

# **City of San José: Neighborhood Association Engagement Model**

**Final Report**

# Agenda

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# Project Overview

# Project Overview

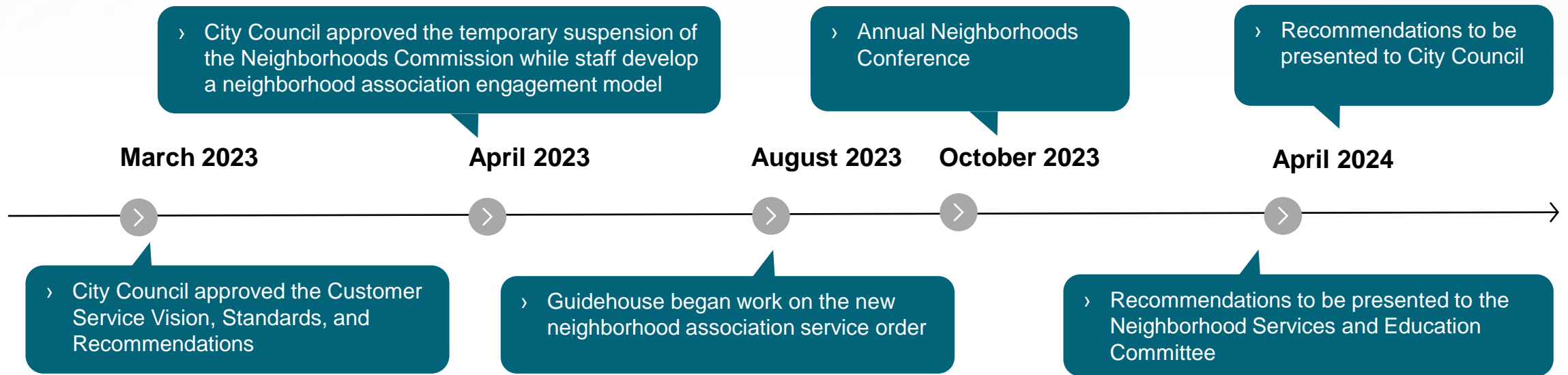


**Project Purpose:** Develop a Neighborhood Association Model that **facilitates City outreach to Neighborhoods** and provides Neighborhoods the **opportunity to engage** with the City.



**Project Goal:** Develop a Neighborhood Association Engagement Model that **increases access, communication, and understanding of City services** and ties into the City's **Customer Service Vision and Standards**.

## Project Timeline:







# Project Approach and Inputs

We engaged 238\* stakeholders over 4 engagement methods over the course of the project.



**Project Approach:** Facilitate and collect City **staff and community feedback** through four engagement methods. Leverage input to **synthesize findings** into recommendations in collaboration and iteration with City staff.

## Project Inputs

Council and Staff Interviews	Community Meetings	Community Survey	Neighborhoods Conference
			
<b>28 City Touchpoints</b>	<b>48 Participants</b>	<b>122 Survey Respondents</b>	<b>40-50 Conference Activity Participants*</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spoke with 13 City staff members through dedicated interviews, regular status meetings, and a Visioning Workshop.</li><li>Spoke with the Mayor and 6 City Council Offices.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spoke with 48 community members through three in-person community meetings.</li><li>Participants came from 20 Neighborhood Associations and 9 Council Districts.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Received responses from 122 community members.</li><li>Surveys were administered virtually and in-person and in 4 different languages.</li><li>Responses came from 47** Neighborhood Associations and all 10 Council Districts.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>City facilitated two engagement model activities at the Neighborhoods Conference.</li><li>40-50 people participated in two activities (participants were given two dots for each activity, each activity had around 80 dots).</li></ul>

\*Approximate estimate based on activity results.

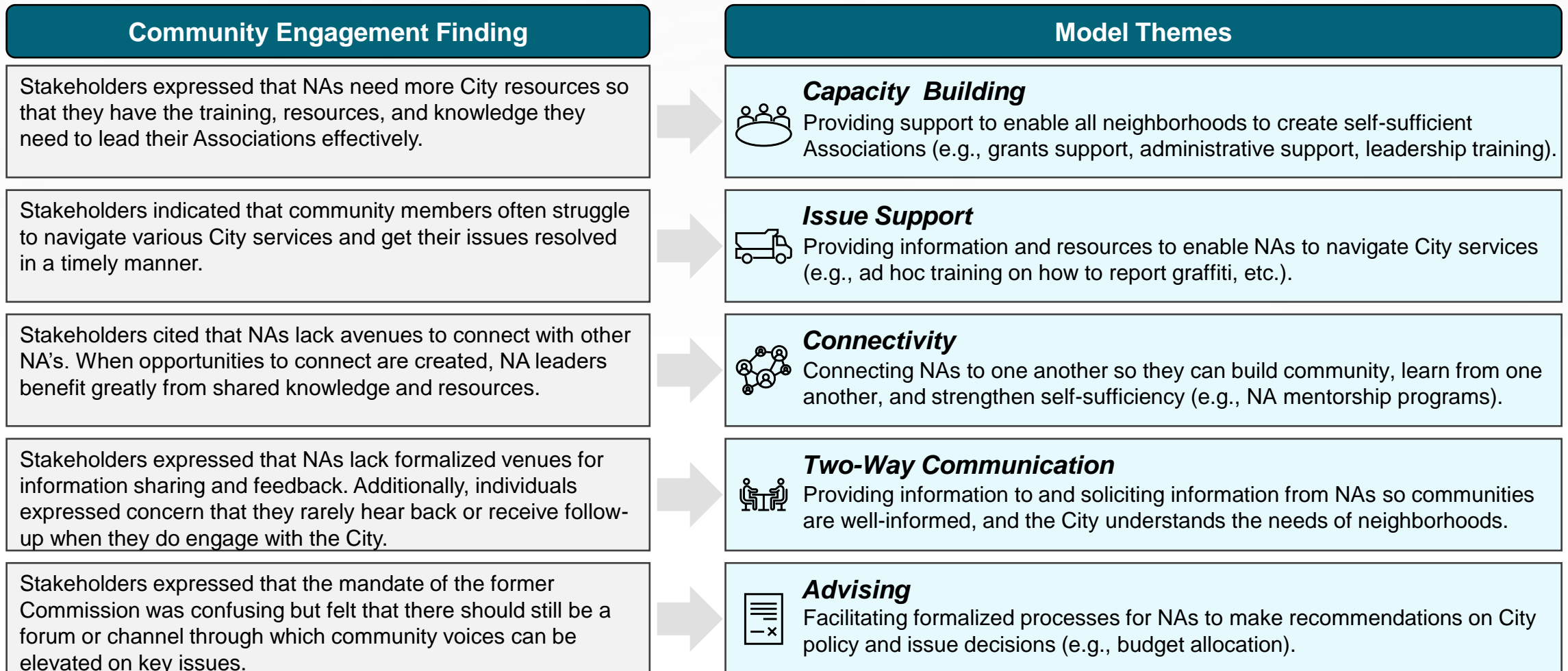
\*\* Approximate estimate based on survey analysis.

# Community Engagement Findings



# Community Engagement Findings – Model Themes

The project inputs revealed 5 themes for the new Neighborhood Association (NA) Model.



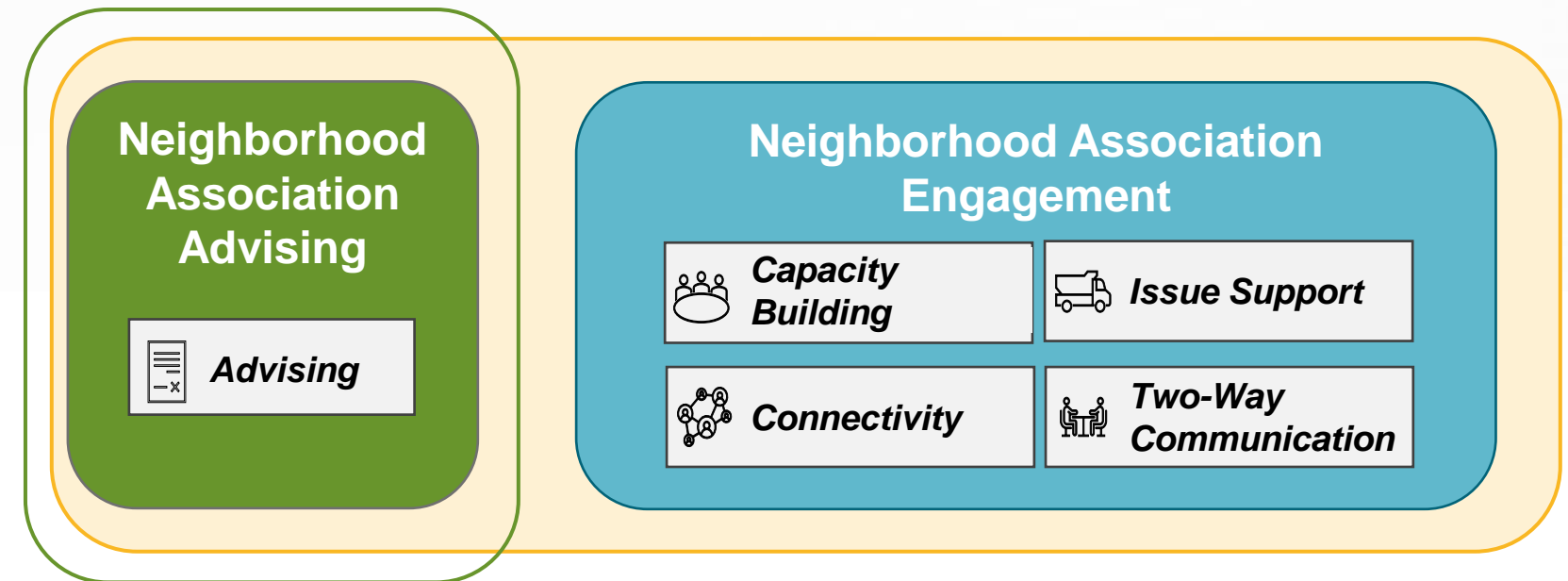
# Community Engagement Findings – Model Purpose

The five model themes signify a desire for an expanded and comprehensive purpose for the new Neighborhood Association Engagement Model.

Though the engagement work revealed confusion amongst stakeholders about the purpose of the former Neighborhoods Commission and its replacement, it also revealed that the new model should incorporate elements of the five model themes.

The five themes can be broken into two potential functions of the model: NA Advising and NA Engagement.

## Expanded Purpose of the New Model



Intended Mandate of the  
Neighborhood Commission

Newly Identified  
Elements for the Model



# Recommendations

# Recommendation Overview

A three-pronged model was designed to address the engagement findings.

## Neighborhood Engagement

*Engagement model recommendations address the themes of capacity building, connectivity, two-way communications, and issue-support.*

**Engagement Method 1:** Create a **Neighborhood Association Forum** that meets quarterly, expanding on the existing annual Neighborhoods Conference hosted by PRNS.

**Engagement Method 2:** Create a new **Neighborhood Support Team** with dedicated staff members called **Neighborhood Navigators** that are assigned a portfolio of Neighborhood Associations.





## Neighborhood Advising Structure

*Advising Structure options address the engagement finding theme of advising.*

**Neighborhood Services Advisory Group:** Create a new **Issue-Based** group that focuses on Neighborhood Services CSA topics not currently addressed through other City forums. Members provide recommendations to relevant Department leadership.

# Engagement Method 1: Neighborhood Association Forum

Engagement method 1 includes the creation of a quarterly Neighborhoods Association Forum that is run by PRNS staff.

Phase Impact*			
 Capacity Building	 Connectivity	 Issue Support	 Two-Way Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Forum provides a centralized venue for NAs to learn about City resources for NA operations as well as seek support in accessing the resources they need.</li> <li>Additionally, NAs will have the opportunity to learn best practices from one another on how to optimize their NA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Forum enables NAs to get together on a more regular basis and establish relationships with one another. This can lead to a greater sense of community between NAs as well as increased information and best practice sharing.</li> <li>Bringing NAs together will also help the City identify common issues across neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAs will have the opportunity to learn about City services during these meeting, familiarizing them with how to navigate certain services and resolve issues.</li> <li>Issue-specific trainings will also give NAs the opportunity to meet with Department staff responsible for resolving some of these issues to answer questions and increase trust with the City.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Forum provides a regular and centralized venue for the City to share information, solicit feedback, facilitate discussions, and provide follow-up with NAs.</li> <li>A consistent venue for communication with the same City staff members can enable better relationship building between the City and NAs.</li> </ul>





## Considerations

- Existing staff may not have the capacity to add additional responsibilities to their workload.**
- The phase only provides a formal venue for engagement between NAs and the City quarterly, but NAs may need or want direct support more frequently.
- High responsibility is placed on PRNS staff to identify issues that need escalating or further attention based on their engagement with the NAs.
- This phase does not provide dedicated resources that can focus on underserved communities or NAs that might need extra support.**

\*For more information on structure and logistics, please go to slide [53](#).

# Engagement Method 2: Neighborhood Support Team

Engagement method 2 includes the creation of new Neighborhood Support Team with dedicated PRNS staff members called Neighborhood Navigators.


Phase Impact*			
 Capacity Building	 Connectivity	 Issue Support	 Two-Way Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighborhood Navigators will hold regular meetings with their assigned NAs, providing a smaller venue for NAs to learn about City resources for NA operations as well as seek support in accessing the resources they need in a personalized capacity.</li> <li>Additionally, these meetings will provide NAs the opportunity to learn best practices from one another on how to improve and optimize their operations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More frequent meetings between Navigators and their assigned NAs enable NAs to gather on a more regular basis and establish better relationships with one another, leading to a greater sense of community between NAs as well as increased information sharing.</li> <li>Navigators will allow for greater connectivity between City resources and neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAs will have the opportunity to learn more about City services during meetings with their Navigators, familiarizing them with how to navigate certain services as well as how to resolve issues.</li> <li>Issue-specific trainings will also give NAs the opportunity to meet w/ Dept. staff to answer questions and increase trust with the City.</li> <li>NL's can answer questions and connect residents with resources throughout the City.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings provide a regular and standard venue for the City to share information, solicit feedback, facilitate discussions, and provide follow-up with a smaller group of NAs.</li> <li>A consistent City point of contact and venue for communication can enable better relationship building between the City and NAs.</li> <li>Navigators can elevate concerns, common themes, and community feedback to City Departments.</li> </ul>

## Considerations

- The City will need to ensure there are adequate NLs so that they have capacity to address different levels of NA maturity as well as provide specialized attention to underserved NAs and communities.
- Navigators will be given responsibility to establish trust, make themselves a well ingrained feature of the community, and manage a large cohort of residents.
- Navigators will need significant training to act as central hubs of information for City services and be experts in all Department resources.

# Advising Structure: Neighborhood Services Advisory Group

**Neighborhood Navigators can help facilitate the creation of and support the operation of a Neighborhood Services Advisory Group.**

Phase Impact		Additional Information*	
 Advising		Role of Participants	Role of City Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides a forum for NAs to weigh in on salient issues in their communities and gives NAs and participants a shared purpose for the Group/Roundtable.</li><li>• The volunteer process decreases barriers to involvement and can encourage those who are passionate about the topic to participate.</li><li>• The changing topics each year provides opportunity for different voices to participate each time.</li><li>• Leverages existing City processes for Advisory Groups/Roundtables, making it easier for staff to stand-up this new forum.</li><li>• The yearly nature of these groups ensures they are action-oriented.</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Represent NA and community perspectives on specific issues.</li><li>• Provide policy and budget recommendations to relevant stakeholders on the given issue using input from their community.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help direct community members to existing Commissions, Advising Groups, and other forums when relevant.</li><li>• Facilitate the selection of the yearly topic during with hall NAs.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Topics should be narrowed to issues of neighborhood services (e.g., beautification or community engagement)</li></ul></li><li>• Provide administrative support.</li></ul>

## Considerations

- The City will need to consider the logistics of the topic voting process at the all-NA meetings.
- There is a risk of the same individuals volunteering for the Advisory Group/Roundtable every year.
- The structure may come with the same strengths and challenges that are persistent in all City Advisory Groups and/or Roundtables.
- The City should consider compensation for the participants to help address systemic barriers to participation.
- While this is being implemented, the City can evaluate creating the Issue-Based Commission based on additional stakeholder feedback.

\*For more information on structure and logistics, please go to slide [66](#).

# Appendix



# Engagement Findings: Key Themes

# Community Meeting Themes

The Community Meetings revealed several ideas on how the City could improve engagement with Neighborhood Associations in the future.



## *Dedicated Resources*

Designated City representative that can act as the point of contact for the Neighborhood Association within the City, Liaison for the neighborhood on behalf of the Association for City operations and conduct outreach and follow-up.



## *Administrative Support*

Centralized resource (e.g., dedicated Neighborhood Association website) that can provide administrative support for the operations of the Neighborhood Association including grants and financing support, technical administrative services, and organizational support.



## *Issue-specific Support*

Forum or channel for issue-specific assistance (e.g., targeted guidance on safety, housing, and other issues in the neighborhood).

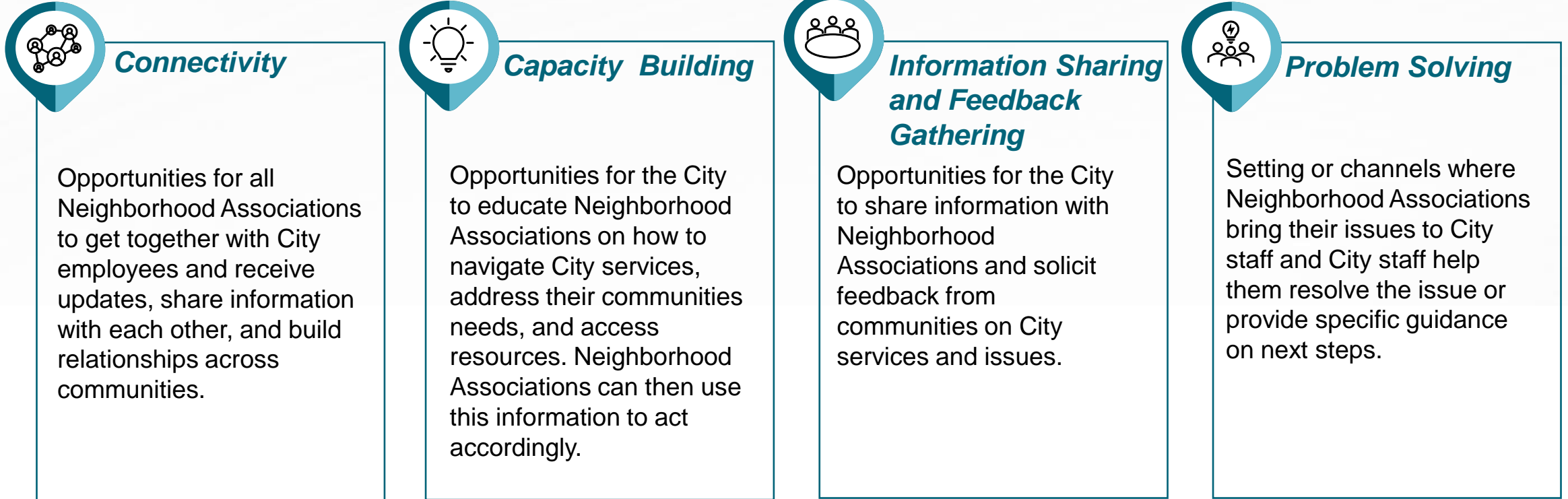


## *Formalized Communication Channels*

Regular and frequent communications from the City across channels (e.g., in-person meetings, paper newsletters, emails, physical banners, website updates) on issues affecting their neighborhood (e.g., new construction, street work, etc.) including regular follow-up.

# Internal Interview Themes

Internal interviews revealed several goals for the new Engagement Model.



# Councilmember Interview Themes

Councilmember interviews reinforced some themes while also introducing new ones.



## *Capacity Building*

Tools and resources to better equip Neighborhood Associations to serve their communities (e.g., succession planning resources, central repository of relevant information, trainings, administrative support).



## *Resource Support*

Event funding and incentives so that the City and/or Neighborhood Associations can create an environment to make participating in a Neighborhood Association more accessible.



## *Advising*

Forum or process where Neighborhood Association leaders or representatives can collaborate with the City directly and provide recommendations on relevant policies and issues (e.g., safety, quality of life issues, the budget).



## *Empowerment*

Opportunities or processes for Neighborhood Associations and community members to make changes in their own neighborhood and/or feel co-ownership over certain City projects/initiatives.

# Survey Key Takeaways

The 122 respondents reinforced many of the themes found through other engagement methods.



**Need for greater financial support..** Most respondents indicated that the City provides NA's "some" support and listed financial resources are the highest need (61%). This resonates with community meeting finds as most respondents listed resources for events and communications as a top concern.

- Community members want to host their own events and connect with their neighborhoods but need consistent and reliable resources to do so.
- This supports the Engagement Model Phase 3 to provide coalitions with consistent grant funding.



**Preference for in-person resources.** Respondents indicated that in-person consistent meetings with City staff were of top concerns (35%) and that their NA's need dedicated support (56%).

- Through community meetings and council interviews stakeholders expressed difficulty building community trust without assigned and consistent representation.
- The City should explore options that provide City resources to connect with, provide resources to, and act as a liaison to neighborhoods. Engagement models 1 through 3 explore various levels of dedicated support.



**Community members want to feel empowered in their interactions with the City and while advocating for their communities.** 81% of responses for 'why you participate in your neighborhood association' included advocating for their neighborhood and for those that are not current members indicated that third most likely reason they would join is to advocate for their community.

- The City should explore options that allow neighborhoods to have an active voice to inform City decisions.
- Advising Models 2 and 3 provide formalized avenues to which community members can advocate for their neighborhood and provide input on City action.

**Note for Consideration:** Between all three engagement methods, the community meetings, survey, and neighborhoods conference, many of the same NA's were represented. Note that there might be some overlap in representation within this data set due to lack of control over single unique inputs.

# Engagement Findings: Neighborhoods Conference



# Neighborhoods Conference Key Takeaways

The ~40 participants reinforced many of the themes found through other engagement methods.



**Support and excitement for the Neighborhoods Support Team.** The Neighborhoods Support Team received the most votes of the model options (26%).

- Participants were most interested in the Neighborhood Support Team, expressing that it could give them the access and resources they need.
- This feedback is consistent with the feedback received from other engagement methods – community members want dedicated support from the City. This is also consistent with the purpose voting results, as capacity building and two-way communication received the most votes (both with 25% of the votes).



**Contradictory advising preferences.** Advising received the least number of votes (14%) during the purpose activity, however the Issue-Based Commission Received the second most votes (20%) overall of the six model options. The third most voted model option was also Issue-Based Advisory Group (16%).

- Engagement has consistently revealed contradictory preferences on the role of advising in the New Model (Advising also received the least number of votes during the staff Visioning Workshop).
- This information signals that stakeholders do want Advising to be an aspect of the new Model, but the City may need to conduct additional analyses to determine the best fit Advising model option in the long-term.

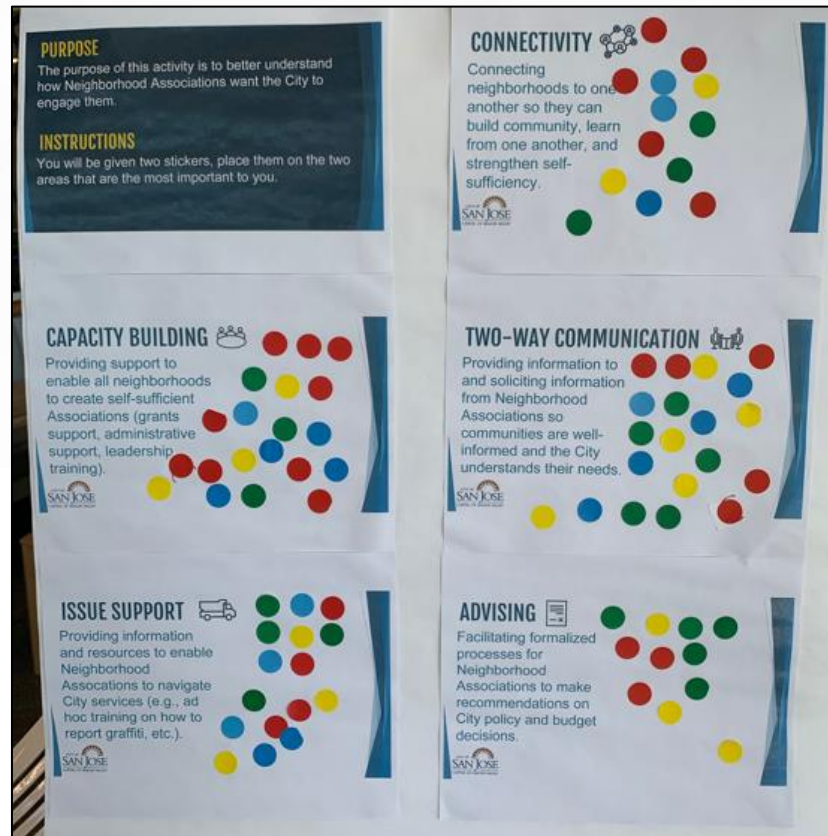


**Need for further exploration.** The Neighborhood Coalitions received the lowest number of votes of the options (12%), signaling the need for additional analyses on potential long-term organizational structures.

- Though Coalitions received the least number of votes of the model options, participants saw value in the Coalition model such as its potential to partner with Project Hope and the potential prevention of City-staff burn-out. However, participants also expressed concern on if this structure would create potential conflicts with existing Coalitions.
- As the City considers adding additional dedicated resources in the long-term, it may need to conduct additional analyses to determine the best structure for organizing NAs and staff resources (i.e., Coalition structure or other organization method).

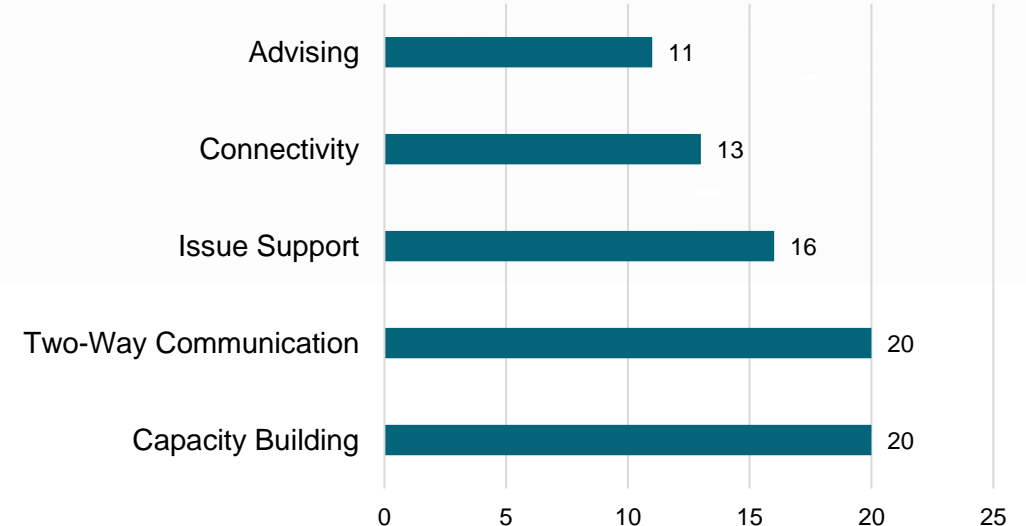
# Neighborhoods Conference – Activity 1

The first activity asked participants to vote for their preferred purpose for the new Engagement Model.



*Participants were given two dots for voting*

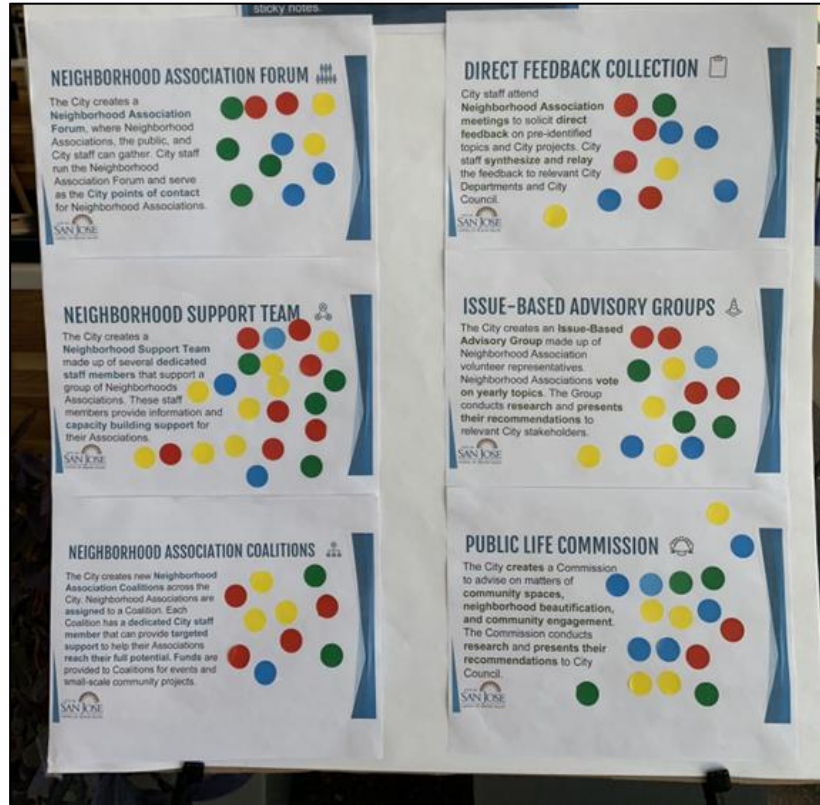
Which two key areas are the most important to your Neighborhood Association?



Two-way communication and capacity building were the most important areas for Neighborhood Associations.

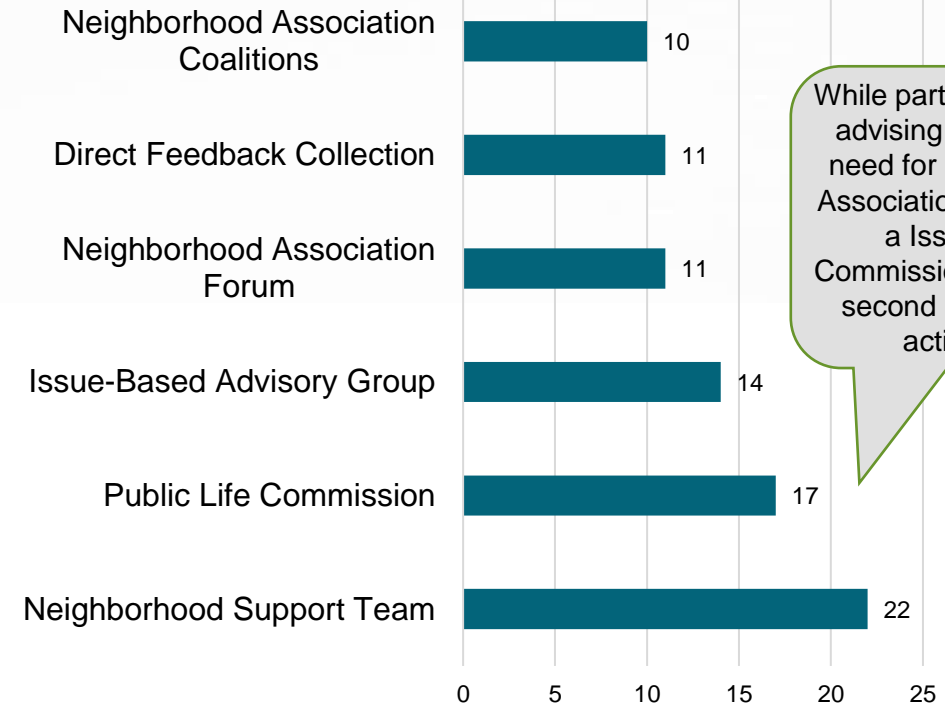
# Neighborhoods Conference – Activity 2

The second activity asked participants to vote for the model they are most excited about.



Participants were given two dots for voting

Which engagement and advising models resonate the most with you.



While participants ranked advising as the lowest need for Neighborhood Associations, developing a Issue-Based Commission received the second most votes in activity two.

# Model Research

# Model Research – Approach

**Desk research was conducted to understand how other cities structure their neighborhood engagement models.**

## Purpose:

Understand alternative neighborhood engagement models between public (community run organizations) and City sponsored groups.

## Approach:

1. Identify cities of similar size, organizations, and/or goals.
2. Conduct desk research to collect information on other City's neighborhood engagement practices.
3. Summarize findings.

## City Models Evaluated:

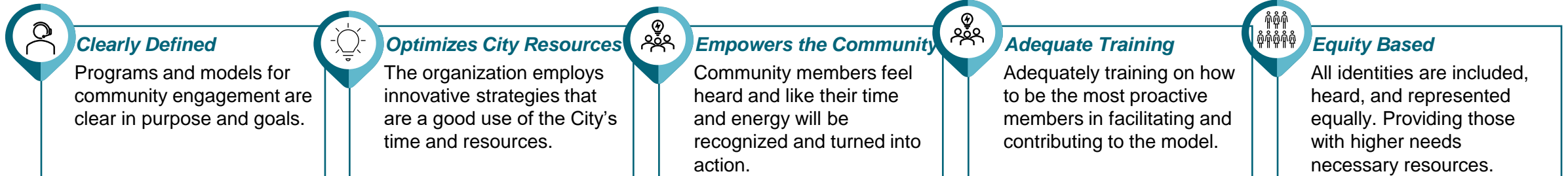
**CITY of BOSTON**



**Seattle**



## Model Considerations:

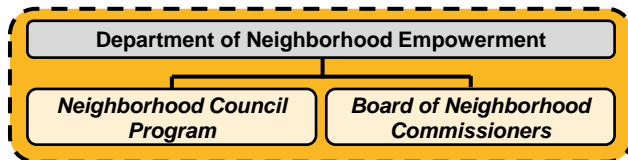




# Model Research – Summary

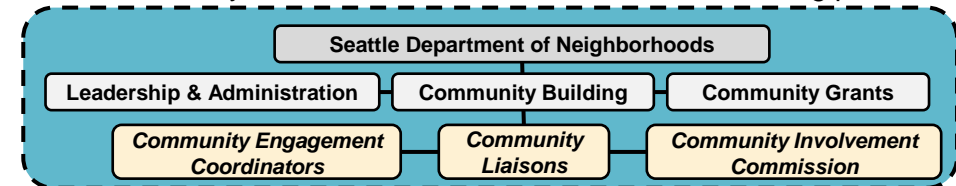
## Los Angeles – Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

- The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (EmpowerLA) oversees multiple engagement opportunities for the City.
- The **Neighborhood Councils** are advisory bodies, who advocate for their communities with City Hall on important issues like development, homelessness, and emergency preparedness. Neighborhood Councils are part of the Los Angeles City government, and have annual budgets funded by City funds.



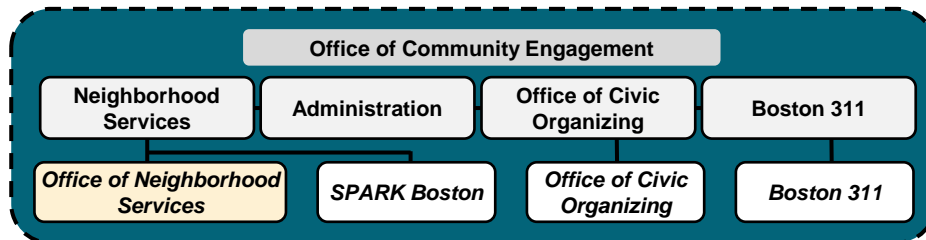
## Seattle – Department of Neighborhoods

- The Department of Neighborhoods is charged with advising on engagement for all city departments and managing the city's engagement needs.
- There are **four city funded full-time staff** operating as Community Engagement Coordinators who are each assigned to different regions.
- There are **53 Community Liaisons** who act as a bridge between the community and city. They ensure underserved and underrepresented groups have access to City information, resources, and decision-making power.



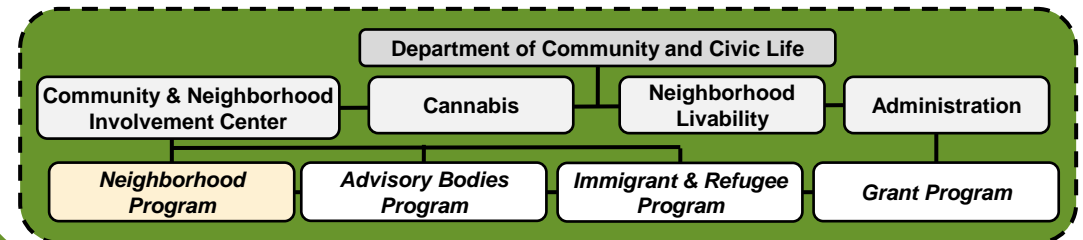
## Boston – Office of Community Engagement

- The Office of Neighborhood Services has **20 employees ("Community Liaisons")** that each represent and serve a designated neighborhood.
- They serve to disseminate information and facilitate delivery of City services. The department provides a forum for both groups and individuals to express concerns, request services, and extend opinions..



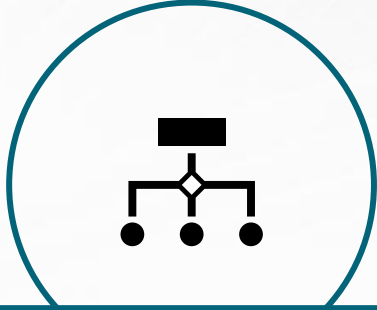
## Portland – Department of Community & Civic Life

- Portland is organized into **seven District Coalitions**. Each coalition contains approx. 12 neighborhood associations. The City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement oversees the Coalitions with approximately **8 full time staff**.
- The primary focus of Coalition work is **building capacity** for civic engagement.





# Model Research – Themes



## Theme 1: Meeting the Community where they are

- Many models are community orientated but maintain City sponsored resources to do direct community engagement.
- These resources are available through central offices with either satellite locations or floating personnel who meet people in the City where they are.



## Theme 2: Multidimensional Engagement

- Forums are meant to supplement other community engagement work.
- Many committees focused on neighborhood groups are one piece of a broader neighborhood engagement model – helping organize the forum but also provide visibility to it via other staff obligations in the City.



## Theme 3: Continuity in City Personnel

- Continuity in dedicated liaisons who interact with community groups is essential in maintaining trust, understanding community needs, and holistically identifying the needs of the community.
- Many models provide dedicated resources that act as the community's point of contact in the City.