



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Memo to the Planning Commission

HEARING DATE: JULY 12, 2012

*Date:* July 12, 2012  
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*Subject:* **Public Outreach and Engagement Program,  
Endorsement of Principles**

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### OVERVIEW

In 2011, staff conducted a Public Outreach and Engagement Effectiveness survey to evaluate the department's outreach efforts. This work was made possible through financial support from the Friends of City Planning and technical support from Pepperdine University's Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership.

The results of the survey showed that, in general and notably among both staff and community stakeholders, there was a desire for more engagement, improved working relationships, more public education on the department's projects and programs, and an interest in exploring alternative methods to communicate this information. There was also a great interest in seeing more culturally-relevant engagement, and in ensuring that outreach and engagement efforts are varied, culturally-sensitive and accessible, in particular to under-represented and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) groups.

Based on these results, the department has created a Public Outreach and Engagement Program to better serve staff, stakeholders and the community at-large through a comprehensive, supported, and thorough outreach and engagement program. As an important first step in this work, the department has developed a set of Program Principles which will guide the department's outreach and engagement efforts. Staff seeks the Commission's endorsement of these principles.

Following is a discussion of the Public Outreach and Engagement Program's principles, goals, priorities, and resources.

### PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT (POE) PROGRAM GOALS

The POE Program is structured around achieving the following goals, which grew out of the department's analysis of its existing and desired outreach and engagement efforts:

- Achieve more effective and broader engagement of the City's residents and businesses;
- Develop more collaborative and positive working-relationships with the public;



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- Increase public knowledge and understanding of the Department's mission and work; and
- Ensure the Department is an adaptive organization that uses the latest methods for outreach and engagement when appropriate.

## PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

The statement of purpose is an overarching description of our beliefs in order to achieve effective public outreach and engagement. The principles are designed to foster quality outreach and engagement with the department's stakeholders, and to achieve the above-described goals.

### Statement of Purpose

The San Francisco Planning Department interacts with members of the public to inform, consult, or seek input on plans and projects and to involve them in an ongoing dialogue about the future of the city. We believe that an engaged and informed community is essential to successful planning, sustained partnerships, and more effective government.

As professionals, we guide the process to achieve what is best for the city and the people that live, work, and play in it. In order to cultivate sustained relationships, we are committed to making information and the public process understandable and inclusive.

Effective public engagement activities are timely, thoughtfully planned and participants are aware of their role throughout the process. We strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where participants are comfortable sharing their opinions and know how their input is used.

The following principles will guide Planning Department staff to achieve consistent and effective public participation. These principles will also help the public understand what they can expect from the Department.

### Principles:

1. Inclusive: We identify and involve all affected community members, including under-represented individuals and groups.
2. Transparent: We conduct a clear, honest and open public process. Members of the public are aware of their level of involvement in decisions that affect them.
3. Understandable: We communicate clearly and concisely to the general public. We use plain language while balancing the need to be precise with technical and complex information.
4. Respectful: We foster authentic, civil dialogue and appreciate diverse views.



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5. Meaningful: We engage the public in a way that is genuine, appropriate, practical and well-planned to achieve the goal.
6. Accountable: We communicate the results of the process to those involved and fulfill our commitments.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Ultimately, the POE Program will guide all outreach and engagement conducted by the department. In order to achieve this, staff has identified the following as priorities:

- Establish the POE program as a permanent function of the department (*complete*)
- Develop a Staff Training Program focused on outreach and engagement skills such as facilitation and cross-cultural communication
- Create a resource library ('toolkit') for staff, providing aides to help perform outreach and/or engagement activities
- Develop a strategy to improve the quality and accessibility of information disseminated to the public
- Develop a Communications Program that includes media relations, employee communication, social media, and branding.
- Investigate alternative ways to conduct outreach, with the goal of reaching under-represented groups
- Develop a 'Planning 101' educational program for stakeholders and the community at-large in order to improve understanding of the department's role and processes
- Develop ongoing tools for monitoring and evaluating the POE Program's effectiveness

## DEPARTMENT COMMITMENT

The POE Program staff is comprised of representatives from each division of the department, recognizing that all divisions regularly participate in outreach and engagement efforts. The following staff are currently members of the Public Outreach and Engagement Team:



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## **Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET)**

Environmental Planning:	Andrea Contreras
Citywide Planning:	Claudia Flores and Steve Wertheim
Planning Information Center:	Jonas Ionin
Zoning and Compliance:	Kimberley Durandet
Legislative Affairs:	Kimia Haddadan
Director's Office:	Joanna Linsangan (Program Manager)

The POE Program is funded through a combination of the department's annual budget and existing and proposed grants. The annual budget funds the Program's day-to-day resource needs, such as meeting supplies. The Program will make use of an existing grant from the Friends of City Planning to pilot the use of digital media in the department's outreach and engagement related to a project in the near future, as well as existing technical support from the Davenport Institute to provide initial outreach and engagement training to relevant staff. The department will seek additional grant funding this fiscal year to support other POE initiatives, such as more intensive training and the use of new technologies to foster broader public engagement in Planning projects.

## **SUMMARY**

The department is excited to initiate the Public Outreach and Engagement Program and anticipates great success in this effort. Staff seeks the Commission's endorsement of the proposed Program Principles outlined above, which will guide the department's POE activities.