

Audit at a glance

Transparency: Public Notice and Engagement

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ABOUT | A transparent government seeks to ensure community members affected by government decisions can both influence and actively participate in making those decisions.

Denver city agencies are individually responsible for public notice and engagement. These efforts range from posting public notices to holding town hall meetings, creating community advisory boards, and soliciting public comment.

Public notices are a basic method for informing the public; they are legally required and intended to inform. By comparison, public engagement encompasses a variety of activities. It is intended to both inform and involve the public. While engagement is not legally required, it is crucial to informing and engaging residents.



In the report

FINDING: Gaps in Structure, Guidance, and Oversight Limit the Public's Ability to Access Information and Participate in Decision-Making on City Projects

- Inconsistent compliance with public notice requirements limits the public's awareness of some city activities.
- While the Department of Community Planning and Development fully complied with all public notice requirements in its case study, two projects in the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure and meetings of the 10 commissions under the purview of the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships did not.
- The examples of noncompliance affected residents' awareness of projects in their communities and limited their opportunities to participate in public meetings.
- Public notice requirements are limited when it comes to how the notices are to be distributed, who should receive them, and when they should be issued.
- City agencies could use additional tools — as well as make better use of the city's website — to improve residents' awareness and provide access to public meetings, hearings, and other ways for residents to provide input on city projects and decisions.
- Standards, expectations, and practices for public engagement vary across the city. More consistent guidance could help agencies better inform and engage residents about decisions that affect their lives.

OUR FOCUS

We examined three case studies to assess the city's public notice efforts and public engagement and outreach activities:

- The Department of Community Planning and Development's Group Living Text Amendment, which is meant to implement elements of the city's comprehensive plan, its land use and transportation plan, and its housing plan.
- Two bike lane installation projects that were part of the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure's annual street paving program.
- The 10 commissions under the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships that represent specific cultural and demographic populations in Denver.

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