

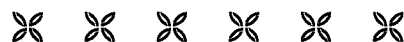
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR THE COMMON GOOD (CECG)--Getting Started

A steady stream of other civic priorities has up to now kept CECG from gathering momentum. But a break in traffic is about to allow that to change. This paper takes off from the staff paper presented to the City Council on April 6, 2009, *Civic Engagement Initiative Overview*, and suggests these next steps.

1. The conceptual leadership of the City Manager.
2. The operational leadership of the Assistant to the City Manager and an Advisory Group.
3. Formation of an Advisory Group representing a cross section of public and private non-profit organizations (see Attachment A).
4. Independent initiatives already underway that promote CECG.
 - a. Palo Alto Leadership Program.
 - b. HRC proposal for building civic engagement by designing and managing productive public meetings.
 - c. Civic engagement workshops for City staff.
5. Three initial actions (led and managed by the Assistant to the City Manager and the Advisory Group) that move the CECG initiative forward.
 - a. Keynote community-wide event(s), where national leaders in CECG are invited to introduce concepts, terms and practices being used throughout the country. The intent of one or more of these events is to broaden awareness of the topic and provide the basis for a common understanding of how Palo Alto might benefit from CECG.
 - b. Community conversations on a variety of topics (see Attachment C) that provide a forum for information and dialogue on matters important to our community. The conversations would be facilitated to constructively further *civic engagement* in the context of promoting the *common good*.
 - c. City Council study session at an appropriate time in 2010 to assess what has been learned and accomplished to date and what next steps can best capitalize on that work to move CECG forward.

These three attachments flesh out the outline above.

- A. CECG Advisory Group. This sketches the size, selection process, and charge to a *working* group.
- B. Advisory Group Representation “Map.” This maps clusters of civically engaged agencies, groups, and collaboratives that would comprise the CECG network.
- C. Community Topics. A starter set of topics worthy of community dialogue because of their significance to the future of Palo Alto.



Advisory Group: Civic Engagement for the Common Good **Appendix A**

Composition 10-15 individuals representing clusters of community organizations
Who “chairs” the group?
Could consider 2-3 reps from larger clusters

Selection Process Interested persons submit a brief application to City Manager’s office for selection by CM, with input from staff

Application

- Name
- Contact Info
- Check box for identifying cluster(s) with which the applicant has recent or current experience
- List up to 5 current or recent community affiliations/activities
- Signature of understanding about the selection process and expectations if selected

AG Charge The CECG AG is a “working group” that, with some support from City staff, will be asked to...

- Meet with CM 2 times per month
- Advise and assist City in planning and implementing CECG activities and programs, as well as identifying and measuring indicators of changes resulting from expanded CECG activities.
- Serve as a communication liaison to cluster organizations
- Perform identified tasks between meetings, perhaps as part of sub-committees
- Individual members of the group may assume leadership/coordinating roles, such as “Communications Coordinator”

Draft, August 4, 2009

Community Conversation Topics

- 1 **Expectations of City Government:** What do residents expect of staff (and what do staff think residents expect of them)? This could deal with topics such as how the city is organized, and why; the level of education, experience, and expertise needed to successfully do staff jobs; how we think of each other (are residents customers and staff service providers; is there a partnership element in the relationship; what roles do residents and staff play in shaping the atmosphere, norms, and expectations of the community?). Places to look for participants: staff, LWV, PAN, nonprofits, critics, etc.
- 2 **Inclusive community:** How might Palo Alto become a more inclusive community regarding race and ethnicity? How can it become a community where no one feels unwelcome because of what group they belong to? Places to look for participants: our near neighbors, churches, Stanford, Chamber of Commerce, PAUSD, HRC, etc.
- 3 **The Palo Alto Process:** What's the best (i.e., most efficient, effective, satisfying, etc.) way to make decisions in Palo Alto? How can we develop an expectation that the best decision will be made in a reasonable time, and not revisited? Or should we be more deliberate and be willing to cycle-back over ideas that were missing from earlier processes or decisions that later generate opposition? Places to look for participants: business community, local government experts, informed (and uninformed?) citizens?
- 4 **[Companion topic to 3 above.] The form of approach ↔ type of results relationship:** Examine the relationship between the form of city processes and the results they achieve. How might matters such as City Council study sessions be more like seminars or town meetings than multiple lectures? What's know about the shape of a process and what follows from it, i.e., the kinds of decisions, degree of acceptance of those decisions, the quality of those decisions, etc.? Places to look for participants: people who have had different kinds of experiences running public meetings, who know of techniques for improving participation quality and quantity, who have critiqued the Brown Act and have ideas for retaining its intent while improving its effect on meetings.

- 5 **The role of non-profits in developing the common good:** How is the division determined among what ought to be a government role, a non-profit supported in part by public funds, or a privately supported non-profit? E.g., how did senior services move from a city function to a non-profit function (i.e., Avenidas)? Should non-financial support for non-profits in matters such as leadership training, management coaching, certain services, etc. be a public responsibility in order to maximize the value and effectiveness of non-profits? What's the right balance between non-profits and government in providing important community services and meeting important community needs? Should there be more public-private collaborations as a means of keeping the common good in perspective? How might non-profits collaborate so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts? Places to look for participants: non-profits, city departments, Chamber of Commerce, professional associations (re pro bono assistance), etc.?
- 6 **How can we best connect and communicate with citizens?** How does the City get its message out to the members of the community? What outreach mechanisms work best? How could/should we utilize the media?