

Examples of Engagement Efforts Led by the National Civic League

City Charter Revisions

Following adoption of the latest edition of the Model City Charter in 2021 the National Civic League made presentations about the model to numerous state and national audiences and provided technical assistance to several cities that initiated charter revision processes. These include Dallas, TX, St. Louis, MO, and Portland, OR. Extended assistance with charter revision processes generally follows the model of other engagement processes like those listed below, since methods used by the League are always centered around civic engagement.

Gladstone, Missouri

The League worked with Gladstone, Missouri on the development of a resident-led strategic planning process for a community of 36,000 residents in the Kansas City, Metro area. An 18-month project, Gladstone: Shaping Our Future was divided into three phases. 1) Initiating 2) Stakeholder 3) Implementation

The initiating phase of the project began in September 2015. Together the city, council and NCL created a committee inclusive of the diversity of views and experiences found among Gladstone residents. Between November 2015 and February 2016, League staff facilitated 5 meetings with the Initiating Committee to establish the framework for the project. The committee's work also included identifying leadership for the stakeholder phase (co-chairs), creating a list of stakeholders to invite to participate, choosing a project name, fundraising and managing all project logistics.

Stakeholder Phase (April 2016 – January 2017) Beginning with large Kickoff Event, the stakeholder phase brought together more than 100 Gladstone residents to debate, discuss and dream about the community's future. NCL facilitated 9 meetings during this time. The first priority for stakeholders was to identify a vision around which the community could rally. The stakeholders set forth a bold vision for the community, Gladstone: An innovative, welcoming community with outstanding business, educational and recreational opportunities for all. This work was organized into key performance areas (KPA's), the main areas, issues or topics which are strategically important to moving the community forward and achieving the vision.

Stakeholders assessed Gladstone's civic capacity using the NCL's Civic Index. To better understand the current realities facing Gladstone, stakeholders received briefings and information from numerous sources about existing efforts, local needs and resources. This research was further strengthened by a city-wide survey conducted by ETC Institute. NCL helped ETC design the survey to eliminate unnecessary questions and add questions related to current topics (police-community relations).

NCL helped identify the initial Implementation Committee – a group of 12 key stakeholders from across the community – charged with coordinating with the city, community and others to put the plan into action. The implementation committee members include a strong mix of established and new leaders that will guide Gladstone's success in the next ten years.

League responsibilities included creating meeting agendas and assigning needed follow-up work to the committee members, as well as several stakeholder analyses to ensure each phase included the full diversity of the community. The final report was issued in February 2017.

Sarah Leavy was the project director for the Gladstone contract, with assistance from Aaron Leavy and oversight by Doug Linkhart.

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Castle Pines, Colorado

In the summer and fall of 2018, the National Civic League worked with Castle Pines, Colorado to aid the community's efforts to create a stronger sense of identity and support for city work to improve services and the city's problem-solving capacity. This was a critical time for the city to do so, as it faced an election that fall to grant the city home rule authority and a planned development that will double the size of the city.

Building on the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and other past planning and input processes, the National Civic League sought to engage residents about their sense of connection to and thoughts on the community; their perspectives on goals articulated in the Comprehensive Plan and Council Vision statement; the actions that they believe could create the community they want; and their thoughts on the development east of I-25. Engagement around these topics included conversations with key stakeholders and online engagement as part of Engage Castle Pines, a web-based platform created by a third party and overseen by the League.

The League's work involved outreach and interviews of various community stakeholders, conduct of a community survey and analysis and recommendations. The survey looked at several main areas:

- Overall perception of the community and its challenges
- Priorities from among the goals from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan (a strong sense of community, vibrant gathering places, a robust open space and trails system, economic development and recreation)
- Specific actions the city or others might pursue (or continue developing).
- Perceptions of the new development east of I-25, including which amenities would be most likely to encourage residents to cross the highway.

The League's report to the Castle Pines City Council took place in October 2018 and included an extensive analysis of the stakeholder input and survey results. Through analysis of the survey questions and open-ended questions we saw three "schools of thought" or clusters of priorities.

- **Slow or no-growth:** This cluster includes those whose primary concern is the rate and type of growth in the community, particularly housing growth. For these residents, growth represents a threat to what they have, it is a threat to the quality of view, their property values and the wild spaces.
- **Business development:** For these residents, business vacancies and limited retail options represent a key problem. They want to accelerate business development and retention.

- Infrastructure-first: This group of residents talk about investments in infrastructure – particularly roads and fences – as essential and believe other concerns should be delayed until infrastructure is addressed.

The election for home rule authority in November 2018 was successful and the city was pleased with the number of volunteers who have come forward to serve on the commission for the new city charter. The city is also working with special districts in the area to consolidate service authority under the city's jurisdiction.

Doug Linkhart was the Project Director for this effort and Aaron Leavy conducted interviews and produced the final report.

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Denver Accessibility Listening Project

The League has a current contract with the City and County of Denver Office of Disability Rights (DODR) to work with community partners (nonprofit, business, residents, and government) to conduct at least 15 community outreach meetings throughout the City and County of Denver specific to individuals with disabilities, representing the racial and ethnic demographics of the City and County of Denver to elicit feedback related to barrier removal within City facilities. Each outreach meeting will include at least 15 people living with a disability or a representative for people living with disabilities i.e., caretaker, parents etc and reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of Denver.

The League will then compile and synthesize information and provide it to the Denver Office of Disability Rights staff to assist with decision-making. Included will be recommendations to city staff based on feedback from community outreach meetings.

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