

# Cedar Rapids Public Works Department Standard Operating Procedure



<b>Procedure Name:</b> Public Relations During Design		<b>Approved By:</b> Doug Wilson	
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<b>Date Revised or Reviewed:</b>	<b>Revised or Reviewed by:</b>	<b>Approved By:</b>	
<b>Published Locations (manuals/websites/etc.):</b> Project Development and Management Manual – <b>After any revisions to this document, replace the obsolete version stored on <a href="#">this webpage</a></b>			

**Purpose:**

To summarize and document the process to effectively communicate with residents during the design phase of a project regarding City work that is occurring in neighborhoods.

**Guidelines:**

1. Communicate in a timely manner with residents before any City work occurs in neighborhoods.
2. Consult this SOP and work with members of the Communication Team when communicating with residents about City work in neighborhoods.
3. The following should always be included in communications:
  - Who:** Who can the residents contact if they have questions/concerns?
  - What:** What is the nature of the work being completed?
  - When:** When will the work begin & how long will it last?
  - Where:** Where is the work occurring and what are the anticipated impacts (traffic, property, etc.)?
  - Why:** Why is the work occurring and what are the benefits to the residents?

**Procedures:**

**Day-to-Day Communications**

Be proactive about identifying and resolving project related complaints before they become a problem to the public. All contact with the public should be courteous and responsive. Staff should conduct themselves to reflect the professional standards of the City. Avoid making casual comments about the project that would cast the City in a negative light.

Media interviews are done to either answer questions received by the news station, or to coincide with a press release. Always work with your communications specialist if you are approached by a member of the local media.

### **Direct Mail**

Direct mail is most often used when the project is planned to impact a specific neighborhood or corridor. Direct mail alerts residents and businesses in advance of the project starting. Direct mail is sent to all adjacent property owners in addition to neighboring streets. The exact mailing list is determined based on the scope of the project.

Refer to SOP: [Generating a Mailing List](#)

If a project has minimal or no property owner impacts, a public information meeting is not necessary and a letter informing the residences and businesses in the corridor about the project is sufficient.

Direct Mail should include:

1. Overview of project improvements including:
  - Why project is occurring
  - Benefits of project
  - Anticipated impacts to residents (traffic, property, etc.)
2. Timeline - when the project/work will begin, possible alternative date (if applicable), how long project will last. Timelines should be within a reasonable timeframe and start and end dates must be estimated as accurately as possible.
3. Contact information
4. Other helpful information to include (if applicable):
  - Invitation to open house
  - Methods to give feedback
  - Maps
  - Link to more details on website

Refer to template: [Project Notice Letter – No Public Information Meeting](#)

Refer to template: [PfP \(Paving for Progress\) Project Notice Letter – No Public Information Meeting](#)

### **Public Information Meeting – including open houses**

*Public Information Meetings* are held months or years in advance of a major project, and most directly target adjacent property owners/businesses and neighboring streets/corridors. They are advertised through direct mail.

*Open houses* are targeted at the general public (not just a specific neighborhood or corridor) and are advertised through a combination of direct mail and press releases, stakeholder invites, social media, etc. Used widely for large initiatives that impact the general public.

A public information meeting should be held for all public improvement projects, except for those with minimal or no property owner impacts. The meeting is typically held at the intermediate stage in design. For large, complex projects with extensive property owner impacts, a second meeting may be held at the final stage in design.

1. The Project Manager prepares a Public Information Meeting invitation letter to residences and businesses in the project corridor. A Property Owner Survey form should be included with the letter. The letter and survey form should be mailed to arrive at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.

CIP/Utilities projects:

Refer to template: [Public Information Meeting Invitation Letter](#)

Refer to template: [Property Owner Survey Form](#)

Paving for Progress projects:

Refer to template: [PfP Public Information Meeting Invitation Letter](#)

Refer to template: [PfP Property Owner Survey Form](#)

Refer to SOP: [Generating a Mailing List](#)

2. The meeting agenda generally includes a presentation by staff, followed by individual discussions at tables. Following table discussion, a staff member (city or consultant) from the table will issue a verbal report of the table's discussion to the entire group at the end of the meeting, summarizing the main points of what their table discussed.

Refer to template: [PfP Public Information Meeting 1 Presentation](#)

Refer to template: [PfP Public Information Meeting 2 Presentation](#)

3. It is suggested to provide "strip maps" (large-format printouts of the project area) to depict the proposed improvements. The size of the strip maps shall be based on the type of tables at the location (i.e. round tables vs. long, rectangular tables). The number of strip maps should be determined based on the expected attendance at the meeting. Generally, 4-8 strip maps should be provided and should include:
  - a. Proposed improvements (keep drawings simple and colorful)
  - b. Aerial photo background
  - c. Property addresses
  - d. North arrow
  - e. Watermark of "DRAFT" somewhere on the map
4. There may be the need to provide display boards with additional information at the meeting.

Refer to template: [PfP Display Board](#)

5. A planning meeting amongst the design team and Communications staff is typically held at least one week prior to the public information meeting to discuss the agenda and materials.
6. Other material to bring to the meeting include:
  - a. [Sign in Sheet](#)
  - b. [Table Project Comment Form](#) – multiple copies
  - c. [Fact Sheet](#) – for staff use (or consider distributing this to staff ahead of the meeting)
  - d. [Room Location Signs](#)
  - e. [Table toppers](#) – for projects with multiple locations
  - f. Presentation on jump drive
  - g. Hard copies of presentation
  - h. Projector screen
  - i. Laptop
  - j. Clicker
  - k. Power strip and extension cord
  - l. HDMI to Video port cables
  - m. Pens and markers
  - n. Post it boards and easels
  - o. Tape
7. General room set-up: Ensure the venue is ADA compliant. Sign-in table outside the room or near the entrance. Rooms should be setup “banquet style” (not “auditorium style”) with a presentation screen and tables/chairs for smaller group discussion. Easels/displays arranged around the room if appropriate. At least one staff member (City or Consultant) at each table. It is strongly discouraged to have presentation slides that require an internet connection if you are hosting the meeting in a building not owned by the City, since an internet connection may be unavailable or unreliable.
8. Within one week of the meeting, a follow up letter should be sent

Refer to template: [Public Information Meeting Follow Up Letter](#)

Refer to template: [PfP Public Information Meeting Follow Up Letter](#)

### **Council Communication**

1. Council Communications are weekly emails to City Council members, and include a number of topics.
2. They are run by the City’s Communications Division and are used to alert City Council to the start of a project that may generate questions or controversy.
3. The text is typically 4 – 8 sentences that describes the project, the impacts, and the timeline.
4. If a Council Communication is required for a project, the City’s Project Manager will be contacted directly by the Communications Division.

### **One-on-One Stakeholder Meetings**

1. It may be necessary to meet one-on-one with some of the affected businesses, property owners, and stakeholders along the corridor that may be affected by the project. These may include:
  - a. Schools
  - b. Hospitals
  - c. Daycares
  - d. Businesses
  - e. Neighborhood associations
  
2. If a Consultant is utilized, a list of stakeholders and the number of expected meetings should be identified during the development of the Professional Services Agreement.