

Increasing Citizen Engagement

Overview

In a recent NGAC meeting, the committee discussed increasing citizen engagement particularly among our peers. With a goal to attract and retain the next generation in mind, three themes emerged in our discussion – accessibility, education, and impact.

Accessibility

- There is a need to meet the next generation where they spend much of their time and in a manner that is compatible with their way of life. This will often mean creating content that is quickly consumable in smaller snippets and readily available in a mobile format.
 - i.e. breaking larger surveys into more digestible segments, conducting polls using social media tools, etc.
- Create materials that are accessible to all members of our community. Littleton is an increasingly diverse city and it is vital that in outreach efforts the various cultures, languages, and life stages are considered.
 - i.e. be mindful of jargon, consider values of various cultures, consider when committees or study sessions are held in relation to the “typical” working day. Vary times of opportunities to get involved in order to capture a wider audience.

Education

- Communicate the role and processes of city government in an approachable way. It is likely that some members of the next generation are taking a back seat when it comes to local civic engagement because they either don’t understand what their local government does or how they can make a difference. We encourage the city of Littleton to help to educate the community
 - i.e. create content on the various aspects of local government to share on the cities social media pages, create “how-to” guides for getting participating in study sessions, studios, council meetings, etc.
- Impact aside, many topics that the city takes up are highly complex. This can be intimidating, particularly to civic newcomers. NGAC recommends distilling topics down into main points, with both pros and cons listed.
 - i.e. create a 1-pager on rezoning or single-hauler trash.

Impact

- Discuss what is important. The next generation isn’t sitting out for a lack of passion. What may be missing in many city initiatives is the “so what.” We feel it is important to communicate the impact of various city initiatives, tying them back to areas that the next generation finds important. This impact should move beyond the jargon to be positioned in a way that is engaging
 - i.e. how does the ULUC impact my dream of owning a home in Littleton? How can a single hauler system increase the availability of composting in my community?
- Be willing to discuss the difficult topics. There are big scary topics on the minds of many young people. Being willing to have a conversation around these items will go a long way in showing the city takes these concerns seriously.