

# **Bend Neighborhood Association Assessment: Summary Report**

January 11, 2016

## **I. Overview**

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The purpose of this assessment is to help the City of Bend better understand each Neighborhood Association's training, communication and information needs, as well as its issues and priorities. Following an initial meeting with the City, the consultant developed assessment questions that were reviewed by staff then emailed out to board contacts at each Neighborhood Association with a request to meet in person for approximately one hour. The consultant completed the assessment effort in a little over one month, with eleven of thirteen Bend Neighborhood Associations participating. Eight of the assessments were completed with representative groups of board leaders and three were completed with Board Chairs alone. The consultant developed a 2-page summary of each Neighborhood Association's responses. These summaries were emailed out to assessment participants and used as the basis for this report. After explaining the purpose of the project and assessment, participants were generally enthusiastic to meet and appreciated the opportunity to provide this input to the City.

## **II. Summary of Overarching Themes**

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Most Neighborhood Association leaders have been in their positions for many years and have provided considerable time, effort and leadership supporting the well being of their neighborhoods and our city.

While the matrix on the next page identifies some common responses to the assessment questions and individual assessments highlight specific information about each group, several overarching themes that emerged that seem worth summarizing.

- 1- **Do we really make a difference?** Leaders are enthusiastic and willing to serve, but many were not sure whether or how their efforts are really making a difference. A number were concerned that Neighborhood Associations are more 'perfunctory' and wonder 1) who on the City Council is really championing the effort to connect and work with Neighborhood Associations, and 2) whether Neighborhood Associations' efforts are taken into consideration and what kind of impact their input has on City Council decision-making. Leaders in at least three Associations felt (based on past experiences) that they were on an uneven playing field when their concerns and needs were at odds with those of business and other powerful interests.
  
- 2- **What is our purpose and authority?** While all Neighborhood Associations understood their role as a 'contact point' between neighborhood residents and the city, this also concerned a number of them. Some were unclear or even uncomfortable with their role as the point of contact for land use issues on behalf of the Neighborhood Association. At times they were not sure what the City really wanted from them as a Neighborhood

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Association. Some were unclear about whether and how they should advocate about concerns on behalf of their Neighborhood Association.

**3- Land use planning, infrastructure and livability.** In general, there was considerable concern about how overall planning for Bend's land use, infrastructure and livability needs is being handled. The general perception is that while the city is developing rapidly (again), effective, 'big picture' planning is lagging behind. Concerns included:

- UGB and infill planning,
- High impact land uses (i.e. OSU Cascades),
- Adequate sewer, roads and other essential infrastructure,
- Traffic ingress, egress and connectivity in areas where development is taking place (especially the east and south sides of Bend),
- The need for increased bus service especially in neighborhoods with high density living and lower income residents, and
- A clear and fair process for siting roundabout art (Art in Public Places).

**4- Communication.** Improving communication was an important topic to all participants.

Common themes related to improving communication with members included:

- The need for technical training and support (websites and social media),
- More money for postcard mailings (successful method for reaching out),
- Ways to help newcomers get connected to Neighborhood Associations, and
- Meaningful ways to recruit, actively engage and get input from members.

Common themes related to communicating with the City included the need for:

- Increased and consistent notification from the City around the UGB and other issues (ie. central on-line bulletin board that gets updated regularly),
- An easier way to stay current with all meetings (land use, noise permits, Parks and Recreation, ODOT, Irrigation District),
- One central place where all city-related information can be accessed (a link placed on Neighborhood Association websites), and
- A guide to how Neighborhood Associations can interface well with the City.

**5- Homeowner Associations.** In general, Neighborhood Associations found it challenging to communicate with and engage residents of Homeowner Associations (HOAs). In particular:

- HOA property managers are perceived as a 'road block' to reaching and involving residents,
- Many residents don't understand the difference between their HOA and the Neighborhood Association and feel that everything is handled by their HOA, and

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- Some HOAs and planned unit developments are inactive and do not enforce their own Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs).

At the same time, when individual HOA residents are involved with the Neighborhood Association they themselves can be a conduit for successfully engaging and communicating with other members of their HOA (CWNA does this).

- 6- Apartments, Assisted Living Facilities and Multiple Family Dwellings.** Many expressed concern that these folks are not included in the Neighborhood Association's efforts. They want creative solutions that would help them connect with these residents.

### **III. Matrix of Common Responses**

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Please review the matrix of common assessment responses attached as Appendix A.

### **IV. Individual Assessments**

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Individual assessments are available as Appendix B.

### **V. Consultant Observations and Recommendations**

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Participants were generally enthusiastic and willing to work on behalf of their Neighborhood Association, however many expressed reservations about whether or how they were really making a difference for all of their effort. The following are a few options to consider and choose from in strategizing a training plan for the next phase of this project. The current scope of work for this effort, its resource constraints and the consultant's areas of expertise will need to be considered in organizing the plan.

- 1- Offer two different tracks of support interested Neighborhood Associations.** One track could focus on strengthening the Neighborhood Association itself in areas such as board development and succession planning, effective meeting management, effective use of technology and social media, reaching and recruiting members, and perhaps basic strategic planning.

A second track could focus on strengthening Neighborhood Associations' understanding of how city government works and how to successfully engage, including: the Bend development code, the function of the Planning Committee, how citizens can effectively interact with the city, how Neighborhood Associations can advocate for themselves.

- 2- Support NART's ability to better serve as resource and meaningfully engage with the City.** While participants felt that there was value in being connected as Neighborhood Associations, they did not feel that NART is a very effective effort at this time and that there is a communication disconnect between NART and the City.

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The following were seen as useful NART activities:

- Sharing of best practices (board practices, meeting management, recruitment, communication, etc.),
- Sharing of information, materials and ideas,
- Mentoring support,
- Collaboration on projects,
- Collective involvement in addressing larger, citywide issues,

The following were seen as drawbacks of the effort:

- Unclear about what the NART's purpose or work should entail (need a greater context),
- Meeting management is a challenge,
- Participation is inconsistent, with some Neighborhood Association's not active at all,
- Needs of the different Neighborhood Association's can be very different,
- Meeting time is not conducive to participation (i.e. consider evenings or weekends),

Most reported that they got value out of the NART Advance that took place February 2015, and felt a similar annual event would be beneficial. One group felt that NART would be much more effective if it was able to work with a sub-committee of the City Council.

## Appendix A. Neighborhood Association Assessment: Matrix of Common Responses

**Note:** Blank spaces in the matrix below indicate only that the Neighborhood Association did not specifically mention a topic during the assessment. It does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest or importance to the Association.

Topics	BANA	CWNA	LNA	MVNA	OBNA	OEDNA	ODNA	RWNA	SEBNA	SWBNA	SWNA
<b>Current # Active Members:</b>											
1. Emails	203	740	215	200	50	600	400	573	85	500	237
2. Annual or general meeting attendance	70		75	60	50	75		160		40	
<b>Successes:</b>											
1. Meetings with members	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	
2. Representation on City committees	•	•					•	•		•	
3. Strong open line of communication with City		•					•	•		•	
4. Well-organized and recognized as effective		•					•				
5. Community engagement activities/events			•	•			•	•		•	
<b>Challenges:</b>											
1. Technology (website, social media)	•		•	•						•	
2. Member recruitment	•		•	•							•
3. Building email and mailing lists	•		•	•							
4. Member involvement	•		•								•
5. HOAs: communicating with and involving				•						•	•
6. Understanding the authority of NAs			•	•							
7. Not sure what trying to accomplish with City								•		•	•
<b>Types of activities we engage in:</b>											
1. Annual or general meetings	•	•	•	•	•			•	•		
2. Getting information to members	•	•	•	•	•			•			•
3. Some community activities/events			•				•			•	
4. Land Use representative/meetings	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	
5. Parks and Rec representative/meetings	•	•			•	•		•			
6. TSAC representative/meetings		•			•	•		•			
7. Good Samaritan				•		•					
8. OSU Cascades		•						•			
<b>Neighborhood Association needs:</b>											
1. Increasing member involvement	•		•	•				•		•	•

## Appendix A. Neighborhood Association Assessment: Matrix of Common Responses

Topics	BANA	CWNA	LNA	MVNA	OBNA	OFDNA	ODNA	RWNA	SEBNA	SWBNA	SWNA
2. Building public awareness	•			•							
3. Better understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the City of Bend works</li> <li>• The Bend development code</li> <li>• Function of Planning Commission</li> <li>• How citizens can effectively interact with the City</li> <li>• How NAs can advocate like other interests</li> </ul>		• • • •						•			
<b>Board Training needs:</b>											
1. Tech training/support (website, social media)	•		•	•				•	•	•	
2. Board recruitment/succession planning	•		•	•				•		•	•
3. Board roles, responsibilities, authority				•							
4. List of resources available to support work	•										•
5. Boiler Plate materials	•								•		
<b>Communication with members:</b>											
1. Postcards (annual or general meetings)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•
2. Email/e-newsletters (Constant Contact)	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
3. Website			•	•			•	•		•	•
4. Tough to reach out/engage HOAs and renters	•		•	•		•				•	•
5. 1:1 contact with neighbors	•	•			•		•			•	
6. Facebook			•	•	•		•	•			
7. Nextdoor	•		•	•						•	
8. High visibility (sandwich board or yard signs)						•	•				
<b>Communication with City (mentioned):</b>											
1. Communicate with Anne Aurand	•		•	•	•			•			•
2. Need City-related info in one place online	•		•	•				•			
3. Annual presentation to City Council	•	•	•					•		•	
4. City has been responsive to our requests		•				•		•			
5. Better notification on important issues/meetings	•		•	•				•			
6. Need a better process for meaningful input		•			•			•		•	

**Appendix A. Neighborhood Association Assessment: Matrix of Common Responses**

Topics	BANA	CVNA	LNA	MVNA	OBNA	OFDNA	ODNA	RVNA	SEBNA	SWBNA	SWNA
7. Need more contact with Councilors	•							•		•	
8. Presence at City Council meetings		•								•	
<b>Issues: Neighborhood</b>											
1. Traffic (speeding, congestion, safety)	•	•	•	•	•		•		•		
2. Walkability and bikeability	•		•		•		•				
3. Our NA needs feel like a lower priority for City	•				•					•	
4. No clear process for roundabout art	•		•							•	
5. Roads (connectivity, maintenance)	•		•			•			•		
6. Land Use (planning, rentals, density, UGB)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
7. Infrastructure planning and improvements	•	•	•	•	•	•			•		
8. Livability (housing, transportation, parking)		•			•			•		•	
9. Code violations (noise, alcohol, etc.)								•		•	
<b>Issues: City</b>											
1. Land use and infrastructure planning/projects (sewer, roads, UGB, density, rentals, parks)	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	
2. Transportation and traffic planning				•					•		
3. Concern about whether public input has an impact	•	•			•	•		•		•	
<b>NA survey of its own members (interested Y/N)</b>	<b>Y</b>		<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>		<b>Y*</b>	<b>Y*</b>	<b>Y*</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>
<i>* NAs currently surveying members</i>											