

# A Handbook *for* Deliberative Community Forums

*prepared by*

The Program for Deliberative Democracy  
Carnegie Mellon University

*with*

The Art of Democracy



## Foreword

My administration actively encourages innovation in every area of governance, which includes how we engage with our community. We have found Deliberative Community Forums to be an excellent way of engaging residents, and they have become an important element of the way we pursue good government in Pittsburgh.

Deliberative Community Forums have been used to generate meaningful public engagement and to gather residents' input about timely decisions (the selection of a new Chief of Police), regular municipal business (identifying priorities for the City's capital budgeting process), future initiatives (facilitating resident engagement with our Affordable Housing Task Force), and the City's involvement with national initiatives (Pittsburgh's adoption of the White House's My Brother's Keeper initiative).

Deliberative Community Forums offer well-structured opportunities for informed and inclusive public engagement. They facilitate civil dialogue among citizens from diverse backgrounds and between citizens and policy makers. As a result, these forums provide a means for gath-



ering rich input about particular issues in ways that strengthen civic relationships and improve our community's overall civic health.

The ongoing effort to institutionalize Deliberative Community Forums has led to the development of this Handbook. I believe the guidance it provides will help other municipal officials and community groups create public engagement opportunities that are more inclusive, more enriching and more productive.

William Peduto  
Mayor



## Why Deliberative Democracy?

Deliberative Community Forums are a proven strategy for engagement that

- Creates a civil, non-confrontational environment for neighbors to learn from neighbors and for policy makers to learn from constituents
- Creates engagement that respects people's differences—all voices, not just the loudest, have a chance to be heard
- Provides an efficient means for generating robust feedback that is more broadly representative

For more than twenty years, deliberative democracy has flourished across the globe as people have worked to devise strategies that involve residents of diverse communities in the decision making processes that affect their lives. The following elements are shared by most work identified as deliberative public engagement:

- It engages a group of citizens reflective of the diversity of the communities affected by the outcomes of the deliberation
- It involves diverse groups in structured discussions
- It provides people with the opportunity to compare values and experiences, consider a range of policy options, and engage relevant arguments and information
- It aims to produce tangible actions and outcomes

Three principles provide a foundation for practitioners of deliberative democracy: *inclusion*, *reciprocity*, and *legitimacy*. Based in these principles, Deliberative Community Forums seek to *engage difference as a resource*.

From their lived experience, people develop valuable insights on the issues facing their communities. Public officials and policy makers, too, have valuable perspectives to share. Deliberative Community Forums provide support that enables residents and policy makers to share their







particular wisdom and to learn from the particular wisdom of others. As a result, they provide an effective way to engage difference as a resource.

Public engagement that involves people from diverse backgrounds in a creative, collaborative, dialogic relationship with public officials and decision makers can help people develop relationships of trust, commitment, and investment in the process and its outcomes. Policy makers can point to a deliberative process and to the data generated by the process, including the list of participants and the results of the surveys they complete, to reveal the range of people and perspectives that were engaged. As a result, Deliberative Community Forums can foster a sense of legitimacy about decisions, even among those who may disagree with them.

*The Mayor promised the community they would have real input in decision making. We have learned a lot about what it takes to do that. Creating a new Office of Community Affairs and throwing more people at community meetings was not enough. It is much more about engaging the public at a time, and in a way, that results in real value for the decision maker, so they can deliver a better solution for the public. That sounds basic but it was not always so clear. . . We have made a lot of changes to adjust but the Deliberative model has made for far better results.*

— Grant Gittlen

Community and Government Relations Officer, City of Pittsburgh

# Deliberative Community Forums

Deliberative Democracy Forums seek to discover what people think about an issue after they have engaged alternative perspectives in a deeply deliberative process. Deliberative forums provide the resources citizens need to develop an opinion informed by relevant facts, expert information, and an understanding of how issues and policies affect others in their community.

*The more opportunities like this I take advantage of, the more proud I am to be a Pittsburgh resident.*

Exit survey comment by anonymous Pittsburgh Resident

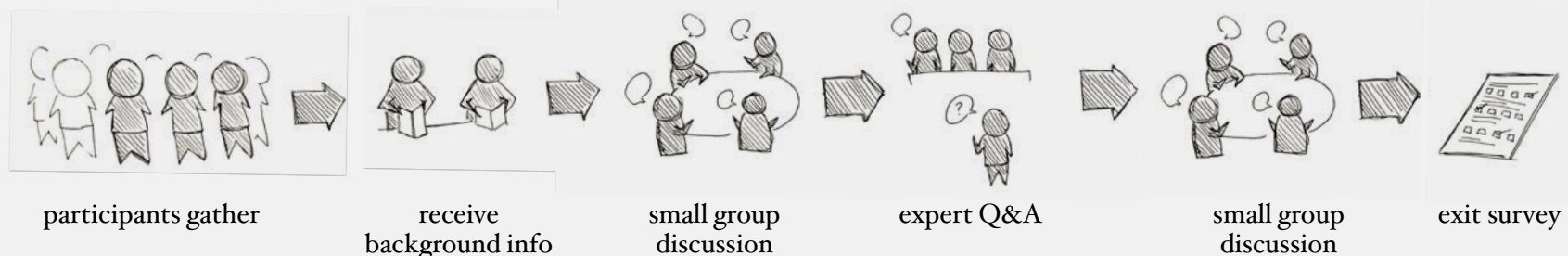
## Elements of a Deliberative Forum

1. Organizers recruit a diverse group of participants.
2. Participants receive background materials offering basic information and a balanced overview of various perspectives on issues.
3. Participants engage in small-group discussions facilitated by trained moderators.
4. Participants' questions are addressed by a resource panel of people with expertise on the issues.
5. Participants return to small groups to reflect on the information provided by resource panelists.
6. Participants complete an exit survey.

## Benefits of a Deliberative Forum

- Participants develop an opinion informed by relevant facts, expert information, and an understanding of how issues and policies affect others in their community.
- Participants enrich their understanding of their own perspective.
- Participants develop understanding of new or alternative perspectives.
- Participants develop a more comprehensive knowledge about the issues.
- Participants practice skills of civil deliberation.
- Process fosters civic connectivity.

## Elements of a Community Deliberative Forum





## AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE

### Deliberative Community Forums

March 7	American Legion, 2863 Chartiers Avenue
March 15	Lifespan Knoxville Resource Center, 320 Brownsville Road
March 23	Letter Carrier's Union Hall, 841 California Avenue
March 29	Kingsley Association, 6435 Frankstown Avenue
April 5	Hill House, 1835 Centre Ave

### Agenda

6:00	Registration and Refreshments
6:15	Opening Remarks and Overview of Affordable House Task Force
6:30	Small-Group Deliberations What changes and challenges have you experienced in your neighborhood/ the city related to housing? How well do you think that the housing priorities and values put forward by the Affordable Housing Task Force will address the housing needs of the City and the housing needs of you and your neighbors? What other housing priorities might you add to the list? What types of housing initiatives and programs do you think will be most helpful for the City in the coming year? What specific housing needs would you and your neighbors like the City to address in the coming year?
7:30	Resource Panel Q&A
8:15	Complete Exit Surveys
8:30	Adjourn

Affordable Housing Task Force Deliberative Community Forums  
are facilitated by  
City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning  
City of Pittsburgh Office of Community Affairs  
with assistance from  
The Art of Democracy



Affordable Housing Task Force Deliberative Community Forums

## What happens at a Deliberative Community Forum?

Deliberative Community Forums take about two and a half hours. When participants arrive, they sign in, providing their name, address, and contact information. Organizers can use this information to share the forum's results with participants. When they sign in, participants receive a copy of the Discussion Guide and the forum's agenda, they are assigned to a table for small-group discussions, and they are invited to enjoy the light refreshments provided by the organizers (e.g., sandwiches, cookies, chips, water).

The forum begins with a short Briefing Presentation (no more than 15 minutes), followed by an hour of small-group discussions. During this hour, each table's moderator guides the participants through the agenda of questions developed by the organizers. At the end of the hour, each small group develops a question for the forum's Resource Panel. Over the next hour, the Resource Panel responds to a question from each table. Finally, participants complete a survey to provide their individual opinions about the topics discussed at the forum.

Organizing a three-hour Deliberative Community Forum involves

- Setting an *Agenda* for the forum
- Developing *Briefing Materials*
- Developing *Surveys*
- Recruiting *Resource Panelists*
- Recruiting *Participants*
- Recruiting and training *Moderators*
- Developing a plan for analysis and sharing of *Results*



## Setting an Agenda for Your Deliberative Community Forum

Organizers need to develop an agenda for the Deliberative Community Forum. At its most basic, this agenda is a series of questions that participants will address during small-group discussions at the forum.

When developing their agenda, organizers should keep in mind the goal of a Deliberative Community Forum. These forums are designed to help people learn from diverse perspectives as they develop an informed opinion. These forums do not pursue consensus or agreement among the participants. The outcome of these forums, as captured in the surveys participants complete, is a range of informed opinions. So, the goal of these forums is to provide an opportunity for people to share, hear, and learn from as many diverse perspectives as possible.

To develop an agenda that will foster deliberation and help create the type of robust data that will be most valuable for policy makers, organizers should seek to answer two basic questions:

1. What is the particular conversation our community needs to have about the issue or topic on which the forum will focus?
2. What do we need to learn from the group of people who come to the forum?

Developing the agenda of questions for the small-group discussions is, itself, a deliberative process. As the organizers try to answer these two

basic questions, they will engage in deliberation amongst themselves. Organizers may also wish to engage difference as a resource at this early stage. Inviting diverse stakeholders from the community to help set the forum's agenda inspires trust, investment and commitment. It also provides organizers with partners to help with recruitment of both participants and resource panelists.

Once organizers, or organizers working in collaboration with stakeholders, develop answers to the two basic questions, they then work to develop a list of questions that can prompt small-group discussions that are relevant to the needs of the organizers and respectful of the needs of diverse stakeholders in the community. Given that there will be an hour for the small-group discussion portion of the forum, organizers should not have more than four questions on the agenda.

The questions organizers develop as an agenda will serve as the basic framework for all the other elements of the forum. The Briefing Materials developed for the forum will need to provide information relevant to the agenda of questions. Moderators will use these questions to spur small-group discussions during the forum. Organizers will need to invite Resource Panelist that can offer diverse perspectives relevant to the agenda's questions. Finally, the Surveys developed for the forum will invite participants' to share their beliefs, attitudes, and opinions about decisions and policy options that are relevant to the forum's agenda of questions.

*Thank you for organizing the forums. Communities deserve to feel ownership and pride for where they live. This begins with giving people a voice and a safe space to vocalize their experience and opinion.*

Exit survey comment by anonymous Pittsburgh Resident



## Developing Briefing Materials

For every forum, organizers will create briefing materials, including a short Discussion Guide and a concise Briefing Presentation (15 minutes at the most). Briefing materials are a resource for the participants; their purpose is support participants' engagement before and during the small-group discussions. Organizers need to carefully consider the needs of participants as they create the briefing materials.

Briefing materials provide the following:

- An explanation of the *Deliberative Community Forum* protocols.
- *Relevant facts and information* presented without bias. Important things to include are: information about the decision making process relevant to the focus of the forum (e.g., the process being pursued to select a new Chief of Police); and any relevant information that the organizers have made publicly available through other means, such as on a municipal website. (e.g., the criteria the Mayor has identified as key for the new Chief of Police).
- *Models to think with*: To spur participants' imagination, provide examples of what people can do or have done to address the issues being discussed.
- *The Forum's Agenda*. Provide the list of questions for the forum's small-group discussions (organizers developed this list of questions as they worked to set the forum's agenda).

The Discussion Guide and the Briefing Presentation should be organized in the same way, provide the same information, and use exactly the same terminology. Participants should be given time to review the Discussion Guide prior to the beginning of the forum. If possible, it should be made available to participants several days before the forum. Those making the presentation should reference relevant sections of the Discussion Guide as they proceed through the presentation.

**QUESTIONS FOR THE DELIBERATIVE COMMUNITY FORUMS**  
Deliberative Community Forums seek to be an opportunity to learn about and to practical wisdom of people from diverse backgrounds.

Some weaknesses that reduce resilience:

### Isolation

Disconnected and disengaged residents are subject to increased risk during

housing prices, other from vacancy. Abandonment and deterioration have

### The Relationship Between Shocks and Stresses

Communities that struggle with chronic stresses are often less prepared and more vulnerable to acute shocks.

For example, if a community has poor transportation networks, residents might

aging pipes and electric infrastructure as well as a housing stock in disrepair (lack of insulation, leaky roofs, etc).

Some of the most common stresses that increase the risk of acute shocks. The deterioration of our infrastructure means we are more vulnerable to like heat waves, drought, and devastating weather.

### What are stresses?

**Chronic Stresses** are long-term, slow burning issues that overwhelm the capacity of city resources and erode resident well-being. This includes environmental stresses such as poor air and water quality, economic stresses such as poverty and unemployment, and

### What are shocks?

**Acute Shocks** are sudden, large-scale disasters that disrupt city services and threaten residents. These include environmental shocks such as storms and heat waves, economic shocks such as industry collapse and bank failure, and social shocks such as disease outbreaks and food shortages.

In Pittsburgh, we saw severe flooding during the 2012 Superstorm Sandy. The flooding on Boulevard in 2012 was a major example of an acute shock.



## RESILIENT PITTSBURGH Deliberative Community Forum

In December 2014, Pittsburgh was selected as one of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities (100 RC), an international initiative that is dedicated to helping cities around the world prepare for the physical, social, and economic challenges of the 21st century. Under the leadership of Grant Ervin, Chief Resilience Officer for the City of Pittsburgh, our city is currently developing an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses as regards resilience. The lived experience and practical wisdom of city residents is key to understanding Pittsburgh's resilience, so the city will convene two Deliberative Community Forums to provide residents with an opportunity to add their voice to this assessment process. The following briefing document has been prepared as a resource residents can use before and during the forum.

### What is urban resilience?

100RC defines urban resilience as "the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what acute shocks and chronic stresses

and is overall better able to deliver basic functions in both good times and bad, to all populations.

On June 5th, 2015 at a resilience workshop, the following two themes were identified to increase Pittsburgh's resilience:

1. equitable and fair access for all city residents to economic, educational, and social opportunities and

## Developing Surveys

Surveys should be developed closely alongside Briefing Materials (Discussion Guide and Presentation), as these materials must prepare participants to discuss the types of questions they will be asked on the survey. In general, surveys should allow participants to provide their input anonymously; organizers should not request names or other personally identifying information on the surveys.

Surveys may include closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions are good for soliciting participants' assessment of options and their assessment of the forum itself. Open-ended questions are good for capturing participants' particular knowledge of issues. For example, closed-ended questions allow participants to assess options by ranking their importance (e.g., How important is it that the new Chief of Police meets the following criteria? [Response options: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Neither Important or Unimportant, Somewhat Unimportant, Not Important, Unsure]). By contrast, open-ended questions can be used to solicit information drawn from participants' particular experience (e.g., What skills does your neighborhood need the new Chief of Police to possess?).

The following types of survey questions can generate useful data:

- Demographics (e.g., zip code, age, years of residency)
- Questions that ask participants to evaluate ideas, proposals, strategies, or actions being considered by the forum's organizers
- Questions to assess participants' specific experience with and knowledge of the issue
- Questions asking participants to identify what they gained from the forum (e.g., learned new information, learned views different from my own, made my voice heard)
- Questions soliciting participants' overall assessment of specific aspects of the forum (e.g., the Discussion Guide, the small-group discussions, the Resource Panel)

Additional comments in regard to policies, programs, or initiatives you think you are important for the Affordable Housing Task Force to consider:

Please take 10-15 minutes to complete this survey. (Please print)

1) Please check the box that best reflects your opinion on each housing goal

Very Important	Slightly Important	Not Important	Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE**  
Deliberative Community Forums

Community Forum  
**FEEDBACK SURVEY**

**Let Your Voice Be Heard!**

Now that you have had a chance to become familiar with the issues and have discussed these with fellow citizens as well as hearing a panel address some of the questions raised by the tables, we want to hear from you.

Please take about 10 to 15 minutes to answer the questions provided. There are also comment fields that you can use to elaborate on your answers if you wish. Your input will help inform Mayor William Peduto and the Affordable Housing Task Force on appropriate affordable housing policies, programs, and initiatives.

\*The answers to these questions are confidential. There are no questions relating to your personal identity (name, address) or personal characteristics (age, income, political affiliation). There are no identifiers on the survey itself. You are not required to fill out the survey but your input would be appreciated.

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## Recruiting Resource/Expert Panel

Deliberative Community Forums engage 4-5 panelists that can draw from a wealth of knowledge and practical experience to offer diverse perspectives. Panelists should have expertise related to the issue, to the specific questions comprising the agenda for deliberation, to the models discussed in the Briefing Materials, and to the survey questions. Keeping these criteria in mind, organizers should strive to convene a panel that reflects the diversity of people and perspectives in their community.

The Resource Panel is convened to address questions that forum participants develop after they have deliberated in small groups. Panelists are a resource for the participant, and they should assume the role of teachers. When answering questions, panelists should not debate one another. Instead, they should seek to provide an account of multiple perspectives within their area of expertise (not just those with which they agree). Prior to the forum, organizers should provide panelists with the Briefing Materials, surveys, and guidelines describing their role.







## Recruiting Participants

The main benefit of Deliberative Community Forums is the opportunity they provide for people to consider an issue from multiple, diverse perspectives. To gain this benefit, organizers must cast a wide net and make a determined effort to recruit a diverse sample of participants.

Organizers should not rely solely on general public announcements or general invitations. A general call for participants, such as a flyer distributed through e-mail or at community meetings, does a lot for raising awareness, but it does little to generate participation.

It is best to ask stakeholders and community-based organizations to help with recruitment through their networks. Special efforts should be made to recruit people whose views may differ from those of the organizers and people whose particular wisdom is not often engaged in community forums.

*Good to see neighbors involved who have been “shut out”.*

Exit survey comment by anonymous Pittsburgh Resident



## Recruiting and Training Moderators for Small-Group Discussions

Each small-group discussion is facilitated by moderators. Moderators help maintain a focused, relevant, and respectful discussion among the participants. They help participants move through the agenda of questions developed by the organizers. After the small-group discussions, they review what has been discussed as the participants work to develop questions for the Resource Panel.

Moderators are not participants and they should not be experts in the issues being discussed. They also need not have any prior training, although past experience facilitating dialogue or mediation is very useful. When recruiting volunteer moderators, organizers should make an effort to recruit and train moderators from the communities that will be engaging in deliberation.

Several days before the event, organizers hold a brief training session for the moderators. At this training, moderators receive an introduction to the principles of deliberative democracy, the protocols of a Deliberative Community Forum, an annotated agenda for the small-group discussions, and copies of the Discussion Guide and surveys.





## Developing a plan for analysis and sharing of results

During the process of planning the forum, organizers should develop a plan for analyzing the data from participants' surveys and for sharing the results. Organizers should plan to share results in a timely manner, soon after the forum has been held. Forum results should be shared with participants and with relevant decision makers. Results should also be made available more broadly by the organizers and through various media outlets.

During the Briefing Presentation at the beginning of each forum, organizers should explain how information from the forum will be used to inform decision making processes, and they should explain their plan for analyzing data and sharing the results of the forum.



*Traditional public forums are often dominated by vocal individuals. With the Deliberative Forum framework, the conversations that occur at the breakout tables reflect varying opinions. Often, the conversations at the tables are more important than the questions asked to the panel experts because residents begin to unpack their thoughts with people they typically don't know. I've experienced a diversity of thought at deliberative forums that I've never experienced in other public forums.*

—Nenha Young  
Urban Planner, City of Pittsburgh

DELIBERATIVE FORUM  
CASE STUDIES  
2014–2015

## Case Study: City of Pittsburgh Chief of Police Selection

At the start of his administration, Mayor Bill Peduto committed to an innovative selection process for recruiting a senior management team, including a new Chief of Police. Known as the Talent City initiative, this process, launched by the Pittsburgh Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh's Institute of Politics, was designed to ensure that the recruitment process emphasized skills and expertise and not political patronage. Managed by the Pittsburgh Foundation, the process involved posting job openings on the Talent City website, having a committee of diverse community members screen applicants, and the committee submitting a list of preferred candidates to the Mayor. To get more community input during the recruitment process for the important job of Chief of Police, Deliberative Community Forums were held as a part of the Talent City process.

Throughout the summer of 2014, six Deliberative Community Forums provided residents of Pittsburgh with an opportunity to participate in the process of selecting a new Chief of Police. The City of Pittsburgh is separated into six policing zones with a corresponding resident-led Public Safety Council. Each of these Public Safety Councils hosted one of the forums. During the forums residents shared ideas about improving policing in Pittsburgh, identified their needs and priorities, and discussed the qualities they believe are essential in a new Chief of Police.

The Pittsburgh Foundation hired affiliates of Carnegie Mellon University's Program for Deliberative Democracy to organize the Deliberative Community Forums. These consultants worked with staff from the Office of the Mayor, the Department of Public Safety, and the Office of Community Affairs (OCA).

### Setting an Agenda

The Office of the Mayor and the Department of Public safety led the development of the forum's agenda and supplied research and back-



ground information for the development of the forum's Discussion Guide and Survey.

The final agenda asked residents the following questions:

- Do you believe the selection criteria identified by the Mayor will result in his hiring a Chief of Police that will address the needs and priorities of you and your neighbors? Are there other search criteria that you or your community would add?
- What priorities does your community need the new Chief of Police to address?
- What qualities and skills does your community need the new Chief of Police to have?
- What can you and others in your community do to help realize a vision of "Policing in Partnership with the Community"?

### **Developing Briefing Materials**

The forum's Discussion Guide introduced residents to the Mayor's vision of "Policing in Partnership with the Community." To elaborate on this vision, the Discussion Guide explained five criteria that the Mayor expected to use as a guide to his selection of the new Chief of Police.

To develop the Discussion Guide, the selection criteria identified by the Mayor were shared with people outside of his administration who had expertise in policing and police-community relations. These outside experts supplied practical examples to help participants understand what the Mayor's priorities and criteria might look like in the everyday work of a Chief of Police.

### **Developing Surveys**

The forum's survey included both closed- and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions asked participants to rank the importance of each of the Mayor's selection criteria, and to assess the success of the forum. Open-ended questions asked participants to identify priorities they wanted the Mayor and the Chief of Police to address; to identify

qualities and skills they wished the new Chief of Police to possess; and to share ways police officers and residents could work in partnership.

### **Recruiting Resource Panel**

The forum's Resource Panel was the screening committee of community members assembled by Talent City to review applications for the Chief of Police position. This screening committee included a recent Pittsburgh Public School graduate, a foundation president, a court-appointed advocate who had founded the Prevent Another Crime Today Initiative, a researcher (former gang-member-now-academic) from the Center for Health Equity, Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences, a professor of law with expertise mediating police-community relations, a former member of the Pittsburgh Citizen Police Review Board, a former Chief of Police of a community adjacent to Pittsburgh, a former president of the Fraternal Order of Police, a deputy director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, a deputy warden of the Allegheny County Jail.

At each of the forums, Public Safety Director Steven Bucar and at least five members of the Screening Committee were present to respond to questions from residents.

### **Recruiting Participants**

The forums were open to all who wished to participate. Six forums were hosted by each of the resident-led Public Safety Councils in Pittsburgh's six policing zones. Members of these councils assumed significant responsibility for distributing information and for recruitment of their neighbors. In the month prior to the first forum, staff members from the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs distributed flyers at community meetings. In addition, the forums were publicized online using e-mail and social media resources. Information about the forums also appeared in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and neighborhood newspapers, such as the South Pittsburgh Reporter. Recruitment activities were supported by the Public Safety Council Presidents, the Office of Community Affairs, the Public Safety Department's outreach staff, and the Pittsburgh Police Department's community resource officers.



## Results

Over 240 residents completed exit surveys at the six forums. After each forum, the individual responses provided by participants were reviewed by a staff member in the Office of Mayor Peduto. This staff member created initial reports from each forum that identified the topics, themes, and ideas that emerged from the participants' responses. Working from these initial reports, consultants affiliated with Carnegie Mellon University's Program for Deliberative Democracy developed a final report, which was shared with the Mayor, the Public Safety Director, and members of Talent City Screening Committee. Key findings from this report include the following:

- Participants indicated that the deliberative forum was helpful: it enabled them to develop a better understanding of the issues, helped them identify their community's priorities, and introduced them to perspectives they had not previously considered.
- Based on statements participants shared with the forum's moderators, participants were engaged in the process; they felt that the forum provided a real opportunity for their voices to be heard and their opinions to be valued.
- Surveys provided validation for the selection criteria proposed by Mayor Peduto, all of the criteria were identified as important by all or almost all participants at every forum.
- No additional or alternative selection criteria were proposed in participants' exit surveys. However, notes from the forum's small-group discussions and information shared by the resource panelists suggested an additional selection criterion: Candidate's ability to develop collaborations with a community's non-law enforcement agencies.
- Participants identified the following priorities for the new Chief of Police: repairing community-police relations; creating a more diverse police force with increased visibility in communities; targeting crime reduction on violence, gun use and trafficking, and drug sales.

- The qualities and skills participants identified as important include personal qualities, such as integrity and empathy, and professional skills, including experience both as a rank-and-file officer and as a leader, experience implementing effective community-oriented policing strategies with diverse communities, and experience using technology to prevent and solve crime.
- Participants indicated that citizen involvement in helping to realize a vision of Policing in Partnership with Communities should include the following: citizens should become more engaged and encourage others to engage in block watches and Public Safety Council activities, citizens should work to create relationships of mutual respect between the police force and community members, and citizens should collaborate with police to develop goals and strategies for reducing crime.

*We used each of our six resident-led police zone public safety councils as venues for deliberations on the selection of a police chief. Among the core values of the zone councils is an open, reasoned and strategic collaboration with public safety officials to keep our neighborhoods and our city safer. The use of the deliberative protocol reinforced this collaborative philosophy.*

— Liz Style

Department of Public Safety, Coordinator,  
Safer Together Pittsburgh

- In small-group discussions, participants' also suggested strategies for developing better police-community relations. Suggestions included informal gatherings, such as "Coffee with Cops" sessions, and special events, such as "Trick or Trunk," which would involve police officers filling the trunk of their cruisers with candy to distribute at Halloween. In addition, participants suggested more extensive efforts, such as Camp Cadet, which one participant described as a week-long immersive program that would help citizens—especially youth—better understand the job of a police officer.



## Case Study: City of Pittsburgh Capital Budget

In June of 2015, the City of Pittsburgh convened two Deliberative Community Forums to provide residents with an opportunity to add their voice to the process of creating the City's 2016 Capital Budget. In previous years, the public's only opportunity to influence budgeting decisions came after a budget was drafted by the Mayor and submitted to City Council for review, revisions, and adoption. In 2014, public comment sessions attracted less than three dozen participants. The Mayor decided to convene Deliberative Community Forums to provide residents with a more robust way to share their ideas about the Capital Budget.

In addition, the forums were scheduled to provide residents with an opportunity to add their input earlier in the decision-making process. The forums were held after the Mayor had announced his priorities but before he received funding proposals from City departments and City Council members.

As a result, the forums were expected both to increase the influence of the public and enhance the knowledge of those who develop funding proposals. This shift in timing was a key element in engaging local stakeholders who helped encourage participation.

The Office of the Mayor, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Office of Community Affairs (OCA) worked with consultants from the Art of Democracy to organize the Deliberative Community Forums.

### Establishing the Agenda

The Office of the Mayor and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) led development of the agenda, discussion guide, and surveys. As these materials were developed, OMB solicited input from key decision-makers, including City Department Heads and City Council Members, about what types of input would be most useful and what

types of information would need to be provided so that residents could provide informed input.

The final agenda asked for residents to provide input on the following questions:

- How well do you think that the Priorities identified by the Mayor will address the needs of the City and the needs of you and your neighbors?
- What other priorities might you add to the list?
- What types of Capital Projects do you think will be most helpful for the City and your neighborhood in the coming year?
- What specific needs would you and your neighbors like the City to address in the coming year?

### **Developing Briefing Materials**

Both a discussion guide and presentation were developed thru an iterative process with the Mayor's office, OMB, OCA, and consultants from the Art of Democracy.

Both the Discussion Guide and the Briefing Presentation included the following

- Explanation of the distinction between a Capital and an Operating budget
- Explanation of the process for developing the Capital Budget (including an explanation of how the forums were a change to this process)
- Listing of the priorities identified by the Mayor,
- Funding amounts and example Capital Projects from the previous year's budget (These were provided both to inform and to spur the imagination of residents who attended the forum).

The Discussion Guide was made available to those who preregistered for the forums. However, preregistration was not required. As a result, the Discussion Guide was developed with the assumption that participants would not have the opportunity to review materials prior to the forum; instead, the Discussion Guide is best used as a resource during the forums. At the forum, participants were encouraged to review the Discussion Guide after they checked in, during the Briefing Presentation, participants received guidance that helped them to use the Discussion Guide as a way to follow along with the presentation, and participants were guided to relevant sections of the Discussion Guide by the moderators during the small-group discussions.

### **Developing Surveys**

The survey was designed to capture confidential input on budget priorities. The survey solicited no demographic or personally identifying information; although, participants were given the option of providing name, address, neighborhood, and email contact.

Participants were asked to rank the five priorities identified by the Mayor's priorities individually as "Important" "Somewhat Important" or "Not Important." In addition, they were provided an open-ended question soliciting additional priorities. The survey also included open-ended questions soliciting ideas for Capital Projects that addressed City-wide needs and neighborhood specific needs.

Finally, the survey sought to measure the participant experience and potential for increased engagement in the future.

### **Recruiting Resource/Expert Panel**

The panel for the forums included City department heads and leaders of city authorities typically not directly accessible by the general public. After the forum, the panelists said they were very pleased that the process lead to an informed dialogue rather than confrontational encounters. Many panelists lingered after the forum to continue their interaction with residents.



## Recruiting Participants

The Office of Community Affairs (OCA) led recruitment efforts, which relied on OCA staff, elected officials, and outreach to key community stakeholders through Community Development Corporations (CDC), neighborhood associations, and social media channels.

Geographic and Neighborhood representation was a foremost concern for the City. Pittsburgh boasts of having over 90 distinct neighborhoods, and residents' affiliation with and allegiance to neighborhoods are deeply felt. The OCA produced a flyer advertising the forums. This flyer was distributed by OCA staff that attended regularly scheduled community meetings in the month preceding the forums. The flyer was also made available electronically to be shared broadly through community-based networks. Community Development Corporations were specifically encouraged to have at least one representative attend the forums.

Additionally, the OCA met with all members of City Council. They explained that the forums were a new opportunity for residents to speak with department leaders prior to the formal creation of the budget and they provided copies of the flyer for them to share with their constituents.

The OCA also made use of social media by creating Facebook events that were widely shared by City staff members and by having the Mayor encourage attendance at the forums on Twitter.

To monitor the effectiveness of recruitment efforts, the OCA set up an online registration form. This enabled the OCA to identify where additional recruiting efforts were needed. Based on this monitoring, the OCA was able to draw on relationships and networks with nonprofit groups working in specific neighborhoods to encourage attendance by residents from typically underrepresented communities.

The initial forum also provided opportunities to increase participation for the second forum, which was held three weeks later. The seventy

participants at the first forum more than doubled resident participation from the prior year. These participants were encouraged to promote the second forum through their networks and through social media. Council members and community leaders were invited to observe the first forum to enhance their understanding and increase the likelihood they would promote attendance at the second forum. After the first forum, the OCA made note of which neighborhoods were represented and made additional contact with organizations working within neighborhoods that had not been well-represented at the first forum. More than 120 people attended the second forum. In all, nearly 200 participants attended the forums, with nearly all the neighborhoods of the city having some representation.

## Recruiting/Training Moderators for Small-Group Discussions

The OCA recruited moderators for the forum from the Civic Leadership Academy (CLA), a program run through the Mayor's office to encourage more informed, effective and inspired community and civic leadership by giving City residents an opportunity to learn about their local government. The Art of Democracy recruited moderators from its established network of volunteers, including the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh and The Center for Victims Dialogue and Mediation Services. Volunteers received a 90-minute training in the principles of Deliberative Democracy and the protocols for a Deliberative Community Forum.

## Logistics: Planning And Hosting The Forum

The OCA managed logistics for the forums, including site selection, on-line and on-site registration, and coordinating catering. When choosing sites for the forums, the OCA sought to highlight City-owned facilities that were supported and maintained by funds from the Capital Budget. Both forums were held at community centers that provided services to seniors and activities and programming for all ages. To promote inclusion, each community center was handicapped accessible and readily accessed by numerous public transit routes.

## Assessing Results

Analysis by City of Pittsburgh staff and interns showed the forums dramatically increased public awareness of and participation in the Capital Budget process. The nearly 200 forum participants included residents from nearly all the City's neighborhoods.

Overwhelming majorities affirmed each of the five priorities identified by the Mayor. In addition, five additional priorities emerged from the responses: affordable housing, community development, green infrastructure, infrastructure management, and public safety. (While identified as priorities by residents, these might also be regarded as aspects to be emphasized while pursuing the five priorities identified by the Mayor.) Participants also identified over 160 unique Capital Projects. The projects proposed by residents had a broad geographic distribution. The OMB prepared a report of the survey results, which included a geographic mapping of the projects proposed by residents. This report was shared with all City departments and with City Council members.

City officials that served on the panels had very positive public interactions. In terms of participants assessment of the forum, most participants agreed that the process achieved the following:

- Gave them an understanding of the issues involved when developing the City's Capital Budget,
- Caused them to consider points of view that they had not previously considered,
- Made them feel as though their voice had been heard by the City,
- Allowed the sharing of stories and experiences with residents from other parts of the City, and
- Made them more likely to become engaged in making their neighborhood stronger.

*Our new deliberative democracy model changed the tenor of the conversation about City funding priorities. It made sure that the loudest voices weren't the only ones heard, and asked people to listen to the City and to each other. The result was better information for the City, and a better sense of understanding for the residents.*

—Alex Pazuchanics  
Policy Advisor, City of Pittsburgh



## Thank you to all who contributed...

Many individuals, organizations and dozens of volunteer moderators contributed throughout this process. We wish to acknowledge the following for making this possible:

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the Art  
*of* Democracy



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