FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Multi-Agency
Transparency: Public Notice and Engagement

MAY 2023

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DENVER AUDITOR

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Cover photo by Denver Auditor’s Office staff.
AUDITOR'S LETTER

May 4, 2023

In keeping with generally accepted government auditing standards and Auditor’s Office policy, as authorized by city ordinance, we have a responsibility to monitor and follow up on audit recommendations to ensure city agencies address audit findings through appropriate corrective action and to aid us in planning future audits.

After following up on the “Transparency: Public Notice and Engagement” audit report issued in November 2021, we determined the Department of Community Planning and Development fully implemented all four recommendations we made to it in the original audit — while the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships fully implemented four recommendations, partially implemented three, and did not implement one other. The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure partially implemented one recommendation and did not implement two others. Finally, the Mayor’s Office and the city’s Technology Services agency partially implemented both recommendations we had made to them.

During the original audit, we found inconsistent compliance with public notice requirements, which limited the public’s awareness of some city activities. We also found that standards, expectations, and practices for public notice and engagement varied across the city.

Despite these city agencies’ efforts, we determined some risks associated with our initial findings have not been fully addressed. As a result, we may revisit these risk areas in future audits to ensure the city takes appropriate action.

We appreciate the leaders and team members in the Department of Community Planning and Development, the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure, the Mayor’s Office, and Technology Services who shared their time and knowledge with us throughout the audit and the follow-up process. Please contact me at 720-913-5000 with any questions.

Denver Auditor’s Office

Timothy M. O’Brien, CPA
Auditor
**Transparency:** Public Notice and Engagement

**Objective**
To evaluate the city's transparency practices by determining whether selected case studies in the Department of Community Planning and Development, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure, and the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships have adequate processes to ensure public notices comply with requirements and that these agencies sufficiently inform and engage Denver residents.

**Background**
A transparent government seeks to ensure community members affected by government decisions can both influence and actively participate in making those decisions. Efforts may include posting legally required public notices, holding town hall meetings, creating community advisory boards, and soliciting public comment.

Denver city agencies are individually responsible for public notice and engagement.

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Gaps in structure, guidance, and oversight limited the public's ability to access information and participate in decision-making on city projects

We identified several areas for improvement associated with the three case studies we reviewed.

- Inconsistent compliance with public notice requirements limited the public's awareness of some city activities.
  
  While we found Community Planning and Development fully complied with all public notice requirements in its case study, two projects in the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure and meetings of the 10 commissions under the purview of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships did not. The examples of noncompliance in these two agencies affected residents' awareness of projects in their communities and limited their opportunities to participate in public meetings.

- Public notice requirements were limited when it came to how the notices were to be distributed, who should receive them, and when they should be issued. City agencies could have used additional tools — as well as made better use of the city's website — to improve residents' awareness and provide access to public meetings, hearings, and other ways for residents to provide input on city projects and decisions.

- Standards, expectations, and practices for public engagement varied across the city. More consistent guidance could have helped agencies better inform and engage residents about decisions that affected their lives.

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**WHY THIS MATTERS**

Engaging community members in the government's decision-making process increases public trust and results in more effective solutions to community issues.

By providing more structure and guidance around public notices and public engagement, the city could ultimately provide higher-quality services to residents and business owners.

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[FULLY IMPLEMENTED] 8

[PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED] 6

[NOT IMPLEMENTED] 3
May 4, 2023

Action Since Audit Report
Transparency: Public Notice and Engagement

17 recommendations proposed in November 2021

The Department of Community Planning and Development, the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure, and the Mayor’s Office with support from the city’s Technology Services agency implemented 14 of our 17 recommendations to varying degrees. Only eight were fully implemented.

Because of Community Planning and Development’s efforts, staff can provide more consistent and valuable engagement with the public, and staff are better able to gather public input and tell residents how that input will be used. Meanwhile, Human Rights and Community Partnerships now has better guidance to comply with open meeting requirements and post meeting agendas and notices for the 10 mayoral advisory commissions under its purview. It also created guidance to better support staff liaisons and commissioners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>FULLY IMPLEMENTED</th>
<th>PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Community Planning and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights and Community Partnerships</td>
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<td>Department of Transportation &amp; Infrastructure</td>
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<td>Mayor’s Office, with Technology Services</td>
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REMAINING RISKS

The recommendations not fully implemented by the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure, and the Mayor’s Office present several lingering risks. Among them:

- Members of the 10 mayoral advisory commissions might still not be receiving regular updates from the Mayor’s Office about how their input was used in the city’s decision-making, which could discourage future engagement.
- The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure’s Office of Community and Business Engagement still lacks clear expectations for the support it should provide to bikes project teams, which could impact the consistency and quality of public engagement for bike lane installation projects.
- Those responsible for planning Transportation & Infrastructure’s engagement efforts for bike lane installation projects still do not have clear policies and procedures that outline their responsibilities and how public input should be handled. This could limit how the department considers the interests and concerns of the public.
FINDING | Gaps in structure, guidance, and oversight limit the public’s ability to access information and participate in decision-making on city projects

FULLY IMPLEMENTED

Recommendation 1.2  REVIEW AND REVISE PROCESS TO POST MEETING NOTICES – The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should review and revise the process by which meeting notices for its commissions are posted to ensure it leverages technology and available staff to help mitigate volunteer- and pandemic-related budget and staffing limitations.

AGENCY ACTION

Agency’s original target date for completion: April 1, 2022

Near the end of our original audit in fall 2021, the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships was working with the city’s Technology Services agency to develop and implement a new platform to streamline the process for publicly posting commission agendas and minutes. Since then, each of the 10 mayoral advisory commissions now has a Microsoft Teams channel with a link that allows its staff liaison to automatically upload agendas and meeting minutes to each commission’s Google Drive, where public meeting notices are stored and accessible to the public.

In addition, the agency changed the user access settings for each commission’s Google Drive so that only liaisons and select agency staff can edit the documents stored on these drives. Commissioners or outside entities are not able to make changes to information on the Google Drives.

Because the agency restricted editing access, this protects the information and minimizes the number of individuals who can access these folders and change commission records. This solution also addresses a concern raised in the original audit report about commission volunteers’ limited capacity to post notices given their own personal time constraints and issues with volunteer turnover and recruitment.

Meanwhile, the agency determined that commission liaisons should be the ones responsible for publicly posting commission agendas and minutes.

Because the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships streamlined how it posts notices and because it determined who is responsible for posting this required information, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.
Recommendation 1.3

ESTABLISH, DOCUMENT, AND COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS – After implementing Recommendation 1.2, the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships and its commissions should establish, document, and communicate clear expectations for all staff and volunteers responsible for posting meeting notices — including commissioners, staff liaisons, or other agency support staff who prepare meeting agendas and publicly post the notices.

AGENCY ACTION

Agency’s original target date for completion: April 1, 2022

Leaders of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships documented the roles and responsibilities of staff liaisons who work with the mayoral advisory commissions. Among the liaisons’ documented responsibilities are posting commission meeting agendas online 48 hours before scheduled meeting times and posting commission meeting minutes in a timely manner after meetings.

It should be noted, however, that the document outlining liaison roles and expectations was created after we had started our follow-up work — eight months after the recommendation’s original implementation date of April 1, 2022.

Agency leaders told us they communicated these roles and expectations to staff by email and verbally when they met with commissioners for orientation training.

When we asked agency leaders whether they had any documentation describing the process liaisons should use to post agendas and meeting minutes to the commissions’ Google Drives, they initially told us there was no standard document for this process. But during our follow-up, the agency created a document outlining the specific steps that liaisons should take to upload commission agendas and minutes to the commissions’ Google Drive folders where public meeting notices are stored. An agency manager said they sent these instructions to all liaisons.

Because agency leaders established clear expectations for who is responsible for posting notices and ultimately did develop explicit instructions on how to perform this task, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

Recommendation 1.8

CREATE FORMAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR ENGAGEMENT – The Department of Community Planning and Development’s Planning Services Division should create formal policies and procedures for department-led text amendment projects to guide staff in conducting public engagement and outreach.
This guidance should identify the circumstances under which a formal engagement plan should be developed and specify that these plans must document — at a minimum — goals for the engagement effort, the process to be used in communicating with the public about input the department receives, and the process for self-evaluating the department’s engagement effort.

**AGENCY ACTION**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: March 31, 2022**

The Department of Community Planning and Development created formal policies and procedures to guide staff in conducting public engagement and outreach for department-led text amendment projects. Staff can now refer to the “Community Engagement Guide for Text Amendment Projects” during their planning process to determine which public engagement strategies to use.

The guide establishes four types of text amendment projects and outlines the minimum community engagement requirements for each. The types of text amendments range from small error corrections to major or substantive changes to the Denver Zoning Code. The guide says no community outreach is required for Type 1 text amendments because they involve correcting minor errors that do not impact the substance or intent of the code. Type 2, 3, and 4 text amendments — which range from clarifying policy to making minor or major policy changes — have specific community engagement requirements for public engagement and outreach.

In keeping with our recommendation, the department’s guide also identifies the circumstances when a formal community engagement and outreach plan should be developed. Specifically, Type 4 text amendments involving major policy or substantive changes to the Denver Zoning Code require staff to develop a project-specific engagement and outreach plan. The guide also requires an engagement and outreach plan to include, at a minimum:

- The goals for the engagement effort.
- When and how community feedback will be made available to the public.
- The process for self-evaluating the department’s engagement effort.

Because the department created procedures that guide staff in conducting public engagement and outreach and because these describe when a formal engagement plan should be developed, including the specific elements of the plan as outlined in our recommendation, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

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1 The department administers the Denver Zoning Code, which regulates land use and design standards for buildings and sites and outlines development review processes. The zoning code comprises separate requirements from city ordinance.
Recommendation 1.9  
**DEVELOP PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO PUBLIC INPUT** – The Department of Community Planning and Development’s Planning Services Division should establish a process for responding to the public directly about input provided to the department — such as auto-reply emails to let individuals know their input was received and how it will be considered in the process, including contact information for the department staff leading a project.

**AGENCY ACTION**  
*Agency’s original target date for completion: March 31, 2022*

Officials in the Department of Community Planning and Development said public comment is now directed to the department’s new Open Forms online platform, which allows residents to submit questions and comments. It also generates an auto-reply email that notifies residents that their input was received.

Meanwhile, the department developed procedures for staff that describe how to set up both the form and the auto-reply function. According to the procedures, after a resident submits their comment, the auto-reply email should generate a “thank you” message that includes additional details on how their input will be considered in the project, as well as contact information for the department staff leading the project.

We confirmed this process by reviewing an example of a form submitted by a department official. Therefore, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

Recommendation 1.10  
**DEVELOP ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION TOOL** – The Department of Community Planning and Development’s Planning Services Division should develop an evaluation tool to assess the public’s feedback on the division’s engagement activities, such as the format of public meetings, the time allotted for questions and answers, and the ways the department collects public input. The division should implement this tool by providing it to community members who participate in an engagement activity to assess whether these activities are meeting the public’s needs and expectations.

**AGENCY ACTION**  
*Agency’s original target date for completion: March 31, 2022*

The Department of Community Planning and Development created several evaluation tools to assess the public’s feedback on engagement activities. Department staff provided a memo on public engagement evaluation, which discusses the department’s approach to assessing the public’s feedback and describes tools for evaluating engagement.
The memo says two tools can be used on different types of department projects and events to get feedback from the public. One of these tools — an external evaluation survey — allows the public to evaluate the engagement events they attend. The second tool is external interviews that enable the department to gain more understanding of the questions being asked in the survey.

The public engagement evaluation memo lists preestablished questions for both the survey and the interview while also giving department staff the ability to add two to three additional questions, if needed. The questions directly ask for the public's input on the format of public meetings and the ways the department collects public input.

Meanwhile, an internal evaluation tool allows the department to collect feedback from city staff on a given project or event.

Department staff provided examples of how they implemented the external evaluation survey and how they evaluated the results for two engagement activities that were held for a major text amendment project. At the time of our follow-up, staff could not provide an example of how they used an external interview because they had not yet held formal, structured one-on-one interviews for the project.

We reviewed the public's feedback on the two engagement activities and determined the external survey tool generated some useful feedback to the questions about the format of public meetings and how the department collects public input. The department's summary evaluation of both engagement activities led to recommendations for project leaders to include more discussion time and casual conversation with participants when appropriate.

Because the department developed and implemented a new evaluation tool, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

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**Recommendation 1.11**

**ESTABLISH SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS** – The Department of Community Planning and Development's Planning Services Division should establish a process to measure the success of engagement efforts for department-led text amendment projects through a lessons-learned review, and it should document the results of this self-evaluation.

**AGENCY ACTION**

*Agency's original target date for completion: March 31, 2022*

The Department of Community Planning and Development uses an “after-action review” document that tracks the results of evaluations for major projects, including text amendment projects. This document is intended to guide discussions on lessons learned, including successes related to public
engagement and areas where the public provided feedback to improve the engagement process.

We reviewed an example of an after-action review that staff completed for a recent text amendment project. We found it included staff observations on successful engagement efforts and information about public input on the department’s engagement activities.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

Recommendation 1.14
IDENTIFY AREAS TO STANDARDIZE – The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should review how it supports its 10 commissions to identify areas where standardizing job expectations, templates, tools, and processes may help the commissions comply with city requirements and operate more effectively. Specifically, the agency should review the support it provides through staff liaisons and it should review the commissions’ practices related to establishing goals and objectives, among other practices as necessary.

AGENCY ACTION
Agency’s original target date for completion: April 1, 2022

Leaders of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships standardized and documented job expectations for their staff liaisons that include specific responsibilities for supporting assigned commissions.

Additionally, leaders created templates for the 10 mayoral advisory commissions to use when developing and reporting annual goals to the agency. This addresses the issue we found during the original audit, where commissions were inconsistently establishing their required goals and objectives and they also varied in how they had reported on these goals and objectives to agency leaders.

These new goal-setting and reporting templates now standardize how commissioners report their goals for the year and help them plan and strategize for the future. The templates also require the use of goals that are strategic, measurable, ambitious, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable.

Agency leaders provided us with an example of the annual goals submitted by one commission. At the time of our follow-up, their efforts to compile all commissions’ goals into one consolidated report remained in progress.

Because the agency standardized liaison job expectations and developed standard commission goal-setting and reporting templates, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation 1.15</th>
<th><strong>WORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP STANDARDIZED PROCESSES</strong> – After implementing Recommendation 1.14, the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should work with relevant stakeholders — like commissioners, staff liaisons, and other agency and city staff — to develop standardized expectations, processes, templates, tools, and technology resources to streamline how its 10 commissions and support staff share information and manage the commissions’ documentation.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AGENCY ACTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agency’s original target date for completion: April 1, 2022</strong></td>
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<td>The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships documented its expectations for staff liaisons, which includes a responsibility to help commissions connect with other city employees and provide pertinent information from the city or outside organizations to commissions as needed.</td>
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<td>Liaisons are also responsible for managing the logistics of commission meetings, as well as managing commission records — including budgets, member rosters, annual goals and reports, and public meeting notices.</td>
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<td>Human Rights and Community Partnerships also began using an instant messaging platform, Slack, to encourage commissions to talk to one another for better collaboration and information sharing. In addition, the agency launched a monthly newsletter that demonstrates agency leaders’ effort to keep commissions more informed of updates, news, and events related to commissioners’ work. This newsletter includes highlights from the agency's teams, announcements of new hires, and recent news articles about the agency’s work.</td>
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<td>Because the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships has streamlined communications across commissions and standardized how commission records are managed, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.</td>
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<td>PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED</td>
<td><strong>Recommendation 1.1</strong> <strong>DEVELOP, DOCUMENT, AND IMPLEMENT MONITORING PROCESS</strong> – The Department of Transportation &amp; Infrastructure’s executive director should work with the director of the Street Maintenance Operations Division to develop, document, and implement a process for street maintenance staff to monitor and track contracted work to ensure all affected businesses and residents receive public notice for paving activities as required.</td>
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Agency’s original target date for completion: May 1, 2022

The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure developed a new public notice procedure that adds to the requirements paving contractors and department project managers must follow to notify the public about paving activities and to monitor contractors’ completion of these notification activities. Specifically, Transportation & Infrastructure project managers are responsible for reviewing photo evidence and address logs on a monthly basis. Project managers must also sign an annual acknowledgment that they are aware of the procedure and its requirements.

The new procedure says contractors should provide the city with photo evidence of notified addresses once their contract ends, along with other information such as complaint logs. The procedure also requires the city’s project manager to pick one block each month, at random, and review photo evidence that public notices were distributed.

Transportation & Infrastructure staff could not show us documented examples of paving contractors providing this evidence of public notice, because all current paving contracts were still active as of February 2023. The new procedure was finalized after paving work in 2022 finished, so this monthly review of photo evidence did not begin in 2022. Staff said these monthly reviews will begin May 1 for active and future paving contracts.

While the department developed a new procedure with additional requirements aimed at ensuring affected residents and businesses are informed about paving activities, staff could not provide us with evidence to show the new procedure is being followed. Therefore, we consider this recommendation only partially implemented.

Recommendation 1.4

INCLUDE EXPECTATIONS IN PERFORMANCE GOALS AND TRAINING – After implementing Recommendation 1.3, the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should include its internally established expectations in its employee performance evaluations for staff liaisons and agency support staff as well as in its training program for commissioners, liaisons, and other staff.

Agency’s original target date for completion: April 1, 2022

Leaders of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships provided us with evidence of a new performance goal for staff liaisons that reflects general responsibilities related to posting commission agendas and meeting minutes. However, this performance goal stipulates only that liaisons should “ensure all meeting agendas and minutes are posted within
required commission timelines.” The goal does not identify who is ultimately responsible for posting this information: commissioners, liaisons, or other agency support staff.

In contrast, the document outlining liaisons’ roles and expectations — which we discussed regarding the implementation of Recommendation 1.3 — explicitly assigns the job of posting the commissions’ public meeting notices to the staff liaisons. Agency leaders also provided us with a document outlining the steps liaisons should take to post public meeting notices to the commissions’ Google Drives. It is unclear why the liaison roles and expectations document is clear about the liaisons’ responsibility while the performance goal is vague in saying only that liaisons should “ensure” this information is posted.

We were told that during commissioner orientation, agency leaders discuss the expectation that liaisons post public notices. We were also told the agency reviews its expectations for commissioners at the beginning of each year during orientation. Agency leaders said they also plan to remind commissioners of these expectations throughout the year.

However, in our review of both the slide presentations used in commissioner orientation and the commissioner handbook, we found no mention of expectations for commissioners’ or liaisons’ specific roles and duties. Additionally, the presentations used in commissioner trainings do not identify who is responsible for posting commission agendas and meeting minutes nor do they discuss how these records should be posted.

We were also not given evidence to confirm that the expectations for posting public meeting notices are communicated verbally in orientations and training.

While the agency established a performance goal that gives staff liaisons responsibility for ensuring commission agendas and meeting minutes are posted, we did not see clear evidence verifying this information is communicated to commissioners. Therefore, we consider this recommendation only partially implemented.

Recommendation 1.5

**DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROCEDURES FOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW** – The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should develop and implement procedures for management to review key activities required of commissioners, staff liaisons, and other agency support staff — including but not limited to those associated with complying with public meeting requirements and developing relevant governing documents.

**AGENCY ACTION**

Agency’s original target date for completion: April 1, 2022
Leaders of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships did not provide us with any documented procedures describing how they will review key commissioner and liaison activities. However, the agency has taken several steps that could improve management oversight.

First, the agency created a new deputy director position to oversee the 10 mayoral advisory commissions and their processes by ensuring that public meeting requirements are met, that goals are submitted on time and are on track for completion, and that governing documents are established and put in place, among other responsibilities.

The new deputy director then developed a feedback report to record common challenges commissioners face in fulfilling their duties. The report also tracks recommended action items to address these issues and the status of completing those actions. Meanwhile, agency leaders said they have regularly scheduled meetings with liaisons, commission members, and commission chairs where they review expectations and gain feedback from commissioners and staff.

The feedback report creates a formal, documented process for agency leaders to review and address commissioners’ concerns in how they perform key functions. However, the agency also continues to rely on informal and undocumented methods of review such as through monthly and quarterly meetings, which was the agency’s practice for monitoring key activities during our original audit.

To review current levels of compliance with posting commission agendas and meeting minutes, we reviewed postings for meetings held in 2022 for five of the 10 commissions. None of the five commissions’ postings fully complied with open meeting requirements. Two commissions had no posted agendas or meeting minutes for all of 2022.

Agency leaders said staff turnover and technical glitches may have been to blame and that they were looking into this further.

Human Rights and Community Partnerships established a new leadership-level position with commission-related responsibilities, and it developed some formal, documented ways to review and address key activities required of commissions through a new feedback report. However, much of the management review process is still informal and undocumented. It is unclear whether these improvements are enough to address ongoing compliance issues with timely and complete public notice of commissions’ open meetings.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation only partially implemented.
Recommendation 1.6

**IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF NOTICE AND ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION** – The Mayor’s Office should work with the city’s Technology Services agency to improve the accessibility of public notice and engagement information on the city’s website to improve residents’ access. At a minimum, this should include determining the feasibility of the following methods — among any others the Mayor’s Office and Technology Services choose to consider — and developing and documenting an implementation plan:

- Adding searchable, interactive neighborhood maps with agency project information.
- Developing a centralized repository for all public meeting notices and engagement opportunities for city agencies under the purview of the Mayor’s Office.
- Enhancing connections between the city’s events calendars and agencies’ events calendars for project engagement opportunities, meetings, and staff contacts.

**AGENCY ACTION**

*Agency’s original target date for completion: April 30, 2022*

Technology Services staff worked with an outside vendor from June 2022 through December 2022 to determine whether a comprehensive, searchable, and interactive citywide map was a viable solution to provide notice of agencies’ project information.

While the Technology Services agency noted that initial phases of this effort seemed promising, staff determined an interactive map was not feasible due to existing technology and variances in how citywide agencies define projects and store data. Should circumstances change, the city’s vendor outlined the work that would need to occur for a comprehensive, searchable, and interactive map to be feasible.

Regarding the other methods posed by the recommendation, Technology Services has taken steps to better centralize information on city events, public meeting notices, and engagement opportunities. For example, a “What’s Near Me” function is available at the bottom of the city’s homepage that allows the user to enter an address to see what events, meetings, parks, and venues are nearby. This map is similar to the searchable map created by the city of Lakewood, Colorado, that we referenced as a leading practice during the original audit.

Additionally, public meeting information is now available via the “Activities, Programs, and Events” section of the city’s community webpage using either the “Upcoming Events” link or the “Public Meetings” link. During follow-up, we had noticed Human Rights and Community Partnerships’ commission meetings were missing from the public meeting information under the “Public Meetings” link. This issue was fixed after we brought it to the attention of Technology Services leadership.
Meanwhile, a new community-focused page was added to the city’s employee intranet that includes standard guidance for city staff on creating and displaying meeting and event information on the city’s website. A Technology Services official said all city agencies’ web authors were trained on how to add public engagement opportunities to citywide calendars and they were also advised this is a best practice.

While the Mayor’s Office and Technology Services made clear improvements in the availability of public notice and engagement opportunities, there remains no oversight to ensure all agencies are consistently adding this information to the city’s website. As such, residents may still miss out on engagement opportunities related to city projects happening near them.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation only partially implemented.

**Recommendation 1.7**

CREATE A CITYWIDE FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE FOR ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH – The Mayor’s Office and Denver Marketing Services, a division of the city’s Technology Services agency, should develop centralized guidance — such as a citywide framework for engagement — and offer formal networking opportunities, such as communities of practice, for the city staff responsible for public engagement.

These centralized efforts should include standardized training, a statement of the city’s values and expectations for engagement, and a description of guidance resources available for all public engagement staff. The establishment of communities of practice could include designating an individual or group that would serve as engagement experts and connect city staff with guidance resources.

**AGENCY ACTION**

Agency’s original target date for completion: April 30, 2022

A Technology Services official created a draft citywide framework for engagement. The guidance contains best practices and guidelines for standardized citywide community engagement through various channels including the city’s website, social media accounts, and registered neighborhood organizations. The draft framework also includes minimum expectations for engagement and values, standardized training, and links to guidance resources.

But, as of Feb. 24, 2023, this framework remained in draft form and was not finalized or implemented through the city’s approval process.

Communities of practice have also not been created. A citywide marketing and communications group — with representatives from all city agencies and elected offices — discusses transparency-related topics at least monthly. However, these meetings do not represent a significant change
because they were already occurring during the original audit.

This group works to consolidate marketing efforts across the city and use consistent messaging to residents and community members. But its focus is different from what we had recommended: having a group of city staff dedicated to engagement and outreach meet regularly to discuss strategies, lessons learned, and best practices. For example, as we discussed in the original audit report, the city of Boulder, Colorado's engagement coordination committee develops standard resources and training for citywide staff specifically regarding public engagement.

While centralized guidance was created, the citywide framework for engagement remains in draft form and has not yet been implemented and no dedicated communities of practice have been established since the original audit. Therefore, we consider this recommendation only partially implemented.

**Recommendation 1.16**

**DEVELOP MANAGEMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES** – The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should develop and implement review procedures to assess key activities required of its staff liaisons and its 10 commissions, including but not limited to setting and reporting goals and objectives on an annual basis.

**AGENCY ACTION**

*Agency's original target date for completion: July 1, 2022*

The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships took steps to improve the annual goal-setting process for the 10 mayoral advisory commissions, but managers did not provide any documented procedures that describe how they will review key activities related to this annual process of setting goals and objectives and reporting them to the agency.

As discussed regarding the implementation of Recommendation 1.14, Human Rights and Community Partnerships leaders created goal-setting templates for commissioners so they can create and document goals with specific action steps and target dates to achieve those goals. Leaders also created an annual report template for commissioners to record their accomplishments at the end of the year as well as their goals for the future and report that information to the agency.

When we finished our follow-up work, agency staff were compiling the commissions’ completed goal-setting templates for 2023 into one report. Agency leaders expected this to be finished by mid-April 2023.

We reviewed two examples of the completed goal-setting documents for 2023. The use of these templates provides managers with a way to monitor the commissions’ annual goal-setting process, which is an improvement
compared to the undocumented process the commissions used to report their goals to agency leadership at the time of our original audit.

Agency leaders also provided us with emails they sent to commission chairs and staff liaisons regarding updates to the annual goal-setting process. This included new time frames for goal-setting and expectations for using the new goal templates. Officials said they would be checking in with the commissions each quarter to discuss the progress of their goals, and this was also communicated to commission members.

However, when we reviewed commission meeting minutes posted from January 2023 through March 2023, we found evidence of agency leaders reviewing expectations for goal-setting and reporting with only some commissions.

Because Human Rights and Community Partnerships has not developed management review procedures and because we found only limited evidence of agency leaders communicating their expectations to commissions, we consider this recommendation only partially implemented.

**Recommendation 1.12**

**ASSESS EXPECTATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT** – The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure should assess the expectations for the Office of Community and Business Engagement, its staff resources, and the level and timing of support the office gives to bikes project teams. The results of this assessment should be documented.

**Agency's original target date for completion: Feb. 1, 2022**

Despite multiple requests, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure provided no evidence it had assessed expectations for the Office of Community and Business Engagement’s staff and the support provided to bikes project teams. Shortly before we published this report, a department director provided a business plan for the Office of Community and Business Engagement. Although this plan referenced the function of the office and how its performance will be measured, it did not include the elements included in our recommendation.

Because the Office of Community and Business Engagement still does not have clear expectations for the support it should provide, this risks a lack of consistency and a lack of quality in the department’s public engagement for
Recommendation 1.13

DEVELOP, DOCUMENT, AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES – Based on the results of the assessment called for in Recommendation 1.12, the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure should develop, document, and implement policies and procedures for planning engagement efforts that include — at a minimum — clearly identified responsibilities of each collaborative partner (e.g., staff in the Office of Community and Business Engagement, public information consultants, and community designers) and the bikes project team to increase the consistency of public engagement and ensure effective collaboration on bike lane installation projects. The developed policies and procedures should also include a formal process for handling public input.

AGENCY ACTION

Agency's original target date for completion: March 1, 2022

The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure provided us with both a community engagement guide and a guideline for community meetings, which provide general information and guidance to department staff about community outreach and engagement. However, with the exception of a few minor updates, the community engagement guide is identical to the guide provided to us during the original audit.

We carefully reviewed the community engagement guide and the guideline for community meetings and found they still lack the elements discussed in our recommendation. For example, they do not clearly describe expectations for each collaborative partner and the bikes project teams to ensure public engagement is consistent. These documents also do not describe how public input is handled, as directed in the recommendation.

Shortly before we published this report, a department director sent us a status update that discussed public involvement consultants and efforts to connect their efforts with the Office of Community and Business Engagement. Although this step toward greater coordination is positive, it does not address the elements from our recommendation.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation not implemented.
Recommendation 1.17

WORK WITH THE MAYOR’S OFFICE TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS –

The agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships should work with the Mayor’s Office and other city agencies to define expectations for and a process by which the Mayor’s Office and the agencies under its purview regularly report to the 10 commissions regarding how the commissioners’ input was considered and used in the city’s decision-making and policy.

AGENCY ACTION

Agency’s original target date for completion: Feb. 2, 2022

Leaders of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships said they met with representatives from the Mayor’s Office to discuss how commissions should provide recommendations to the mayor and be given feedback. They also said a representative from the Mayor’s Office comes to advisory board meetings each month and provides city updates — and that the mayor attends commission events and meetings each year, including an annual feedback session with the commissions.

Leaders said they have a goal for the mayor to meet with the commissions at least once a year. They also told us there has always been a process for commissions to make two policy recommendations to the mayor each year.

However, officials provided us with no documentation of these processes, so we could not confirm whether they are done and how. Some of these processes already existed before our original audit in 2021, such as commissions making two policy recommendations to the mayor each year and the mayor’s goal of meeting with commissions at least once a year.

Additionally, the mayor’s goal to meet with commissions at least once a year is not a mandate nor is it documented in any commission bylaws. Our review of meeting minutes for the Human Rights and Community Partnerships advisory board also found that none of the Mayor’s Office’s updates directly addressed how commissioners’ work was incorporated into city decision-making or policy.

According to the commission feedback report the agency provided, access to and communication with the mayor continues to be a concern among commissioners. Leaders for the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships said they had addressed these concerns by providing training and by having conversations during commission meetings to clarify the mayor’s involvement and how best to support the mayor.

But these actions do not demonstrate that efforts were made to work with the Mayor’s Office and other city agencies to define expectations for and a process by which the Mayor’s Office and agencies under its purview regularly report to the 10 mayoral advisory commissions about how the commissions’ input is considered and used in city decision-making and policy. This risks discouraging commissioners’ continued engagement.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation not implemented.
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