

Advisory Council

Homework Responses

April 19, 2018



QUESTION 4:

What are your thoughts about the engagement process? What questions do you have? What do you think of the one big meeting idea?

Response 1:

I love the one big meeting idea. I think we have A LOT of work to do to make sure that it really is "Richmond under one roof" and I would encourage tasking us as advisory council members to help do the legwork/promotion for helping make that a reality. I think the September goal is reasonable and more practical for getting broad constituent participation. I think it is important to clarify that the one big meeting is another means of data collection (qualitative and quantitative) so that we have the perspectives of as many people in our city as possible to guide our work on the advisory council. I think we are all feeling a bit of "what is our job?" confusion, but yesterday's meeting and review of the engagement process cleared a lot of that up for me. I got the sense that the community meeting would prevent a "cart before the horse" mentality, in wanting to prescribe the contents of the master plan without having the data and citizen concerns that would inform those contents. I concur that smaller community-based meetings in addition to the one big meeting would be ideal, and another avenue by which advisory council members and ambassadors can help inform the public and involve them meaningfully and genuinely in the process.

Response 2:

I think it is exciting. However, it seems like we are talking about 2 or 3 "big meetings". I have never been part of something like this, and am excited about the idea of helping to make it a success.

Response 3:

I am concerned that the one-big-meeting idea will not work as well in Richmond as in DC because it still requires people to take time, get in their cars, drive to the meeting, etc, and that we won't get useful information out of the event because it won't accurately reflect Richmond's population. Even if we wait for the Pulse system to be fully operational, that does not do much to engage Richmonders on the Southside. I also would like to see more working groups, because while public engagement is always a higher good, I feel the point of the selection process for committee members was intended to effectively represent Richmonders' ideas, experiences, and opinions. We are supposed to be Richmond in a microcosm, which is necessary to do work effectively while still being open to public comment. I appreciate that leadership wants to be as transparent and responsive as possible, but we already have a good group of highly diverse people who can be presented with materials, process, bring ideas to the table, and distill goals without a huge, expensive, cumbersome process.

Response 4:

One big meeting seems stressful and potentially not useful if not handled correctly. There would need to be structure set in place that day and potentially have the public prepped with the structure prior to the day of the meeting.

I am concerned that, while there will be effort to engage the larger community, we will end up with the regular demographic that attends public meetings. There needs to be very clear and directed effort to engage those who are not normally engaged to make sure we have a true discussion about the plan and the future of Richmond.

Response 5:

I would rather we take our time in planning and executing the process and not rush. I think one big meeting would be fantastic. I assume that there would be small work groups WITHIN the large meeting. One of the better meetings for master planning Gilpin Court and Dove Court was a similar format and

allowed many residents to talk about their small group work. "Richmond Under One Roof" jumped out at me like... a lion from a cage (?).

Response 6:

I am new to the engagement process and am struggling with the concept. I think one big meeting is a positive idea that must be fully supported by the entire group in order to be successful.

Response 7:

What are the goals of the engagement process? What is the goal of the one big meeting idea?

These are important questions that need to be answered before choosing the appropriate engagement tools. Are we trying to involve the community/stakeholders? Consult with the community/stakeholders? Or inform the community/stakeholders? Or all three? There are dozens of ways to accomplish this and I don't think the draft communications, engagement, and consensus plan gets specific enough around the timeline, tools, and goals.

I don't love the one big meeting idea. I prefer a smaller, more personalized, thoughtful, and targeted approach. I think community engagement is a critical part of this process and I feel that the large meeting approach might not encourage the type of participation that a smaller community meeting would. I am also concerned that this approach will not allow for meaningful dialogue. There is a great deal of material to review and complex issues and information to process and I'm not sure that one city-wide meeting is the best way to approach this. I also think it's important to go out to communities and encourage participation and have meetings where they live and work, it provides important context and shows that this process is committed to making sure we capture their voice. I also think that it's important to have more than one opportunity for people to contribute. While online feedback and surveys are good and fine, I think many people aren't comfortable with technology so providing them with options and more than one in-person opportunity to contribute is important. Lastly, I'm concerned that we may rush through this process. This to me, is the most exciting part of this process. This is where the community gets to contribute to the future of Richmond. They get to say what's important to them and what they want the city to look and feel like. This is a critical piece and I hope we get it right.

Response 8:

I have several specific questions about the plan document I will email separately.

I like the "one big meeting" idea. "No one asked us" is a common sentiment heard here when it comes to policy, and this type of one Richmond under one roof model could be impactful as well as useful.

I do think we need to be VERY thoughtful about

- a) engaging with community prior to event to prepare them for the event and set expectations,
- b) strategically planning engagement to ensure all corners/major groups are engaged on the lead up (UCI cycling championships lead up engagement I think was a good example of this),
- c) ensuring access to event via public transportation/walking/biking, food, water, childcare, Spanish translators/facilitators,
- d) training of facilitators to REALLY do well at facilitating dialogue at the event and listening without judgement (this is a HUGE skill and should not be overlooked),
- e) ensuring diversity among ambassadors and facilitators (how are the ambassadors being advertised? I hadn't heard about it until reading the engagement plan. Diverse ambassadors means diverse networks on getting the word out; diverse facilitators mean people can feel comfortable seeing other people who look like them in leadership roles and engaged),
- f) make it fun! Invite all our local mascots out, pause every hour for Community Line-Dancing with the Wobble/Cupid Shuffle/Electric Slide etc (Sports Backers' Fitness Warriors are a great resource for fitness engagement), etc. Youth Corner that engages them for input in a different/fun/age appropriate way,
- g) balancing safety needs and possible deterrents for attending (e.g. police; possible solution: use more plain clothes officers than uniformed officers?).

Response 9:

On the One Big Meeting:

In my experience with community engagement, both small and large, in the US and in the Middle East, it is very often that community members have a lot to say but won't. Sometimes they are shy, sometimes they don't know how to contribute, and often they just don't think what they have to say is of value. For this reason, I think it would be much more beneficial to first have a few smaller neighborhood size meetings for interested individuals to not only become accustomed to the process, the questions, the challenges and opportunities, but to also have an opportunity to listen and talk in a space that may feel more comfortable to them. My concern is that many individuals may feel overwhelmed by the crowd and not engage, which defeats the point of the meeting.

I also think as fun and unique as the 'Richmond under one roof' idea can be, it can be more beneficial to the process, if individuals are informed about what it is exactly that a masterplan can accomplish, and not mistaken this with issues that should be taken care of in a small area plans or daily issues that the City Council would be taking care of, which again, would not be beneficial to the purpose that the meeting would be serving, not to mention time consuming.

I believe a combination of taking the time to inform and educate individuals about masterplanning with the help of ambassadors, as well as holding community/neighborhood size meeting in their home neighborhoods, would 1) help them help us envision the future we would all like for the City, and 2) make the large meeting more manageable and productive. I think that the large meeting would only be beneficial to the process if the individuals attending are informed and clear on what is happening, the process, and have already been thinking about them in their own time, otherwise, my concern is that individuals may not only be overwhelmed and not-as-contributing in a conversation they want to be involved in, but also feel left out.

Response 10:

The process seems logical to me. Like anything though, it's all about execution. I have a question about the big meeting...Is it one meeting or three? Looks like three on the diagram. I am in agreement with our discussion about the timing. I don't think summer is a good idea. We need to do a good job defining the goals of the meeting beforehand and setting expectations both before and after. Let's make it fun as well!

Response 11:

It is well thought out and I appreciate all the effort that has gone into it. I like the one big meeting idea. I do not believe it should take place in the summer and it should be supplemented by additional localized opportunities for engagement that rely less on technology. I believe we all agree that inclusive, extensive engagement is a priority. Thank you for all you are doing. You are off to a great start!

Response 12:

I'm in favor of the large city-wide meeting. I have a clarifying question, is the suggestion for one (1) large city-wide meeting or three (3) large city-wide meetings as illustrated on the one-pager? However, I agree with council member Elyana that there needs also needs to be some small group meetings as well to reach populations of people who may not ever be able to attend the larger meetings or watch it on TV (e.g. older and disabled adults in skilled nursing or assisted living facilities and the staff who work there). The ambassadors are going to be vital and we're going to need a good array of people to reach a diversity of residents throughout the city. Getting active clergy and community resource centers involved will be very helpful with spreading the word to communities of people who may fall in Quadrant 1 and 2, but especially quadrant 1.

Response 13:

I think it may be too ambitious to hope for the desired participation levels with one big meeting and would suggest at least two meetings - one in the evening and one on a weekend. I believe it would be helpful to have a work plan for the committee and the goals/objectives for that meeting or meetings at least 3 months in advance so it can be broadly and extensively advertised. In order to get good feedback from community members we will need to give them an advance preview of what feedback we want from them.

For example lots of neighborhood associations will want to participate and they will need to have time to meet and discuss their planned feedback in advance. You need to keep in mind they only meet once a month and maybe not at all in the summer. So I think the earliest such a meeting or meetings could occur and be effective would be September. Also I agree with many of the comments made at the last meeting.

Response 14:

I am EXCITED about the engagement process. I have a lot of faith and hope in what Don Edwards and Tasha Chambers are doing. It's exciting, because it has not been tried before here in the city, but it may be just what we need as far as reconciliation and (everyone) moving to a more idealized place. I think that the big one meeting is a fantastic idea!! Personally for me, I took part in a 10 month long leadership program specially for those interested in moving Richmond forward. The best part of the program were the opportunities for people with diverse backgrounds and ideas gathering to talk about some very tough issues but yet in a "safe place" where people were allowed to freely express themselves and be heard. Overall, it led to an increased awareness for all participants and as stubborn as I can be, I found myself changing my perspective on a few issues (hence why ending concentrated poverty is one of the issues I am passionate about today). I envision this happening for this City through the Big One meeting. It's probably something that should have happened decades ago, but perhaps we needed the right leaders in place to begin this process. I came out of last week's meeting and a recent phone call with Mr. Edwards and Ms. Chambers more hopeful and inspired than ever. It is truly an honor to be a part of this awesome process.

Response 15:

I'm not sure about the "one big meeting idea". The engagement process looks solid to me. I'm wondering how I can be more instrumental in increasing public awareness about Richmond 300. I'm also wondering how we are going to work through barriers (child care, transportation, etc) to assist citizens in participating.

Response 16:

My primary concern is that the draft schedule does not allow sufficient time for meeting with the Working Groups and/or representatives of the three types of constituencies identified in the outreach plan (geographic, communities of interest, and sectoral). The current schedule has the working group meetings beginning in November 2018 and ending in February 2019, which is very little time especially considering that it includes the holiday season. These working group and constituency meetings should start much earlier, sometime in summer 2018, and continue at least through the second community consultation in Spring 2019.

I consider these smaller meetings to be the most important part of the outreach process, in part because they will allow us to draw on expertise from community members who are not included in the Advisory Council. For this reason, I think it is important to allow some amount of working group / constituency input into the Existing Conditions element of the master planning process (i.e., the "Insights Report"). Starting the process earlier will allow us to include outside information and perspectives from those community representatives in our understanding of the current opportunities and challenges facing Richmond, which will create more buy-in when we solicit their input into the recommendations for how Richmond should change and evolve.

I do like the idea of "one big meeting," but I think that should not take the place of a series of smaller meetings with community and working groups. Also, the first big meeting should take place a little later in the process, perhaps in September 2018. This is important because July/August is not traditionally considered an appropriate time for having major public involvement activities, and pushing the meeting back two months will allow for more time to get working group / constituency input into the existing conditions / insights.

Response 17:

I read the draft and find it thorough and concise. I feel it gives the Council a framework in which to work as we go through this process. I think it would be helpful to seek the opinions of the communities involved. I also feel it will assist the Council in understand the direction we need to focus on. I don't have any questions at this time.

Response 18:

I support the idea of one big meeting.

Response 19:

I think that the engagement plan is good, but people need to be provided with a clear vision (or a couple of options of visions). The people of Richmond want to be lead, and I think it's the responsibility of the advisory council to help suggest what that vision might be and to then have those in the community help refine that vision through the engagement process. I also think education around the development process is a significant component of the engagement process that needs to be included because it tied directly to the execution of whatever is recommended in the plan. It's important for people to understand how all of these pieces fit together to develop the city that everyone desires.

Symbolically, I think one big meeting would mean a lot to the city. Everyone talks about One Richmond, and I think Richmond300 has a unique opportunity to actually make that happen in a meaningful way. With that being said, there needs to be a clear strategy on how to get people from all over the city to attend.

One final note: I'm not sure if this is the proper place to have this discourse, but I do think that the community engagement process as it relates to the entitlement process should be considered as part of a larger conversation.

Response 20:

Engagement process seems well thought out. I think smaller meetings will provide an opportunity for more engagement with the community but at least one larger meeting is probably helpful for full transparency - perhaps a larger meeting in the middle of the process.