

Proposed definition of Community Engagement

*This is the **proposed** definition using suggestions submitted by task force members via email as a genesis of this definition.*

Community engagement is the participation of members of a community assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating solutions to problems that affect them. As such, community engagement involves interpersonal trust, communication, and collaboration. Such engagement, or participation, should focus on, and result from, the needs, expectations, and desires of a community's members. Community is not solely defined by geographic boundaries and may include residents, users, community organizations and institutions, neighborhood associations, businesses and workers, cultural communities, advocacy groups, students and youth.

Offered by Matt Perry

Community engagement is the participation of members of a community in assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating solutions to problems that affect them. As such, community engagement involves interpersonal trust, communication, and collaboration. Such engagement, or participation, should focus on, and result from, the needs, expectations, and desires of a community's members.

Offered by Mohamed Ali

Loosely defined, community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.

Offered by Joyce Wisdom

- I would suggest the City declare its mission to be to enrich the lives of local citizens by integrating their vision into City planning, services, design and infrastructure.
- The description for the proposed Department for Public Engagement should include fostering opportunities for engagement and celebration, stimulating participation, encouraging cooperation and coordination, seeking financial support, acting as a advocate for public engagement, advising the city council with respect to public engagement related matters and striving for high standards of public engagement.
- When we return to Charge #1, I suggest wording used by Mpls Arts Commission: "Everyone within the city is invited to participate. Community is not solely defined by geographic boundaries and may include residents, users, community organizations and institutions, neighborhood associations, businesses and workers, cultural communities, advocacy groups, students and youth." The Commission goes on to say "This definition shall be included in all notices of community meetings, community surveys and requests for proposals."
- Additional wording from Mpls Arts Commission: "balance across wards and neighborhoods, aware of and receptive to initiatives which come from the community, and proactive in seeking proposals from the community."

Direct from City documents / websites (offered by Barb Lickness)

Answers to frequently asked questions on the City's website (not all definition's but offer content that could be considered for a definition [comment from Jennifer (Amundson) Lastoka]

Definition #1:

What is Community Engagement?

The City of Minneapolis defines the primary purpose of community engagement as the empowerment of people to influence City government decisions that shape their city and their lives. Of course, community building, outreach and education activities are also important to the City.

Why is it important to engage the community?

Community engagement refers to the many ways in which the City connects with its residents and communities in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and services. It is the process of working collaboratively with the community to address issues affecting their lives.

Furthermore, Engagement acknowledges the right of residents to have a say and to get involved in the business of government. The City recognizes that the community is a valuable source of expertise to influence government decisions that improve the quality and delivery of public services.

What are the benefits of Community Engagement?

The City of Minneapolis is committed to engaging our community. We recognize that an engaged community offers:

- Greater diversity of views expressed
- Mutual learning among participants
- Previously unknown special needs may be accommodated
- Improved relationship with community
- Mutual respect among stakeholders

Definition #2:

There are many possible definitions of the term "community engagement". John Persico and Peg Peck-Cahpman, the consultants who worked with the City Communication Department in 2005 to develop the Community Engagement Process Model, observed that there is considerable confusion about what qualifies as community engagement and what does not. They concluded that the activities identified by both City staff and community stakeholders naturally fall into two categories:

- 1) engaging the community regarding a City decision, and
- 2) being involved in the community to deliver programs or services, volunteer, educate or build relationships.

Based on this distinction the consultants worked with the Communication Department to arrive at the following definition, which we shall use for the purpose of this report.

Community engagement always involves an impending city government decision.

Of course, while **engaging** members of the community in a decision-making process, the City may also **be involved** in activities that educate and build positive relationships, but the primary purpose of community engagement - as defined above - is **to empower people to influence decisions that shape their city and their lives**.