Neighborhood Engagement Process

Phase III Report

November 18, 2019

I. Background

Phase III of the NEP was designed and built utilizing lessons learned from Phases I & II. Phase III was intended to deepen and actualize the deliberate and intentional nature of a comprehensive participatory community engagement process. This was achieved by initiating an equitable outreach and engagement process that created access to ONC neighborhood groups and others-regardless of their size or capacity-so that they could fully participate in giving input to perceived areas for changes, clarifications or removal to the ordinance. By developing a set of language data derived from this kind of community engagement process, policymakers have benefit of language data that can be triangulated with other kinds of information that can be used when undertaking the important work of updating the Neighborhood Association Recognition Ordinance.

Phase III of the Neighborhood Engagement Process (NEP) began in May 2019 with work continuing through mid-October 2019. This phase centered around direct community engagement with neighborhood associations (NAs) and homeowner associations (HOAs) by means of in-person discussions, known as "Choice Dialogues. Additionally, "flash polling" was done at four community centers, one in each quadrant of the City.

Personnel

SISGroup, led by its principal, Everette Hill, subcontracted a team of facilitators. Everette Hill collaborated with Eduardo Martinez, Meridian Strategies, and hired Tandem Consulting, LLC to help manage the project, serving as a hub. The Facilitator Coordinator, Dr. Rudy Garcia, managed the process with help from Barbara Garcia, who collaborated with the team to communicate and track progress, trends, and statistics. Lead field facilitators included Lara Bryson, Anthony Maestas, and Jamie Welles.

Process

Following several training meetings regarding the background of the Neighborhood Engagement Process as well as the process for Choice Dialogues, the facilitators began contacting neighborhood associations and homeowner associations in order to set up the Choice Dialogues. They used a database shared by the Office of Neighborhood Engagement (ONC).
Facilitators traveled to neighborhood public places (coffee shops, community centers, police substations, libraries) that were convenient locations for residents to meet. Facilitators met with NA leaders at convenient times throughout the day and evenings and held meetings during the week and on weekends.

Choice Dialogues

The first ten conversations utilized a survey instrument to accompany the Choice Dialogues. The team convened following these initial dialogues to review and refine the process. The dialogue plan, as originally designed, included the use of real-time click-polling technology to collect data from participants. Feedback from the neighborhoods after the first ten Choice Dialogues focused on the fact that the survey instrument utilizing the clicker system was cumbersome and a more "community friendly" tool and process was needed. The SISGroup team incorporated that feedback and made the implemented community-informed adjustments. The resulting final instrument was easier to comprehend and discuss. That instrument (comprised of questions and sub-questions) was used for the remainder of the community dialogues in Phase III.

The goal was to connect to (and engage) leadership from all the NA's and HOA's listed in the ONC contact database. Board leaders were asked to convene their leadership teams and invite residents to the community dialogues. Due to issues related to scheduling and coordination, some conversations were held only with board presidents, but many other dialogues included numerous board members. It is assumed that board leadership maintain the knowledge and authority to provide feedback which conveys the general perspectives of the organization.

Participants completed survey forms during the conversations and facilitators compiled notes from each discussion. The written comments from participant feedback forms were reviewed, analyzed, and compiled by Barbara Garcia and delivered to SISGroup for data entry and analysis. Throughout Phase III, the entire team met numerous times to review the work and make ongoing improvements based on feedback from residents. The team met on October 12, 2019 in order to review, reflect, and report about Phase III. The meeting included discussion about the human element involved in the NEP process. Phase III ended on October 15, 2019.

Flash Polling

Throughout the community input process, facilitators became aware that many NAs reported challenges with member recruitment and engagement. Near the end of the Phase III timeline, SISGroup facilitators conducted informal, non-scientific "flash polls" at community/senior centers in each of Albuquerque's four quadrants to assess whether residents were members of a Neighborhood Association, and if not, to identify reasons for not participating in the civic engagement efforts.

II.   Summary Analysis

NEP Project Demographics

Throughout Phase III, outreach to each of the 222 Neighborhood and Homeowners associations were contacted via phone and email. Final statistics are as follows:
- Total outreach (NA and HOA contacts from the ONC database that rec'd emails/phone calls): 222

- Total number of NA/HOA Choice Dialogues convened/completed: 93
- Total number of 'no responses' from NAs and HOAs (attempted contact but no contact): 83
- Number of interactions w/no Choice Dialogues (declined participation or unable to schedule within the Phase III timeline): 46

An additional <u>159</u> individual "flash" interviews, which are three-hour sessions with three facilitators and included Spanish translation, were held at four locations, one in each quadrant of the City: North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center, Manzano Mesa Multigenerational Center, Barelas Senior Center, and North Valley Senior Center.

The NEP employed a dialogue process for neighborhood group discussions. This process included a form with questions designed to elicit spontaneous answers in conversations with facilitators. The form was completed by neighborhood association (NA) and homeowner association (HOA) board presidents, board members, and other residents who chose to participate in the NEP.

Analysis

The process involved an important overview of the NEP as well as a general discussion in a Choice Dialogue, after which residents completed the three-part form. An analysis and synthesis of responses related to the main emerging themes from the Choice Dialogues is shown below. Written responses to the forms used in the Choice Dialogues were most central to the summary analysis described below.

In each form, there are "distinct" input/feedback statements – those that relate specifically to requests or recommendations on specific topics that may be included in a quantitative "count" during the affinity/theming/analysis step. For example, a response stating that the NARO revision should "address enforcement, ensure capacity-building trainings and strengthen board requirements would represent three distinct elements that would contribute to different themes.

There are also "corroborating" statements - responses intended to support previously stated elements that are not counted as separate statements: "We need a stronger engagement process. There are few options for residents needs to be addressed and the current process isn't adequate." In the previous example, "engagement process" is listed as the primary element for the quantitative counts, but the information in the second sentence of the example only serve to reinforce the main point. Consequently, the points made in that sentence (and ones like it) are not 'counted'.

It's important to note that during the dialogues, participants repeatedly expressed gratitude that City Council and ONC provided the opportunity for meaningful feedback and engagement.

They found the NEP process as central to strengthening the partnership between the city and neighborhood groups.

A. <u>Most Common Themes from the NEP Dialogues (provided by > 50% of respondents):</u>

   1. Revision of the NARO should establish stronger processes for engaging and supporting neighborhood groups, focusing on those activities that build trust with residents:

      a. Establish better and more frequent opportunities for NA's and residents to engage the city:
- Convene annual neighborhood "summits"
- Balance input and attention to needs of homeowners and residents with the needs of business and development interests
- Broaden stakeholder access to, and participation on, city boards and commissions

      b. Strengthen bi-directional communications between city components and NA's via regular/ongoing meetings and a diverse set of tools, communication modes and products:
- Strengthen ONC's "push" communications to NA's.
- Communications must provide options that reach individuals from a variety of ages, cultural norms, languages and technological skills.
- Make better use of online media, apps, newsletters, e-databases, letters, etc. to reach a wider audience.
- Create opportunities for residents to "opt in" and "opt out" of electronic communications and online data systems so that a greater number of residents can access information and not have to rely on Neighborhood Association processes to receive information; ensure that communications can be tailored to be relevant to specific associations.
- Do a better job of relaying existing supports and resources (access to facilitators and/or mediators) available to NA's.

   2. Land use, zoning and commercial development issues continue to be a major issue for NA's, despite the fact that most of these are now addressed by the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO). Lack of community support for the IDO process and its outcomes were a common response.

      a. Address conflicts or competing language between NARO and IDO (and other) ordinances.

      b. Ensure clarity for NA's with respect to input processes and conflict resolution processes for land use disputes.

      c. Allow for longer advance notification and more time to collect and relay residents' response to proposed development projects.

3. Provide resources that help support engagement with residents, build capacity of NA's and facilitate stronger connections with the City:

   a. Create access to resources for NA communications (online surveys, postage, printing, etc.) and to incentive resident participation.

   b. Assist NA's with communications to residents/members (communications infrastructure, tools and trainings).

   c. Provide tools and trainings for NA board development on multiple topics (operations, stakeholder engagement, financial management, ethics, volunteer/member recruitment and funding), 'how to' manuals, glossary of acronyms, etc.

   d. Establish funding supports for NA operations and projects (National Night Out, community policing, neighborhood meetings, etc.)

   e. Assist with mediation of land use and other disputes that residents may have.

4. Ensure follow-up/follow-through on issues relevant to neighborhood groups.

   a. Make sure that requests to 311 and ONC are relayed to appropriate departments on a timely basis.

b. Require staff/departmental responses within a reasonable amount of time.

   c. Elevate ONC's role in supporting neighborhood priorities.

   d. Strengthen enforcement of existing ordinances - particularly with respect to land use, nuisance properties, public safety issues and NA recognition/participation guidelines.

e. Establish and promote conflict resolution processes for NA's to engage in.

   B. <u>Less Common Themes (provided by 25-50% of respondents):</u>

   1. Remove barriers to participation:
      a. Address indemnification issues for NA boards and consider providing insurance coverage for those NA's that meet recognition requirements.

      b. Help mediate disputes with developers and/or city infrastructure improvements.

      c. Avoid requirements that make it harder for NA's to be "recognized" while ensuring that boards establish, and comply with basic operational requirements.

   2. Make the NARO ordinance easy to read, comprehend (or at least provide a companion document that translates it.

3. Ensure that Association boards do a better job of recruiting and engaging residents.

4. Eliminate overlapping boundaries in recognition of the Neighborhood Associations.

C. <u>Other areas (provided by <25% of respondents):</u>

1. Don't overcomplicate the ordinance language (or change it at all).

2. Clarify the role of NA coalitions and HOA's in the revised ordinance. Some respondents value the work of the Coalitions while others feel their views are not represented well by Coalition leaders.

3. Required NA boards to ensure advocacy positions and operations are responsive to majority of residents within the physical boundaries of the association. Ensure that boards are operating in a representative and transparent manner.

4. Research legislation from other U.S. communities and apply "best practices" to the revised NARO ordinances.

More specific comments/ themes are provided in Section III below.

Flash Polls

The flash polls were not originally included in the NEP process design. However, we found it important to undertake a simple process to begin polling residents whether or not they were involved with their Neighborhood Association, and if not, for what reason. Of the 159 individuals interviewed, just over 60% indicated that they did not belong to a Neighborhood Association. The most common reasons cited included:

- Individuals have no time or interest in engaging with the NA's
- Individuals live in areas where there are no NA's (or they're unaware if there is one)
- Individuals are renters or temporary residents
- Some feel NA's are ineffective, not engaging, or don't attend enough to needs of residents
- Individuals don't engage due to personal preferences or privacy concerns
- There are language or mobility issues that inhibit their ability to participate
- A small minority of people involved dictate positions for the majority of residents

For the other 40% that were NA members, most of them listed the following reasons:

- Individuals want to know about issues in my community and be involved in them
- Individuals want to help influence what happens in my neighborhood
- Individuals engage opportunities to get to know and interact/socialize with neighbors
- The NA has an important role in advancing public safety, beautification and development issues

III.   NEP Process Considerations

Phases I and II of the project were critical in determining contextual factors (history, trust, institutional and neighborhood capacity) that influence the design and deployment of strategies for neighborhood dialogues. Phase II findings indicate that continuing to build trust in the process and designing engagement opportunities that meet neighborhoods where they are, with an acknowledgement of their current capacity, will be critical. Throughout Phases I and II, we identified many things that could be addressed in the rewrite of the NARO to enhance engagement with Neighborhood Associations.

Phase III convened meetings with neighborhood groups, neighborhood associations and homeowners associations through facilitated dialogue that yielded input in real-time. This input can be foundational to the updates to the NARO. These updates to the ordinance, in their entirety, have an opportunity to codified a reimagined relationship between the City, the ONC and Albuquerque neighborhood groups. Some of the information focused on process and tasks that can be implemented by ONC, but other information was more relevant to specific products that NA's are desiring.

The following is a list of considerations for Council Members and Council Staff to consider:

A.   *Considerations residents offered constructive considerations to improve City-neighborhood group communications and engagement:*
- The current ordinance assigns administrative roles to too many entities; simplify the ordinance by making ONC a more capable liaison to Neighborhood Associations and provide ONC with the resources to better meet constituent needs.
- Share up-to-date information via binders, mailings, brochures and/or the City website about City departments. Specifically, NA's requested information about departmental functions, appropriate and current contact personnel, and contact information (e.g., which person in what department should be called concerning an abandoned house).
- Establish a "liaison" or "ombudsperson" to serve as an important "navigator" between the neighborhood associations and the City for advice about matters concerning their neighborhoods. This single point of contact would ideally help residents more efficiently reach the right person in the City to help with their issues. Homeowner associations also expressed the desire for a liaison to help them navigate City departments. Many participants expressed frustration about being transferred between multiple people in various departments with no resulting resolution to their problems. They desire to have one go-to person with whom they can build a relationship to help with general questions and advice about maneuvering through City processes. Many people expressed the need for ONC to build capacity and ramp up staffing in order to have sufficient staff capable of serving these important roles.
- Residents want well-defined points of contact at the City.
- Improve the City website so that it is easier to navigate.

- Have an ONC server devoted to neighborhood association (online) boards where all members can share ideas, successes, and challenges. This tool could possibly link to neighborhood associations' social networking.

- Hold regular meetings with departmental representation.

- ONC should help fund mailings to residents. (Many neighborhood associations have little to no budget to put out mailings.)

- The NARO should include specific methods of communication.

- Compile FAQs for neighborhood associations and homeowners associations and add to the City website.

- Homeowners' Association residents should also get information, not just board members.

B. Considerations of activities that were recommended for implementation include:

- Best practices should be shared on the website and at citywide meetings.

- Hold annual or semi-annual meeting with all departments about roles and responsibilities.

- Hold a large meeting with APD, AFD, Zoning (rules and regulations).

- Informational events should include neighborhood associations and homeowners associations.

- Hold crime prevention meetings.

C. Many neighborhoods readily acknowledge that they need help with skills development and capacity-building. They specifically requested training regarding the following:

- Ideas/assistance for member recruitment.

- Engage all residents with special emphasis on reaching/involving younger and more diverse groups of residents.

- Conducting safety patrols, crime prevention tips and addressing "real issues" such as crack houses, needles, and abandoned homes.

- Conflict resolution/ mediation/dispute resolution and dealing with disruptive board members or residents.

- Website development/modernization.

- Leadership development/board operations and bylaws.

- Meeting facilitation.

- Grant information and grantwriting resources.

- Finance management/budgeting.

D. Specific recommendations that align with feedback from Phases I and II:

- Assign liaisons to help neighborhood associations navigate City processes.

- Include a list of City department heads, (under 14-8-2-6(f) (6).

- Teams of City officials should attend neighborhood associations' annual meetings to explain their roles and responsibilities.
- City officials should participate in regular forums.
- Include a statement that the City will meet on a regular basis with Neighborhood associations.
- Include a clear conflict resolution process. (Most people are unfamiliar with this process.)
- Homeowners associations need liaisons.
- Homeowners associations need listening forums.
- Include a clause about holding regular trainings/seminars/semi-annual or annual meetings.
- Trainings should include best practices for healthy and thriving neighborhood engagement.
- City follow-through should be codified. The City must give a timeline for expected progress.
- Codify so that the City must communicate outcomes to neighborhood associations.
- Insist developers follow rules.
- Define job responsibilities.
- Address liability.
- Write indemnification into the ordinance.
- Specify that neighborhood associations will receive training on various topics (e.g., IDO, conflict resolution, strategic planning, leadership, etc.).
- Specify that neighborhood associations will be updated about new planning projects.
- Codify keeping neighborhood associations from acquiring other neighborhood association boundaries.
- Codify streamlined/easier document submission.
- Codify verification of credentials of those claiming to be neighborhood association board members to ensure that the City is working with only elected board members, not rogue individuals who do not truly represent the neighborhood.
- Consider requiring board treasurers to participate in training about fiduciary responsibilities.
- Include mediation facilitation.
- Clarify the role of homeowners associations in the NARO.
- Homeowners associations should have a separate ordinance.

E. *Choice Dialogue participants made recommendations throughout the conversations. Many did not neatly fit into or overlapped particular categories of responses. The most frequently heard overarching suggestions included:*

- ONC needs liaisons to help neighborhood associations navigate City processes. They understand capacity issues and hope that funding will make this more possible.

- Neighborhoods desire many types of training including: board development/leadership; website development; member recruitment; conflict management; strategic planning; IDO; acquiring grants.

- Residents suggested holding forums, seminars, and/or a "Citizens Academy" in order to understand how CABQ functions. They repeatedly requested having a current directory of services with updated contact information.

- Participants also like the idea of being mentored by more experienced neighborhood associations.

- They would welcome doing more collaboratively with neighboring neighborhood associations.

- Neighborhood associations requested that other neighborhood associations share best practices, particularly about safety and recruitment.

- Communication is a huge issue and recommendations varied according to the age of residents. Having a neighborhood portal was suggested as a way to share information between neighborhood associations.

- Follow through of complaints was frequently mentioned as being vital to establishing/maintaining trust. If it can be codified, that would be well received.

IV.   Closing

The NEP yielded many informative and lively conversations. The process served as a great example of authentic community engagement. It is our belief that through this process, SISGroup outreach, structure and protocols for community dialogues input initiated a foundational structure of relationship- and trust-building between the neighborhoods and the City of Albuquerque. Further, it created both an expectation and an opportunity for the CABQ, the Office of Neighborhood Coordination in particular, to continue to utilize authentic community engagement methodologies and community readiness capacity-building assessments to develop an ongoing infrastructure and develop "muscle-memory" around how best to engage the passionate neighborhood constituents who care deeply about their city.

The NEP dialogues helped codify the realization, for both CABQ partners and neighborhood group stakeholders, that:

1. Trust has to be re-established and regularly attended to;

2. Personalized outreach and communication must be improved, simplified and more consistent;

3. The partnership between the CABQ and the neighborhoods have to be built on greater role-clarity and responsibilities by all partners and stakeholders;

4. Neighborhood groups must develop greater capacity to attract new members and conduct their business in the most efficient, ethical and representative ways, and,

5. That all who are working hard daily (at the City and NA level) to make Albuquerque a safer, happier, more engaged and vibrant city must be recognized and acknowledged and given an opportunity to connect to other individuals regularly to reinvigorate their efforts.

If the NARO update can help to begin to systematically create clarified process, clarified access pathways to participation and information and clearly define whom and how residents can connect to capacity-building supports offered by the City, we will all be better for it. As one of the participants in our Phase III dialogues claimed, "when neighborhoods are strong, Albuquerque is strong."