhood associations and other community leaders.

Each event started with a welcome from the City and County Budget Directors as well as a welcome from and acknowledgement of participating city, county, and school board elected officials. Budget staff then presented a high-level budget overview to share the funding of each relevant agency. Department directors from relevant agencies likewise presented a quick overview of their department's roles, key performance metrics, and new initiatives.

Following the thirty minutes of context and introduction, the event transitioned into table discussions. Each table had 6-8 residents, one elected official or department head, and one staff member. The elected official or department head led the conversation by asking questions and requesting resident responses. The staff member provided facilitation support as needed, organized responses into themes, and guided the table prioritization to reach the top suggestions. Spanish tables with translators were available at each event.

The elected official or department head would read each discussion question to the table before giving residents 2-3 minutes for silent brainstorming. During this time, residents would write down their ideas on the provided sticky notes, using one sticky note per idea. The elected official or department head would then ask residents for their feedback, ensuring that everyone at the table had a chance to share their comment or idea. As residents shared their input, they would pass the sticky note to the staff member who would group similar ideas together. If a few, clear themes emerged, the table would verbally discuss prioritization of which ideas they found the most important. If the table cultivated numerous and disparate ideas, residents would use dot voting to prioritize the ideas. Staff captured all comments and ideas; this prioritization only helped in narrowing down ideas for the report out stage in the interest of time. Residents could share questions or comments unrelated to the themed questions on available butcher paper “parking lots” or through the Neighborhood Improvement Services question/comment box.

Each event focused on three questions related to that conversation’s theme. Tables had roughly 15 minutes of discussion per question. Following the small group discussion, each table selected a representative who reported out to the larger group with a quick, two-minute recap of the table discussion and priority ideas. The budget office selected the nine questions based on the conversation themes and using prompts from the resident satisfaction survey. Table 1 below shows the questions used for each event.

Table 1: Community Conversation Details

Community Conversation	Theme	Lead Agency	Location	Questions
1/27/2018	Public Safety	City of Durham	Durham Convention Center	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can law enforcement do to better build trust within communities in Durham? 2. How could law enforcement better serve or support your neighborhood? 3. What could the Fire and EMS departments better do to serve or support communities in Durham?
1/30/2018	Affordable Housing,	Durham County	Durham County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What could the County do to improve access to and quality of health and social services?

	Transportation, and Human Services		Human Services Complex	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. What actions can the City and County take to be most helpful in addressing affordable housing? 3. What could improve the way you travel around Durham?
2/6/2018	Education and Economic Development	Durham Public Schools	Brogden Middle School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What could the City and County do to better ensure economic prosperity for all residents? 2. What could be done to improve the schools in our community? 3. What could the City, Schools, and Durham Tech do to better prepare all residents for the jobs available in our community?

Results and Next Steps

75 residents attended the public safety conversation, 130 attended the housing and health conversation, and 140 attended the education and economic development conversation. These figures do not include staff attendance, which included the 40 facilitators (elected officials, department heads, and staff) as well other staff who were present in an observational role. The three meetings resulted in 1,640 comments or ideas from residents. Staff at the city’s budget office are currently reviewing these responses to find themes and implementable ideas. The budget office will present the resulting information at the city’s budget retreat in mid-March to help frame the budget discussion and decisions for this year. Results will also inform the current strategic planning process to influence more long-term budgeting decisions.

The budget office will circulate the final report to participating residents who provided their email address as well as through the normal city communication channels. Since this is the first year for the community conversations, the scope of further next steps or how the results will incorporate into policy or budget decisions remains uncertain.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Community Conversations succeeded in building relationships and prompting civil discourse about issues facing the city. Residents not only met staff and elected officials but also other residents. This environment provided a networking opportunity with some residents

exchanging contact information or business cards for future collaboration. Residents were also able to increase their knowledge and awareness of municipal services. In addition to the department presentations, city and county departments hosted information tables at each event where residents could ask questions and get more information about programs or services.

However, the conversation lacked any framing in terms of limited resources or trade off effects. As such, the conversation become more of an idealistic brainstorming session of residents describing their wish list of everything they wanted their local governments to accomplish. While this process has value and is supplemented by the prioritization process of the report out, it does not present residents with real life decision making situations. Some residents also admitted that they did not know enough information about the topics to present ideas, particularly for the question on EMS and fire operations. This limitation did not appear a problem during the health and housing or education and employment discussions.

The conversations tried to address access concerns through the location of each events and provision of food. Yet, the snack like nature of the food and the lack of childcare may still have created barriers for lower income individuals or families with young children. The public safety event had a lower turn out than other conversations. It remains uncertain if lower participation stemmed from the fact that this was the first event or if the location (the more formal convention center), time (Saturday morning), or extensive presence of uniformed public safety officials prevented resident attendance.

Questions of resident participation lead to concerns about representation and whose voices made it into the conversation. Although the municipalities collected names and email addresses of participants, they did not collect any demographic or geographic information. This lack of metrics makes it difficult to determine which population groups participated.

As mentioned previously, it remains too early to evaluate the long-term impacts of the Community Conversations. Future analysis should track how resident feedback is used to shape resource and policy decisions.

Civic Engagement Across the City

While the budget team has worked to coordinate civic engagement internally, the city overall lacks consistent coordination of civic engagement across all departments. The city does not have a central civic engagement department or position. Departments therefore do not always know about the outreach occurring in other agencies. To mitigate this limitation, the below sections attempt to map out existing communication channels and engagement efforts of the external facing city departments.

Communication Channels

The City of Durham functions under a decentralized communication structure (Blalock). A small centralized office of 8 staff members coordinates city wide communication. Only one staff member focuses on external communications, supported by 3 video production staff. Separate public affairs staff embedded in departments run communications for police, parks and recreation, water management, and fire. These staff report to the departments directly rather than to the public affairs office. The central office does not have a budget beyond staff expenses. Instead, departments allocate funding and work with public affairs on communication efforts.

Durham's communication strategy works to build awareness of services, engage with residents, manage the city's reputation, and provide first line customer service. City communications involves both pushing out information and responding to requests or information that come in. The public affairs office seeks to function as its own news station. The changing communication landscape, both in terms of local media and social media innovations, complicate traditional municipal communication. Durham therefore seeks to provide direct

messaging through this news station approach. Public Affairs also provides branding guidelines and communication templates to all departments.

Durham's decentralized structure and low communication investment makes creating a comprehensive communication strategy more challenging. Departments must plan for communication in advance, but often do not think of communication needs amidst the rest of their program and service requirements. The central public affairs office lacks the capacity for proactive outreach and follow up with departments. Public Affairs therefore usually operates on a limited time frame and budget, which limits the effectiveness of communication campaigns.

Table 2 below summarizes key communication channels at both the central and department level. Departments and the central office coordinate and cross post messages to reach the widest audience. Departments and the central office also choose channels to customize information to the target audience and type of message. For example, twitter works well for emergency information but does not provide in depth discussion or detailed information.

Many of these platforms provide one-way communication with the city pushing out information to residents. Social media creates the potential for two-way communication through resident responses and comments. Unfortunately, the discussion is usually negative leading to questions about whether these formats qualify as meaningful and productive conversation. The limited length of many formats prevents nuanced discussion. Certain residents also want to use the channels as a personal platform and remain uninterested in dialogue or customer service from the city. Social media similarly can create misinformation, forcing the city to work to become aware and to civilly correct discussions to provide accurate information to the public (Smith).

Table 2: City of Durham’s Communication Channels

CHANNEL	DESCRIPTION AND DISTRIBUTION	CONTENT	FOLLOWERS*	FREQUENCY	TARGETING
Public Affairs Office					
Sources: Blalock, City of Durham-Bull City Today, City of Durham – Durham Television Network, City of Durham – City Life, City of Durham – Durham Information Network, City of Durham Twitter, City of Durham Facebook, City of Durham Instagram, City of Durham YouTube					
Press Release	<p>Public Affairs helps departments write press releases. Departments are responsible for the accuracy of information, while Public Affairs is responsible for the format and distribution.</p> <p>Public Affairs circulates finalized press releases to print and media outlets (both English and Spanish) as well as to neighborhood list serves, issue organizations (i.e. PACs, InterNeighborhood Council, Downtown Durham Inc), and local institutions (i.e. NCCU, Duke, DPAC, RTP) as relevant.² Public Affairs also shares all press releases with NIS, which then repackages and redistributes information to their contacts of community leaders.</p>	Broad scope that varies depending on department and situation.	Varies based on circulation.	Varies – usually several per week	Distribution through neighborhood list serve allows geographic targeting, while distribution through issue organizations and institutions allows topic targeting.
Bull City Today	Daily, minute long news show posted on the city’s social media and TV station.	Updates on city council actions, upcoming events, and new or ongoing projects and services.	Varies	Once a day	None - available to entire public
Durham Television Network	<p>As the official government access channel for the City of Durham, the Durham Television Network provides live and taped coverage of council and planning meetings and emergency information as needed. It also runs original programming, including Bull City Today, CityLife (a talk show hosted by the director of public affairs), and Bull City Wrap (a weekly, longer form news show).</p> <p>Residents can access the Durham Television Network on AT&T U-verse channel 99, Spectrum channel 8, Frontier Communications channel 70, or through livestreaming on the city’s website.</p>	Updates on city council actions, upcoming events, and new or ongoing projects and services.	Varies	24/7	None - available to entire public
City Manager’s Report	Weekly, opt in newsletter	Updates on city council actions, upcoming events, and new or ongoing projects and services.	1000	Weekly – sent out Fridays at 2 pm	None - available to entire public
Durham Citizens’ Newsletter	Two-page, quarterly newsletter sent out with printed water bill.	Updates on city council actions, upcoming events, and new or ongoing projects and services, with special attention to the timeliness of information.	This newsletter has the widest reach as it is sent to all residents of Durham who	4 times a year	None - available to entire public

² Certain neighborhood list serves allow Public Affairs to post directly on their threads. For the others, Public Affairs contacts the registered neighborhood leader with a request to circulate the information.

CHANNEL	DESCRIPTION AND DISTRIBUTION	CONTENT	FOLLOWERS*	FREQUENCY	TARGETING
			receive a printed water ball. Residents who receive electronic invoices do not receive the newsletter.		
Social Media	Twitter: @CityofDurhamNC	Varies – can include emergency information, public relation spotlights, or information about upcoming events or city programs.	10,800	Around 12 times a day – platform can handle more frequent postings	None - available to entire public
	Facebook: City of Durham, NC Government	Varies – can include emergency information, public relation spotlights, or information about upcoming events or city programs.	6,756	Twice daily	None - available to entire public
	Instagram: cityofdurhamnc	Photos and videos of city events	1,712	Varies	None - available to entire public
	YouTube: CityofDurhamNC	Bull City Today and other promotional videos	671	Varies	None - available to entire public
	Next Door	Tailored updates on city council actions, upcoming events, and new or ongoing projects and services.	Varies by neighborhood.	Once or twice a week. Limit posting to try to avoid saturating platform.	Geographic targeting
<p>Fire Department: Durham’s Fire Department focuses its communication efforts on explaining events to the public and sharing proactive fire prevention messages. Their primary audiences include residents, the business community, and schools. The Fire Department seeks to reach 25% of Durham’s population annually through these channels. They are currently working to develop a twitter handle and YouTube channel to boost their social media presence. Source: Iannuzzi, Durham Fire Department Facebook</p>					
Responses to Media Requests	Provide interviews or written summaries to news and media outlets after events.	Summary of what occurred as well as relevant fire prevention message.	Varies	Varies	None - available to entire public
Social Media	Facebook: Durham Fire Department	Performance metrics, promotional material, and prevention messages.	7,723	Varies	None - available to entire public
<p>Neighborhood Improvement Services Sources: Biediger, Lerner</p>					

CHANNEL	DESCRIPTION AND DISTRIBUTION	CONTENT	FOLLOWERS*	FREQUENCY	TARGETING
Relationship Based Communication	NIS fosters relationships with community leaders so they can more effectively share and receive information from residents. The department uses Nation Builder, a customer relationship management tool, to track residents and contacts who have engaged with the city and with whom NIS staff have built relationships.	Depends on context. Reinforce and emphasize the city's official communications through individualized messages and follow up.	Varies	Varies	Yes – NIS can target the message to the appropriate issue or geographic audience.
Parks and Recreation					
Sources: Booth, Jones, Durham DPR Twitter, Durham DPR Facebook, Durham DPR Instagram, Durham DPR YouTube					
News releases	Provide information to news and media outlets as relevant.	Updates on programs or events.	Varies	Varies	None - available to entire public
Play More Magazine	Service catalogue published three times a year in both an online and printed form.	Catalogue of available parks and rec programming and activities.	Varies	3 times a year	None - available to entire public
My Durham	As part of Parks and Rec's teen programming, the department hires selected youth to promote events and programming. Each student works five hours a week both providing feedback on the programming and sharing information about DPR opportunities to their peers and social networks.	Updates about teen related programs or events.	Varies	Varies	Each teen promotes events for their assigned rec center.
Social Media	Twitter: @dprplaymore	Updates on programs and events.	1,033	2- 3 times a day	None - available to entire public
	Facebook: Durham Parks and Recreation	Promotional material and updates on programs and events.	7,233	Multiple times per week.	None - available to entire public
	Instagram: dprplaymore	Photos and videos promoting programs and events	997	Varies	None - available to entire public
	YouTube	Videos promoting programs and events	7	Varies	None - available to entire public
Police Department The Police Department's Public Affairs Unit includes a public affairs manager, public affairs specialists, crime stoppers coordinator, and administrative assistant. The Unit works to "inform residents on how officers are serving and improving their neighborhoods;...motivate community members to get involved;...improve officer and employee morale by highlighting their efforts and accomplishments;" provide the public with prevention tips, and solicit public input to identify suspects or create leads in criminal cases (Public Affairs Unit, 1). Overall goals focus on increasing news coverage of police operations and successes while improving relationships and building trust with Durham residents.					
Sources: Glenn, Public Affairs Unit, Durham Police Twitter, Durham Police Facebook, Durham Police Instagram, Durham Police YouTube					
News releases and responses to media requests	The Public Affairs Unit functions as the primary contact with the media. The Unit works to release information in a timely manner, taking into consideration public safety, protection of witnesses and victims, and ongoing criminal investigations.	Information about crimes or critical incidents.	Varies	Varies	None - available to entire public
Social Media	Twitter: @DurhamPoliceNC	Focus on providing updates and emergency information, especially	3,924	1 – 2 tweets per day, except in cases of	None - available to entire public

CHANNEL	DESCRIPTION AND DISTRIBUTION	CONTENT	FOLLOWERS*	FREQUENCY	TARGETING
		when significant event ongoing. Also provides updates on programs, promotional materials, and safety messages		significant events which have more frequent postings	
	Facebook: Durham Police Department	Crime updates, prevention messages, and program updates.	12,978	4 – 5 posts per week	None - available to entire public
	Instagram: durhampolicedepartmentnc	Photos promoting the police department.	596	Varies	None - available to entire public
	YouTube: Durham Police Department	Requests for public information on crimes, program promotion, and press conferences.	156	Varies. Goal to post 3 – 5 videos per month	None - available to entire public
	Next Door	Tailored updates regarding crime and safety.		1 – 2 times per week	Geographic targeting
Transportation Department					
Sources: Poole, Durham Transportation Twitter					
Social Media	Twitter: @movesafedurham	Updates on traffic patterns and detours	211	Varies	None - available to entire public
Water Management: Water Management uses their mascot, Wayne Drop, in almost all of their communications as a branding tool and to make their messages interesting. They have a small communication budget which goes into commercials and the promotion of Facebook posts. Sources: Butts, Durham Water Twitter, Durham Water YouTube https://twitter.com/DurhamWater , https://www.facebook.com/DurhamWater/ , https://www.youtube.com/user/DurhamSavesWaterNow/videos , https://durhamnc.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/2889					
Responses to Media Requests	Provide information to news and media outlets after events.	Usually providing technical information	Varies	Varies. Usually requests go through the central Public Affairs Office.	None - available to entire public
Commercials	Advertisements circulated through television.	Water conservation techniques	Varies	Varies – depends on budget	None - available to entire public
Posts to neighborhood list serves	Push construction info out to geographically effected areas	Updates on construction	Varies	Varies	Geographic targeting
Water Quality Report	Federally required report published on-line and in print copy. The online version has been available in English and Spanish. This year, printed copies will also be available in Spanish. Durham’s Water Management works to make this publication high quality to increase readership.	Overview of water quality	Varies	Once a year	None - available to entire public

CHANNEL	DESCRIPTION AND DISTRIBUTION	CONTENT	FOLLOWERS*	FREQUENCY	TARGETING
Social Media	Twitter: @DurhamWater	Construction / emergency updates and conservation messages.	428	Several times a week	None - available to entire public
	Facebook: Durham Saves Water	Construction information, promotional material, and conservation messages.	851	Several times a week	None - available to entire public
	YouTube: DurhamWater	Videos about water conservation techniques.	41	New video every few months	None - available to entire public

*As of March 2, 2018

The Office of Public Affairs is currently reevaluating their channels due to broader changes in the communication landscape. Facebook has introduced fee schedules which require local governments to pay to prioritize their messages. The local newspaper, the Herald Sun, has likewise decided not to use the city's press releases for their stories. Public Affairs also reviews responses to the city's Resident Satisfaction Survey to determine how residents would like to receive information and what issues residents see as most important. The Public Affairs office uses this listing of community priorities to shape and plan the overarching communication strategy for the year, for example in determining which services or departments to highlight.

Engagement Efforts

Table 3 summarizes how external facing departments in the City of Durham described their civic engagement, particularly around the methods they employed and their perspectives on why civic engagement is useful. Information on specific, large scale examples of civic engagement efforts and advertising channels was included as relevant. The majority of the highlighted civic engagement focuses on lower levels of engagement with information and two-way communication exchange. This engagement succeeds at getting community input but does not reach the higher engagement levels of public participation and decision making (Biediger).

Departments are not well equipped to receive input / feedback outside the scope of specific engagement efforts or their departmental mission (Biediger). Specific questions or service requests from residents, however, are easier to deal with as departments can more easily forward them to the appropriate contact (Jones, Filter). Department staff informally triage unrelated issues by taking notes and following up or putting residents in touch with the right department and representative.

Departments use resident feedback as one of many data points, including operational data and technical assessments, in making decisions (Jones). They also consider resident feedback in comparison to national trends and in terms of how many or how long residents have expressed that particular view (Propst). These strategies help mitigate the risk of implementing decisions based solely on a minority, vocal viewpoint. Departments acknowledge that they can never make all residents perfectly happy, but they try to maximize approval across residents.

The departments in the City of Durham generally do not track the demographics of participating residents, due both to logistics and a desire to avoid questions that may make participants uncomfortable. This lack of metric makes it challenging to measure the

representativeness (in terms of race, age, and socio-economic status) of any civic engagement effort. Occasionally, civic engagement initiatives will capture geographic information about participants, usually through their addresses. In theory, this geographic data could be used as a proxy to estimate representation across neighborhoods. However, to date, the city does not conduct this type of analysis or collect geographic identifiers as a standard practice.

Specific representation issues exist in planning and transportation. Planning engagement often deals with very technical issues that require specific outreach to skilled populations, including engineers, architects, and developers (Filter). The nature of these technical discussions mean that only certain types of individuals and perspectives are represented in the conversation. The transportation department also needs representation in terms of primary transportation mode to get a full understanding of how residents use the transit system (Poole).

According to informal observations, most department staff recognized that the majority of civic engagement has over representation from the white, middle class with black, Hispanic, and low-income populations generally underrepresented. Departments try to balance representation with targeted outreach to underrepresented populations, but it remains an ongoing issue. Department staff also commented that the most useful information comes from underrepresented populations since their perspectives are usually so different from staff observations and viewpoints (Poole). It therefore becomes especially important to ensure their representation in civic engagement efforts.

Table 3: Civic Engagement by Departments

City Council	
Source: J Johnson, Ferguson	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election cycles to select council members • Attend community meetings • Connect with residents through social media and email • Interact with residents who attend work sessions, public hearings, and city council meetings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and commission connections with City Council
Purpose of Civic Engagement	Civic engagement provides council with a sense of community priorities, allowing them to make more informed decisions.
City Clerk – Management of City Boards	
Source: Brooks	
Method of Civic Engagement	<u>City Boards and Commissions</u> : The City of Durham has 25 boards with members appointed by City Council. While certain boards have more restrictive requirements, most only require Durham residency. Members must live in the city and be up to date on their property taxes. Members serve for three years (except for the Workforce Development board which serves for 4 years and the Housing Appeals Board which serves for 5 years). Board members can serve two consecutive terms, although residents can only serve on one city board at a time and must complete a full term before transitioning to another board. All boards meet monthly.
Purpose of Civic Engagement	The purpose varies by board. Most serve in an advisory capacity to city council, although a few have decision making authority (e.g. the Board of Adjustments).
Advertisement for Civic Engagement	The City Clerk must advertise board openings for 30 days. The department circulates information about openings through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Updates on the city website • Presentations at PAC meetings • Outreach through NIS' mobile city hall
Fire Department	
Source: Iannuzzi	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired community education captain to focus on community outreach • Fall prevention programs through a grant from the National Fire Protection Association • Working with local businesses to develop and evaluate their fire codes and fire evacuation plans • Complimentary home inspections for fire risks and distribution of smoke alarms • Attendance at community events and festivals, both to recruit and share fire safety advice • School outreach • Provide after the fire packets with toiletries and informational brochures on next steps to residents affected by fire
Purpose of Civic Engagement	The fire department benefits from a positive reputation with the community. Civic engagement works to continue that relationship and educate residents about safety measures.
Advertisement for Civic Engagement	Currently, the fire department relies on ad hoc, word of mouth advertising to spread awareness of educational opportunities. The fire department is in the process of implementing a more formal system to

	track events and requests for workshops and plans to become more active in marketing education opportunities.
General Services Source: Propst	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate purchase of right of way from residents for the planning department. • Community outreach around project management and large-scale changes to city buildings. • Volunteer tree planting and litter clean-up opportunities through the city funded and affiliated non-profit, <u>Keep Durham Beautiful</u>.
Example of Civic Engagement	<u>Relocation of Police Headquarters</u> : To gather resident input about where the city should place the new police headquarters, General Services coordinated with NIS, the police department, and the PACS to host community listening sessions at the police headquarters, the Hayti Heritage Center, and Golden Belt.
Purpose of Civic Engagement	General Services functions as a service department to other city agencies. Therefore, its role in civic engagement focuses on supporting other city agencies on projects that impact the public.
Neighborhood Improvement Services Source: Biediger, Lerner	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Neighborhood Matching Grants</u>: the city funds selected applications from neighborhoods for improvement projects. The program started in 2016 and occurs quarterly. 13 neighborhoods received funding in 2016, and 8 neighborhoods received funding in 2017. • Helps coordinate the Partnerships Against Crime (PAC) network. Staff participate in every PAC meeting to respond to resident questions and provide information. • Relationship building with community leaders and community organizations. • Capacity building of community organizations.
Purpose of Civic Engagement	NIS uses civic engagement as a community development tool. The department seeks not only to strengthen resident engagement with the city but also with outside civic and community groups.
Office of Workforce and Economic Development Source: Smith	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Youth Works</u>: summer internship program for high school students • Resident involvement in selecting public art: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Artist selection committees ○ Public Art committee ○ Include contractual requirements for selected artists to conduct civic engagement before submitting a final design
Purpose of Civic Engagement	Civic engagement strengthens place-making by ensuring that the end product fits the needs of that specific neighborhood or community.
Parks and Recreation Source: Booth, Jackson, Jones	

Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff attendance at PAC meetings to answer resident questions and distribute information about upcoming programs. • Evaluation surveys after every program to determine what residents did and did not like about the activity. • Invite residents to visit community rec centers and participate in community walks around rec centers. • Host tables to provide information and take resident feedback during city events and festivals. • <u>My Durham</u>: As part of its free programming for teens, Durham Parks and Recreation hires part time teen ambassadors to provide feedback on the offered activities. Staff leading the program incorporate this feedback on a thirty-day planning cycle to customize offerings to teen needs and interests.
Example of Civic Engagement	<p><u>Aquatics Facilities Master Plan</u>: In collaboration with General Services, DPR conducted a needs assessment to inform Durham’s Aquatic Facilities Master Plan. An online survey collected responses from over 500 residents, while open houses at rec centers and pop up events during existing programs collected face to face input from residents. Six stakeholder meetings provided input from key constituencies. This feedback helped determine priorities for the master plan and guide Durham’s aquatic planning for upcoming years.</p>
Purpose of Civic Engagement	<p>Part of DPR’s core mission involves engagement with the community. DPR staff are often the face of city government for many residents. DPR also acts in a more customer-oriented role given that residents have the choice of using their services as opposed to competing, private options. Therefore, most of DPR engagement revolves around new projects and finding out what the community wants.</p>
Advertisement of Civic Engagement Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication channels as shown in Table 2 • Presentations at PAC meetings • City Hall on the Go
<p>Planning Source: Filter, Jacobson, Whiteman, “Future of the Police Headquarters Site”</p>	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 – 2-hour workshops consisting of staff presentation, Q&A, and breakout groups. During these workshops, planning also asks residents to fill out worksheets to collect individual feedback. Generally, several workshops connect in a series where one discussion builds off another. • Outreach and engagement tables at community events and in public areas. For example, planning hosted pop up tables at City Hall, the Durham bus station, the Durham Co-op, and the farmers market to solicit resident feedback about plans for the what should replace the current police headquarters. • Staff attendance at PAC and neighborhood group meetings to answer questions and provide information. • Mailed notification of planned or ongoing projects.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearings
Example of Civic Engagement	<p><u>Future of the Police Headquarters Site:</u> The planning department coordinated with general services and consultants to conduct civic engagement around what should replace the current police headquarters after it moves to its new site. They conducted an online survey and held pop ups events at City Hall, the Durham bus station, the farmers market, and the Durham Co-op. More formal engagement opportunities included two public meetings as well as a workshop with the Durham City-County Appearance Commission. An estimated 1,200 residents participated in the process.</p>
Purpose of Civic Engagement	<p>The planning department conducts civic engagement to meet legal requirements, inform strategic and long-term planning, and to provide customer service, particularly around permitting and zoning inquiries. Planning engages with residents anytime a project will affect the public and prioritizes engaging with stakeholders and affected residents.</p>
<p>Police Department Source: Glenn</p>	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online complaint form • Anonymous crime stoppers line • Police sponsored events, including National Night Out, the police athletic league, and Youth Empowerment Day • Quarterly coffee with cops • <u>Citizen Police Academy:</u> Each fall the police department invites about 30 residents to learn more about the police department through a twice weekly, 6-week course. • Crime prevention workshops at each district. • Neighborhood walks • Staff attendance at PAC meetings to answer resident questions and distribute information about recent crimes or upcoming programs. • New community engagement unit of 10 officers created to focus on building relationships with residents in public housing.
Purpose of Civic Engagement	<p>The Police Department uses civic engagement to inform residents about risks and safety precautions as well as to get information from residents regarding crimes. The department also uses civic engagement to improve relationships and build trust with the community.</p>
<p>Public Works Source: T Johnson</p>	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Street maintenance:</u> face to face interaction with residents in the community as well as processing complaints from residents • <u>Engineering and storm water:</u> project driven civic engagement through community meetings, direct mailings, and electronic dissemination of information and project status updates • Annual presentation at PAC meetings
Purpose of Civic Engagement	<p>Public works primarily conducts project based civic engagement. Engagement outreach is targeted to the area impacted by the project.</p>

	Earlier design sessions focus more on getting feedback from residents, while later meetings focus on communicating project information to residents.
Transportation	
Source: Poole	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings • Focus groups • Surveys
Example of Civic Engagement	<p><u>Durham Bike + Walk Implementation Plan:</u> To inform the most recent bicycle and pedestrian plan, the transportation department conducted a two-stage program of civic engagement. The first stage included an online map to which residents could add comments as well as an online survey collecting information about what transportation aspects residents viewed as most important. Transportation staff tried to promote the survey in underrepresented areas through on the ground outreach, particularly in East Durham and by the Durham Health and Human Services complex. The mapping helped narrow down geographic areas of interest, while the survey helped create metrics to prioritize projects. The second round adapted the map into a second map and held public meetings at the Durham County library. Residents could respond to the existing map and provide additional feedback. Transportation transitioned the engagement map into a version that staff still use to make project decisions. As the department expands its scope of building bike lanes, engagement strategies will also expand. The department recently hired engagement consultants and plans to continue engagement through a mix of web site feedback and stakeholder meetings.</p>
Feedback to Residents	Transportation notifies participating residents about the publication of final reports. Residents can also opt in to receive quarterly email updates summarizing projects' progress and status. A project planning website lists out all transportation projects with contact information.
Purpose of Civic Engagement	Transportation does not conduct civic engagement on a regular basis, unless the department is in the process of planning out new corridors or if work directly effects residents living on the corridor.
Advertisement of Civic Engagement Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with Public Affairs • Sharing information with bike/pedestrian list serves and bike advocacy groups to circulate information to interested participants • Partner with GoTriangle, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and NC Department of Transportation to coordinate larger engagement efforts.
Water Management	
Source: Butts	
Methods of Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face engagement to share information and resources at events, including pop ups at heavily trafficked areas, baseball games, or other city programs. • Provide interested residents with tours of water treatment facilities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School visits to educate children and youth about water usage. • Water use assessments for residents and the availability of low-cost save water kits. • Communication efforts as detailed in Table 2.
Purpose of Civic Engagement	Most water management decisions involve technical analysis that does not require significant resident input. Civic engagement in the water management department instead focuses on education, particularly around water conservation. The department works to make education available but also recognizes that no engagement or feedback can be a good thing if residents are satisfied with the service.

In addition to department level civic engagement, the 5 quasi-independent Partnership Against Crime (PAC) groups provide another avenue to connect the city to residents. Durham’s 5 PACS represent the city’s police districts to provide geographical civic engagement opportunities (Partners Against Crime). The PAC system originated as a collaboration between concerned citizens and the police to deal with safety and crime concerns (Tankard). Since then, the volunteer organizations have expanded to deal with a variety of other community issues. Each PAC receives \$2000 annually from the city for operational expenses as well as city meeting space (usually in Parks and Recreation facilities) to host their monthly meetings (Biediger). However, the PACS do not have common bylaws or resources and instead act independently of one another (Simonetti).

The established meeting dates (shown in more detail in Table 4) provide a mechanism for regular engagement with residents at a set time and location. The meetings provide an opportunity both for the city to share information with residents and for residents to share their concerns with the city. PACS work closely with both the city and the county (Chestnut). They focus on bringing the community together to discuss issues.

Meeting formats vary by district but usually include a combination of presentations from city departments, invited speakers, and open discussion among participants (Tankard, Chestnut). Attendance likewise varies by PAC as well as by time of year or the topic of the meeting.

Between 35 and 100 residents on average attend the PAC meetings. PACs communicate information about the meetings through newsletters, Facebook, and list serves.

Each PAC focuses on different topics or areas of concern, depending on the priorities of the community. PAC facilitators gauge interest in different topics by following the Next Door social media platform and talking to community members (Tankard). PAC participants elect the volunteer facilitators every 2 years, although facilitators can serve for as long as they are interested (Chestnut).

Table 4: Partnership Against Crime (PAC) Meeting Details

PAC	Area of City	Meeting Time	Meeting Location
PAC 1	East Durham	9:30 am on the third Saturday of the month	Holton Career and Resource Center
PAC 2	North Durham	6:00 pm on the second Monday of the month	DPS Staff Development Center
PAC 3	Southwest Durham	10:00 am on the second Saturday of the month	Community and Family Life Recreation Center, Lyon Park
PAC 4	South Durham	10:00 am on the second Saturday of the month	Campus Hills Recreation Center
PAC 5	Central Durham	5:30 pm on the second Thursday of the month	City Hall

Civic Engagement Barriers

The City of Durham faces barriers to civic engagement similar to those found across the United States. Residents are busy and have limited attention for city related news (J Johnson, Poole). City departments must compete for residents’ time (Filter). Residents might also not see the issue in question as applicable or important to their lives, which would decrease their incentive to engage (Poole). On the flip side, residents might not even be aware of the engagement opportunity (Brooks).

Even if residents are aware and interested in the civic engagement initiative, access barriers may still prevent their participation (J Johnson). Concerns about food, childcare, and transportation cause individuals to miss meetings and engagement opportunities. Access barriers disproportionately impact lower income residents, creating equity and representation challenges (Lerner). From a city viewpoint, it is difficult to capture the opinion of residents who do not attend meetings (Filter). This reality highlights the importance of tackling these access

challenges to ensure that everyone can take part in the discussion. Otherwise, the self-selected nature of participation raises issues with the representativeness of the engagement.

Language access creates a related barrier (Butts, Booth, Iannuzzi). Without interpretation services, non-English speakers remain excluded from the discussion. The city has a language incentive for bilingual Spanish – English speaking employees. The initiative helps address language concerns but cannot always provide enough resources for the communication needs of the Hispanic population.

El Centro, a community organization focused on serving the Hispanic and Latinx population, notes that translation from the city has improved in recent years (Posada). However, Spanish materials often come weeks after the English materials. This delay can prevent participation in events since residents do not receive the information with enough lead time to know and plan for the event. The city must also consider the reading level of residents. Attempts to simplify English versions of communication materials do not always translate into the Spanish equivalents. The translation process can result in high level, literary Spanish not easily understood in a daily context, particularly if the translation is done by a nonnative speaker. Although Spanish arguably remains the focus of city interpretation due to demographics, the city also needs the capacity to deal with other languages. Refugee resettlement agencies working in the Durham area, including Church World Services, World Relief, USCRI, and Lutheran Family Services, place about 1,000-1,200 refugees in the triangle area annually (Bosley). A comprehensive language access approach would also address the needs of this community.

On the city side, limited resources prevent full access or language services. City departments face staff and budgeting constraints (Butts, Jones, Iannuzzi, Booth, Filter, Lerner). Staff working on civic engagement efforts frequently have other responsibilities and must

balance outreach with other priorities and deliverables. Staff may have limited experience or capacity to run engagement efforts. Effective civic engagement also requires time, which can prolong project cycles (T Johnson).

The technical aspects of many projects can create challenges in presenting information to residents as well as power dynamics between residents and experts (Biediger, Filter). City departments struggle to balance open discussion with a focus on options that are feasible at the city level. The city needs to help residents understand trade-offs and the city's legal restraints and requirements to facilitate prioritization and more realistic solutions. Some departments found it useful to deal with this issue by presenting residents with clear options to react to rather than having a completely open conversation.

Residents similarly do not always have a clear understanding of how the city plans to use their feedback. City departments must manage expectations and be very transparent in the scope and next steps regarding the issue in question. This follow up becomes challenging due to the slow pace of some government decisions, a cycle that civic engagement can lengthen (Jones, Biediger). If not careful, civic engagement efforts can create skepticism about government follow through. This disillusion can fuel a sense that the city checks the box of civic engagement without allowing participation to influence policy decisions (Ferguson).

Frustration with the results of engagement can also feed into an underlying distrust of government (J Johnson, Butts). Residents may avoid engagement with the city due to a history of disenfranchisement or a belief that the government has ulterior motives. National challenges can exacerbate this trend as residents see national news stories and equate them to their community. In recent years, this national to local phenomenon has been especially challenging for water management and police (Butts, Glenn).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Best Practices in Civic Engagement

The below best practices arose as themes from the interviews as ways departments seek to make civic engagement a positive experience for residents and a productive experience for moving policy forward.

1. Take time to plan civic engagement efforts: Plan civic engagement in advance, thinking through the type of project, scale, and feedback required as well as the engagement level, method of engagement, and impact for final decisions. Know your audience and the goal for the engagement effort. One size of engagement does not fit all situations, and departments should conduct research in advance to understand the culture of the community in question. Strategizing about the format, feedback sought, and plans to incorporate resident insights into final decisions will help customize the engagement to resident and project needs.
2. Market civic engagement efforts in the community: Allocate resources to communicate engagement opportunities. Use communication channels beyond neighborhood list serves and PACs to reach underrepresented populations. For certain projects, market segmentation of advertising may help reach a diversity of residents. Partnerships with local community organizations representing both issue groups and geographic areas can also help in spreading awareness about the civic engagement opportunity
3. Bring civic engagement out into the community: Flip the traditional public meeting by hosting events in neighborhood spaces and areas where residents are already present. In short, go to where people already are to meet them in their own space. Pair engagement efforts with activities residents are already interested in. For younger and more

technologically connected audiences, this approach may involve incorporating more text and internet-based outreach.

4. Provide multiple communication channels: Each engagement opportunity should provide multiple ways for residents to share feedback in recognition of different comfort levels and communication styles. For example, departments can pair opportunities for written feedback with public comments or group formats.
5. Make engagement creative and fun: Residents will be more interested in activities that they can enjoy. Keep content as interesting and engaging as possible. For example, Water Management relies on the Wayne Drop mascot as a branding and self-deprecating tool to make engagement fun. Even with serious engagement discussions, ice breakers can help lighten the event while framing the event around issues of interest or innovative ways of participation can spark residents' imagination and keep them engaged.
6. Manage expectations: Frame engagement discussions to focus on areas where resident input can change policy decisions. Clearly communicate how resident feedback will be used in making decisions and a rough timeline of next steps moving forward. Explain that not everyone's idea will end up in the final project and clarify what the city can and cannot do in terms of policy changes.
7. Follow up on civic engagement efforts: Share reports on what the city heard during the engagement session and provide updates as that information is used in decision making. Show how engagement is making a difference, potentially with a quick win soon after the event. Ensure transparency about the city's continued decisions on the project.
8. Build partnerships to increase resources and representation: Coordinate across departments to plan and implement civic engagement events. Partner with local

organizations and community groups to advertise the event and increase attendance. For example, the city's National Night Out involves partnerships between Parks and Rec, elected officials, and the Police department as well as with neighborhood associations and faith-based organizations.

9. Strengthen neighborhood networks: Informal networks provide the most effective way to share information and receive feedback. It's also often easier for the city to reach out and engage with groups rather than individuals. Therefore, the more neighborhoods are organized, the more civic engagement can occur. Durham already has a strong network of neighborhood groups and neighborhood list serves. However, this network does not represent all areas or populations within the city. Continued community development can help build new groups and strengthen existing associations to ensure equal representation.

Improving Community Conversations

For the Community Conversations specifically, the below recommendations highlight ways to improve the program. These insights came from feedback from community organizations as well as themes that arose from the interviews and participation in the event. The recommendations are organized using the four aspects of civic engagement success: representation, asking the right questions to get the required information, incorporating feedback, and using the right format to improve involvement. The importance of allocating time and resources for the planning of engagement efforts remains a main take-away underlying these recommendations. Civic engagement is not an automatic process. Cities must prepare for each engagement effort, customizing the event based on the goal and community context.

Ensuring Representation

1. Increase efforts to advertise and communicate about the event: Expanding communication efforts would inform more residents about the opportunity, which in turn

would increase participation and ideally representation at the Community Conversations. Although Durham has strong communities connected through neighborhood groups and list serves, not all areas of Durham have access to this form of organization or communication. The city's traditional communication outreach strategies may not reach these areas, usually where underrepresented populations more often live (Bosley). Neighborhood cohesion and power exists within these areas but does not take the formal organization structure that the city is used to dealing with. Therefore, Budget and Management Services should:

- Partner with community organizations to target marketing to segments of the public, particularly underrepresented populations who may not receive information from traditional city channels. For example, Durham Congregations in Action (DCIA) sends a news email to member congregations about what is happening in the community, while El Centro conducts outreach through social media, phone alerts, and in person at event tables and door-to-door (Bradford, Posada). In the past, El Centro has shared information from NIS and the county health department with their constituency. Departments can partner with these and similar organizations to share information with a group's member population, provided that the issue is of interest to the population and aligns with the mission of the community organization.
- Tailor the content of the message to the specific population. Overall, messages should remain as streamlined and simple as possible to convey the relevant information in the shortest time. Communication messages should also emphasize why the opportunity would be valuable to the individual resident to help convince them to participate. For example, Community Conversations advertising should emphasize

how the event gives residents the opportunity to influence city priorities and strategies. Each event communication should have a point of contact listed who would be available to answer any questions.

2. Increase the budget for access amenities, including full meals, childcare, and transportation vouchers: Make it as easy as possible for people to attend the event without having to deal with outside logistics. Remember to advertise these offerings as part of the event messaging so residents are aware of their availability.
3. Continue to consider transportation when choosing event locations: Locations near multiple bus lines or close to downtown are easier to access for residents without cars (Posada).
4. Track participants' addresses to measure representation: Budget and Management Services should add a column to the Community Conversation sign-in sheet requesting participants to provide either their local address or neighborhood in addition to their name and email address. Having information about participants' addresses can serve as a proxy for representation metrics. At the very least, this information will allow Budget and Management Services to see the geographic spread of which neighborhoods were represented. This analysis could also inform future years' outreach by indicating which neighborhoods of the city require additional or more targeted advertising.

Asking the Right Questions

5. Adapt questions for each year's events: Introduce questions focused on more specific aspects of what was already discussed or switch to a new topic. Avoid making residents repeat information year after year. Questions can be rotated every few year, but make

sure to mix them up in intervening years. Continue to use the resident survey to hone in on resident priorities or determine outstanding questions the city would like clarified.

Incorporating Feedback

6. Share collected information and feedback with relevant departments: Organize the collected comments by relevance to department and share the narrowed down feedback to department leaders, who can then evaluate and implement the ideas as applicable.
7. Update residents when city decisions or programs use the information shared during the Community Conversations: Share progress updates of how the city incorporates resident feedback into policies and programs. Coordinate with Public Affairs to highlight success stories of when Community Conversation comments influenced decisions.
8. Supplement the Community Conversations with follow up surveys or focus groups: Use the collected contact information to invite participating residents to follow up engagement opportunities. These follow up efforts can either help the city clarify themes or ideas mentioned in the original Community Conversations or involve residents in the planning and implementation of the resulting policies or programs.

Using the Right Format

9. Introduce resource constraints and trade off discussions to the event: As part of the introduction section of the Community Conversations, remind residents that the city operates under resource constraints. Program development and expansion either requires cuts in other areas or tax increases. During the Community Conversation, place more emphasis on the group prioritization, not only in terms of the best ideas but also in terms of which ideas residents would be willing to pay for. Explore the possibility of pairing the

Community Conversations with a city wide, online budget simulation to familiarize residents with the trade-off decisions required to balance the city budget.³

10. Continue to frame budget questions in terms of impact: Residents are not interested in the budget itself. Instead, they are interested in the impact and policy implications the budget has for the community. Continue to frame civic engagement around these broader themes (i.e. public safety or education) rather than around the details or the process of the budget to keep residents interested and increase participation.

Coordinating Civic Engagement

Many of the above Community Conversation recommendations can apply to Durham's civic engagement efforts more broadly. Other departments should learn from the Community Conversations and adapt the above recommendations and best practices as applicable to their own civic engagement programs. However, this learning requires intentional collaboration and planning at a city-wide, cross departmental level. The below recommendations suggest ways that the City of Durham can encourage this civic engagement collaboration and coordination:

1. Hire a central staff person to facilitate engagement coordination and communication across departments
2. Create engagement templates and timelines to help departments plan engagement efforts
3. Develop a central repository for departments to share information about their civic engagement efforts, i.e. when events are occurring, what information they collected, their planning process and tools, and any lessons learned. Plan in-person brownbag meetings to share the information further and to encourage networking and collaboration amongst departments on civic engagement project.

³ Open North, Delib, Balancing Act, and Bang the Table all provide budget simulation options for cities.

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