

Memorandum

To: Planning Commission

From: Lori Peckol, Policy Planning Manager, 425-556-2411
Kimberly Dietz, Senior Planner, 425-556-2415

Date: October 19, 2011

Subject: **2011 Redmond Neighborhood Network and Citizen Academy –
End of Year Briefing**

MEETING PURPOSE – OCTOBER 19, 2011

The Planning Commission's briefing on October 19 will include a summary of interests and perspectives shared by Redmond community members during the 2011 Redmond Neighborhood Network meetings and the Redmond Citizen Academy series as well as staff's proposed enhancements for 2012.

BACKGROUND

Redmond Neighborhood Network

Within the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood plans and the Neighborhoods Element call for opportunities to maintain a formal and ongoing communication channel between the City and Redmond community. The Redmond Neighborhood Network was the outcome and provides a continuous opportunity for community members to: help retain and enhance the quality of life, promote community gathering places, and encourage a community of neighbors working in collaboration toward a common vision.

Piloted in the Grass Lawn and Education Hill neighborhoods during 2010, the 2011 Redmond Neighborhood Network series provided the first opportunity for City officials and staff to consider the benefit and impact of this program throughout Redmond's neighborhoods. The purpose of the Redmond Neighborhood Network is to:

- Maintain connections with residents;
- Provide opportunity for check-in on neighborhood plans;
- Hear from residents; and
- Complement existing communication opportunities.

During the first half of 2011, staff organized annual meetings for seven Redmond neighborhoods: Grass Lawn, Willows / Rose Hill, Idylwood, Overlake, Education Hill, North Redmond, and Downtown. The Bear Creek neighborhood was completing review of their neighborhood plan update during this time and staff will include this neighborhood as part of the Neighborhood Network process beginning in 2012.

Approximately 100 Redmond community members attended the 2011 Neighborhood Network meetings. Many more provided feedback through an online questionnaire, totaling over 200 responses.

Transportation continued to be a common theme with interest including walkable and bikable neighborhoods and mitigating traffic speeds and volumes. The interest in walking and biking was also reflected in requests for additional street lighting, trimming of vegetation along non-motorized connections, increases to the amount of bicycle storage facilities in parks, installation of trails and sidewalks along frequented neighborhood and school walk routes, and continued interest in benches along sidewalks and trails.

Each neighborhood also expressed interest in establishing community gardens. Several community members described their interest in locating additional community gardens in public parks while others expressed their interest in potentially leasing privately owned vacant lots such as in the Downtown.

Attachment A includes comments from Neighborhood Network meetings and responses from staff. In some cases, additional information is necessary. To encourage additional neighborhood feedback, staff posted the comments and responses to each neighborhood webpage and provided a notice on respective neighborhood Facebook pages. The neighborhood webpages also include the results of the respective 2011 online questionnaires.

Redmond Citizen Academy

During April and May of 2011, staff organized six Citizen Academy sessions during which 25 community members learned about Redmond government. Each session included presentation and a question-answer portion with staff representing the various disciplines that comprise Redmond's daily operations and services. Disciplines included policy planning and development; public safety; human services; housing; transportation; utilities; natural resource management; parks, arts and recreation; financial planning; community indicators; and economic development.

RCTV staff videotaped the six meetings. A library of the on-demand video, meeting minutes, and related material are available at www.redmond.gov/residents/citizenacademy.

The academy audience primarily included residents of the Downtown neighborhood and many comments reflected the increasing residential population. For example, attendees described their interest in additional community events and places for community gathering. Again, comments demonstrated increasing pedestrian activities for both utilitarian and recreational purposes.

For the first time from a neighborhood perspective, interest in youth-based activities emerged and included comments regarding availability of affordable, age-appropriate movies and evening activities geared toward Redmond teens. Discussion also included concern about teen safety. As a result, staff coordinated with Ken Wong to provide a tour of the Fire House Teen Center to academy participants.

Bruce Newman also provided a tour of the Traffic Operations Center to offer greater awareness of the City's traffic cameras found at <http://www1.redmond.gov/TrafficCameras/>.

Attachment A also includes Redmond Citizen Academy participant questions and comments as well as staff responses.

PROPOSED 2012 SCHEDULE AND PROCESS ENHANCEMENTS

The 2011 Redmond Neighborhood Network meetings occurred in February, March, and April. Where logical, neighborhoods were combined for efficiency and in the context of possible commonalities such as travel patterns, land use, or other neighborhood aspects. Meetings consisted of an open house portion, Mayor's introduction, and small group discussions. Participants received a brief summary of their respective neighborhood plan as well as a take-home questionnaire. The questionnaire matched the online version for consistency.

During 2012, staff proposes several enhancements and additions including:

- Providing GovDelivery newsletters to promote meetings and maintain communication with participants;
- Scheduling events in April and May;
- Recognizing Redmond's 1912-2012 Centennial;
- Enhancing the invitation to members of the City's boards, commissions, and committees;
- Promoting additional representation on behalf of citywide programs and topics such as Sustainable Redmond and the Redmond Historical Society; and
- Offering a "world café" setting to foster additional sharing of community perspective and greater awareness of Redmond's resources.

The Redmond Citizen Academy followed during April and May and was intended to repeat biennially. Participants expressed appreciation for the program and for the opportunity to learn directly from these presentations. They also expressed significant interest in community service opportunities such as serving on Redmond's boards and commissions or as civic volunteers.

Staff recommends holding the Citizen Academy in 2012 and suggests the following steps in preparation for this series:

1. Host a focus group discussion including several 2011 participants and presenters to consider specific improvements to the academy series;
2. Schedule the academy series for late winter/early spring (late January -March) to precede and provide a foundation for the 2012 Budgeting by Priorities process;
3. Limit meetings to no greater than two hours and coordinating topics over six sessions;
4. Include a tour of the Redmond Senior Center in addition to the Fire House Teen Center and the Traffic Operations Center;
5. Seek a volunteer scribe to replace staff's need for transcribing; and
6. Partner with King County Library System's (KCLS) adult librarian to promote the series and encourage related reading material.

KCLS staff also invited City staff to participate in Talk Time, a regularly scheduled series that encourages non-native born community members to talk with facilitators, presenters, and participants while practicing the English language. Promoting the Redmond Citizen Academy through additional resources such as this can help foster increased community connection and greater awareness of city services.

NEXT STEPS

Staff initiated neighborhood Facebook pages to increase communication with the Redmond community. Additionally, staff implemented an outreach project to establish a connection with and consider appropriate communication tools for multi-family residential properties. In partnership with James Bove, RPD Community Outreach Facilitator staff will continue outreach efforts and take additional steps to establish connection with home owner associations.

MEETING PREPARATION

The Commissioners are asked to identify their major questions and to contact Kimberly Dietz, 425-556-2415 or kdietz@redmond.gov, with these in advance of the October 19 briefing.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Redmond Neighborhood Network and Citizen Academy input with staff responses
- B. Redmond Citizen Academy questionnaire and evaluation results