

# Building Trust and Community Engagement, Offline

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# Bedford University – Citizens Academy Program

- 10-week program, featuring various departments/divisions
  - Police, Fire, Communications, Public Works, Parks/Rec, Library, Development, Finance, City Manager’s Office, and more
- Open to residents, Bedford business owner
- Accept first 22 applicants, includes 2 alternates
  - All applicants subject to a background check due to class being held in restricted areas (police and fire station)



# Bedford University – Logistics

- 6-9 p.m. on Thursday nights
- One staff member oversees program, acts as coordinator/liaison and attends each session with the group
- Department heads provide dinner/drinks (built into each dept. budget)
- Presenters should prepare presentation to education residents about their department's roles/responsibilities (behind-the-scenes look)
- Encouraged to have interactive activities/games



# Bedford University – Perks

- Bedford University T-shirt
- City Swag
- Graduation Ceremony
  - Recognized at a Council meeting
  - Separate reception, certificate presentation, and refreshments



# Bedford University – Program Goals

- Educate residents about their local government
- Build trust, shows transparency
- Humanize City staff
- Face-to-face conversations
- Address rumors, misconceptions
- Serve as a listening tool for City staff
- Develop ambassadors
- Inspire future Council, Board, or Commission members



# Mornings with the Mayor - Overview

- Occurs from 10 – 11 a.m. on a Saturday, every other month at City-owned facility
- Attendance: 50 – 80 folks
- Covers latest news and initiatives, road construction, CIP updates, Parks and Rec projects, special events, private development, and new businesses



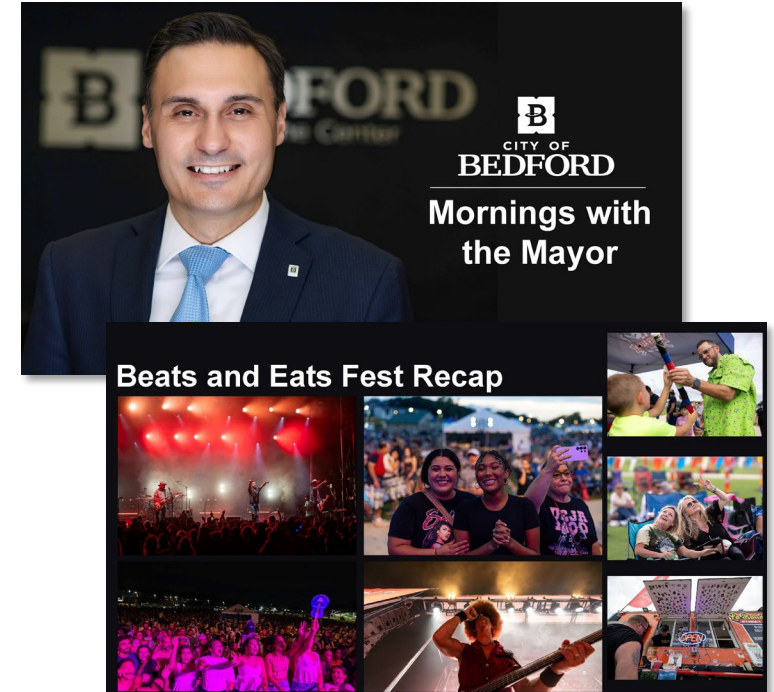
# Mornings with the Mayor - Logistics

- Communications emails departments with relevant information, puts together documents, sends to mayor one week in advance
- Creates slideshow presentation, takes current pictures to include of projects mentioned
- Meets with mayor on the Wednesday prior to the event, reviews information, makes additions or removes items
- Communications liaison attends event, writes down questions from community for follow-up



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# Mornings with the Mayor - Benefits

- Informed, engaged community
- Builds trust and increases transparency through in-person interactions, opportunity for feedback
- Ensures Mayor, Council, and City staff have latest information on important topics
- Presentation and prepared information can be reused for other neighborhood meetings
- Prepared information and photos used for easy social media posts, answer questions, etc.



# DITCHING THE TRADITIONAL TOWN HALL

Meeting your residents where they are - literally.

ALY VAN DYKE | CITY OF GEORGETOWN

# AGENDA

Public engagement vs outreach

The One-Project Town Hall

Changing our tactics

City on the Road

Success stories

Handout

Q&A



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS NOT OUTREACH

- **Public engagement (community impacts outcome):** Two-way communication that is used to solicit meaningful feedback from the public you can and will use. You should be able to show what you heard and how it was used in the final decision.
- **Outreach (Council/staff decision):** One-way communication that is used to inform residents about an upcoming decision. Use to build trust through transparency: Explain decision and prove you considered alternatives.
- See handout for more detail.

# THE ONE-PROJECT TOWN HALL

## Some shortcomings of the traditional method

- What is the traditional method?
- Shortcomings
  - Minimal ROI
  - Low attendance
  - Burn out
- Exceptions
- Best lessons come from bad engagements



# CHANGING OUR TACTICS

*Go where people are: Digitally and literally*

- **Virtual surveys:** Now run through a service people sign up for to receive surveys how they want them: Phone, text, or email.
- **No more one-project town halls:** If a project needs in-person outreach or public engagement, Georgetown either:
  - Brings multiple projects under one roof OR
  - Books tables at existing, community events.

# CITY ON THE ROAD

## Why you should use existing events & tips from the field

- › Easier marketing
- › New people
- › Staff light
- › Low cost
- › Fits any timeline & resources
- › Cautions

### June 2025 Events

4 STORYTIME PLAYDATE  
San Gabriel Park, Event Lawn Pavilion

11 ART IN THE PARK POP UP  
San Gabriel Park, Event Lawn Pavilion

13 SUNSET MOVIE SERIES  
San Gabriel Park, Legacy Pavilion

14 GO SKATE DAY  
San Gabriel Park Skate Park

18 STORYTIME PLAYDATE  
San Gabriel Park, Event Lawn Pavilion



# SUCCESS STORY

## Future Mobility Plan

- One-project town hall December 2022
  - 10 in attendance

### CAPE tactic change

- Red Poppy Festival: Table at our 175<sup>th</sup> celebration area
  - 87 in attendance
- Gather Round Georgetown Project Expo
  - 70 in attendance



# SUCCESS STORY

## Gather Round Georgetown

- > 13 projects
- > 160 residents
- > Family-friendly
- > \$2,400
- > **One event**
  - Model for State of Our City & engagements



# SEE THE HANDOUT FOR...

- Flow chart to determine whether you need **public engagement** or **outreach**
- Notes for identifying and reaching your audiences
- Dos and don'ts for survey writing
- Five more effective options than a one-project town hall

*more than*  
**WELCOME**  
Georgetown, Texas



# Building Trust and Community Engagement through Neighborhoods

2025 TML Annual Conference and Exhibition  
Don Magner, City Manager, City of Richardson



# City of Richardson

## 1990s

- Telecom Corridor thriving
- University of Texas at Dallas expands
- DART Light Rail opens
- Eiseman Center launches
- \$950M in new commercial development
- \$780M in new single-family homes
- Political stability and accord

## 2000s

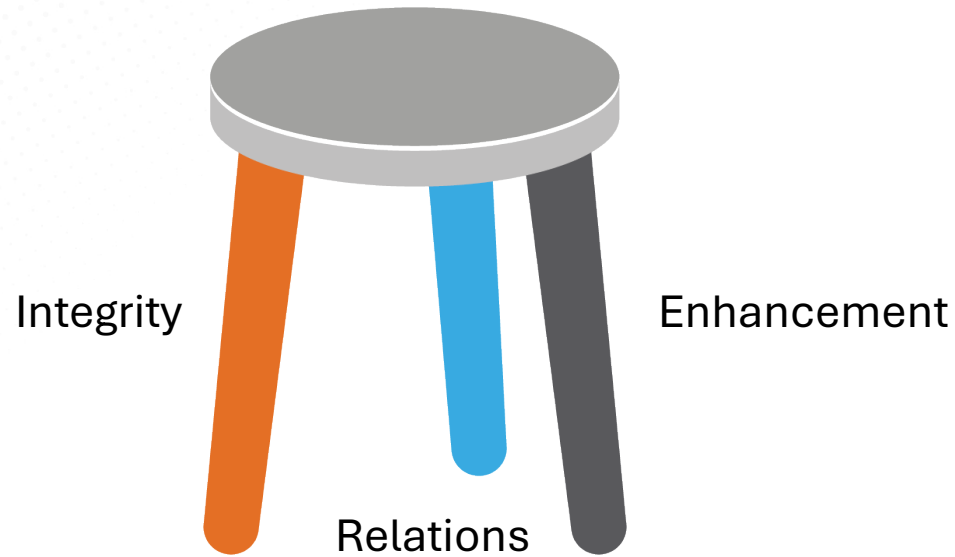
- September 11 / economic downturn
- Significant shortfall in commercial tax base
- Sharp drop in sales tax
- Residential rental property increased
- Basic property maintenance not occurring
- Significant change in demographics
- First signs of political dissatisfaction

# City Council Goals

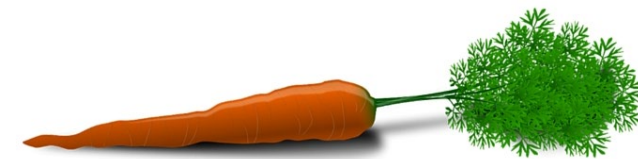
- Support the creation of homeowner and neighborhood associations
- Promote well-informed associations and encourage constructive dialogue between this network and the City
- Encourage development initiatives and post-development programs that are designed to establish distinctive neighborhood identities within the City
- Implement a wide range of strategies designed to promote vitality within the City through public and private initiatives



# Neighborhood Services - Created in August 2003



Code Enforcement



Community Programs

# Community Services – Today

## Neighborhood Relations

- New Neighborhood Association Program
- Leadership Workshops
- City Council/Presidents Meetings
- Communication Initiatives

## Neighborhood Enhancement

- Home Improvement Incentive Program
- Neighborhood Assessment Program
- Neighborhood Vitality Program
- Sign Topper Program

## Neighborhood Integrity

- Code Enforcement
- Email Update Program
- Graffiti Abatement Program
- Volunteer Assistance Program

# Neighborhood Relations

- Strategies designed to **empower** leaders to create healthy neighborhoods
- What is a **healthy neighborhood**?
  - Comfortable Being “Neighborly”
  - Work Together
  - Reinforce Positive Standards
  - Maintain Partnerships



# Neighborhood Relations

## Benefits of cultivating neighborhood leaders

- Develop appreciation for neighborhood issues
- Train “best practices” for neighborhood associations
- Create understanding of City processes
- Offer networking/ relationship building





# City Council-Presidents Meetings

- Designed to provide presidents with direct access to City Council members and executive staff
- Agendas include:
  - City Manager's review of current events
  - City staff presentation on topical issues
  - Open Discussion
- Leaders are provided detailed information, given an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback, and enlisted to help communicate next steps back to their residents



# Neighborhood Leadership Workshops

- Open to current board or committee members of recognized associations
- Agendas include:
  - Overview of City programs, policies, etc.
  - Association best practices
  - Panel discussions
- 2 ½ hour session held in the evening in April and October each year; includes a city department “exhibitors' row”



# Final Thoughts

- Richardson leverages its strong network of neighborhood associations as a vital outreach channel
- Community ambassadors help address neighborhood needs/ issues
- Creates avenues for community solutions



# Questions



113th Annual Conference and Exhibition  
October 29–31, 2025

• FORT WORTH •