Public Comment on Alexandria's Draft Handbook for Civic Engagement
Dec. 20, 2013

Comment # Response #	Last	First	Date	Draft Date	City Comment/Response (Text in Bold indicates changes that have been made to the revised draft as a result of suggestions. Text that is not bold is a comment, explanation or answer in response to a question that did not result in a change to the handbook.
COMMENT 1	Hickok	Tom	10-Sep	6-Sep	This document represents a tremendous amount of work. In a first read I didn't see any reference to establishing an amount of time for each agenda item at a meeting. I think that respecting people's time by starting and finishing on time, and sticking to the agenda items within (as best you can) is a key pre-condition of getting good participation. The norm should be that meetings start and end on time.
RESPONSE 1					*While the handbook addresses the importance of timelines and timely responses, **we have incorporated your suggestion specifically by adding new bullets to pages 32 and 35: "Respect participants' time by starting and finishing meetings on time and sticking to the agenda."***
COMMENT 2	Roberts	Jimm	11-Sep	6-Sep	Clearly, an enormous amount of work produced this handbook. Its motivating impetus; that is, explaining to citizens how to engage their government, is commendable. Missing, however, is a sharper delineation of its theme: Our city government needs citizen input to properly fulfill its purpose. Consequently, I urge the opening sentence in the introduction be edited to make indisputably clear that the city government belongs to its citizens and exists to serve our needs. To effectively perform this core mission, our public servants need advice and guidance from those whom they serve. My suggested opening sentence follows: "This Handbook explains how citizens of Alexandria can make their voice and views heard. Both are essential to ensure our city government is response to its those whom it is dedicated to serve and whose taxes make possible the city services intended to enhance the delight of residing, working and enjoying our historic and beautiful port city, Alexandria"
RESPONSE 2					***Insert text on page 1: This handbook explains how Alexandrians can make their voices and views heard. This is essential to ensure that City government is responsive to those whom it is dedicated to serve.*** *We have not included the last part of your sentence because it infers that we do not serve people who do not pay real estate taxes (such as renters) and it also assumes that tax revenue alone pays for services.*
COMMENT 3	Hopkins	J. Glenn	17-Sep	6-Sep	This is a very thoughtful and detailed document. It will certainly be very useful, I hope, in encouraging even more civic engagement than we already have in our city. Congratulations to everyone involved in its development. My only question is to ask how this engagement will be implemented? I assume the City Manager will assign a City office or officer to manage the several processes described in the document, including and especially training/retraining City staff and the public.
RESPONSE 3					*The implementation of the civic engagement framework is addressed in the handbook on pages 55-59. A more detailed implementation action plan accompanies the Handbook presented to Council for review in January, proposing an organizational structure and resources to accomplish the goals set forth in the Handbook.*
COMMENT 4	Macek	Nate	2-Oct	6-Sep	I've had a chance to review the draft Civic Engagement Handbook and think it does a great job of capturing the What's Next discussions and documenting a flexible framework for future public participation efforts. I do have several specific comments that I wanted to provide for your consideration as you finalize the draft: • In the Principles of Engagement section, pages 8-16, the Actions checklists are very focused on the process for a a given project or single utilization of the framework, but many of the Outcomes seems more focused on the City's civic engagement efforts in general. For example, on page 13, one outcome is "increased trust in city government," an outcome that will require several public outreach efforts using this framework assess. There are a few different ways to address this. One option is to remove the check-boxes from the Outcomes lists. Another is to try to reword Outcomes to make particular to a single effort utilizing the framework rather than the engagement process in general. Another is to separate the effort-specific outcomes with the overall process outcomes using sub-headers. • Page 17: I would suggest flipping the Framework for Engagement graphic so that the flow chart moves naturally from left to right. It's counterintuitive to our usual reading patterns as it's currently oriented. • Page 19: The Tour of the Framework on page 19 is very difficult to read. I suggest showing across two pages to provide more space, so that the annotations can be printed next to, rather than on top of, the framework text. • Page 29: I suggest adding a sentence to the Meeting Venue paragraph on choosing a building and meeting room that is accessible to persons with disabilities. This, of course, is a legal requirement, but is worth reiterating here along with the other venue considerations listed. • Page 32: Consider saying "advance the discussion" or "move the issue forward" instead of "move the ball forward." • Page 40: No other commercial products are mentioned on this page, so consider removing the specific reference to Textizen here. • Page 44: The clip art here (and the smaller version on the preceding page) connotes confrontation rather than communication. Consider using a figure of speaking persons instead. • Page 51: Might add bullet here noting that there is a hesitancy to participate in civic engagement by residents who are not U.S. citizens and are therefore not eligible to vote here, but engagement by non-citizen residents should be encouraged nonetheless. • Page A-7: Suggesting making the organization names hyperlinks that can be directly clicked on in the PDF version of the guide.

RESPONSE 4	*The following edits have been incorporated per suggestion:*				
	Page 8-16 - For all principles, under all 'Outcomes' columns, delete the boxes and lines - replace boxes with bullets				
	Page 17 - reconfigure graph for improved understanding				
	Page 19 - adjust framework graphic for improved legibility				
	Page 29 - add to ...easily accessible by transit "and accessible to persons with disabilities," centrally...				
	Pg 32: change: "move the ball forward" to "move the discussion"				
	page 40: remove brand names				
	page 44: edit clip art - use different graphic for 'communicators'				
	page 51: add to existing bullet: Many residents do not speak English or are reluctant to participate, because they are not U.S citizens; however, involving noncitizen residents is strongly encouraged.				
	A7: yes, these were intended to be hyperlinks, but will be fixed in the final online version.				
Comment 5a	King	Janet	3-Oct	6-Sep	10-3: I just reread the sentence below: "A document demonstrating how the comments were addressed will be provided with the public hearing docket item." This on the day of the Council consideration of the handbook.
					This suggests that the community members who have provided comments will not have an opportunity to see how or if they input was included. It would be far too difficult to do so while sitting in Council Chambers awaiting the beginning of the session that would address this issue. Please help me understand this - which seems inconsistent with civic engagement from my perspective. Again, I hope that it has been proposed that this draft handbook be retained in that status for the duration of the 4 projects - and then revised as necessary to reflect the real life experience (a test use).
RESPONSE 5a	*Per response previously sent to Ms. King, the revised draft and response to comments will be posted two weeks prior to the City Council meeting.*				
	Re: retaining handbook in draft form: While staff is not recommending that the handbook be retained in "draft form" for the first year, it has been explicitly stated that the handbook will not be a static document set in stone. It will be reviewed and updated as needed over time to adjust for improved performance and usability. On page 16, under the principle Evaluation, it states: "Conduct annual reviews of civic engagement performance following the first year of implementation of the What's Next Alexandria process and the utilization of this handbook, including the outcomes of each principle, and recommendations for improvement and revisions to the Civic Engagement Handbook, if needed." Pages 57-59 also covers evaluating performance and determining whether changes to the handbook are needed.				
Comment 5b	King	Janet	11-Oct	6-Sep	Ms. King's full comment on the draft handbook does not fit within the confines of this spreadsheet. Please see attached document for full text of the letter, attachments and written comments on the handbook. Key overarching recommendations in the letter are shown here.
					1. That the Principles of Civic Engagement alone be submitted for City Council approval on November 14 and thereafter posted in Council Chambers, at all public meetings, broadly distributed among city staff plus widely publicized via other media
					2. That the next projects before our city (those 4 stated at the June 24 meeting if they are still viable as candidates) be established as test projects or laboratories for the essential refinement of the handbook.
					3. That this interval be used by staff alone, and in conjunction with community activists/experts, those most often active in civic engagement to date (* specifically those described in greater detail at the end of this letter), to address deficiencies in this draft.
					4. That an evaluation tool be adopted which will provide quantitative assessments of citizen ratings of performance against the Nine Civic Engagement Principles. That this involve a numeric rating (e.g. using a scale of 1-10) of experience for each relevant Principle at every civic engagement setting- and with each rating, this assessment tool would elicit from the citizen one or more suggestions for improving her/his rating.
					5. That the actions stated in 2-4 above be woven into a process for producing a final draft and thereafter a final comprehensive Handbook for Civic Engagement for the City of Alexandria.
					Staff also addressed additional comments provided by Ms. King in multiple attachments, responses to which follow below.

| RESPONSE 5b | Thank you Ms. King for your time and commitment to providing extensive comments on the draft handbook. Because of the extent of your comments, an additional separate response will be provided. Many thoughtful and strong suggestions have been provided, and while we can't implement all of your suggestions at this time, they provide an excellent starting point when we begin to evaluate performance of the initiative over the next twelve months and determine what aspects of the handbook need strengthening. Your time and extraordinary effort are deeply appreciated.

1. In order to move forward, Staff is recommending that the handbook as a whole be considered for adoption by City Council. As you state, the principles will be the foundation. At the same meeting, City Council will consider for adoption a resolution embedding the principles into all we do. **Your suggestion to post the principles in all appropriate locations is a good one that we have recommended in the implementation plan.** It has been explicitly stated that the handbook will not be a static document set in stone. It will be reviewed and updated as needed over time to adjust for improved performance and usability. On page 16, under the principle Evaluation, it states: "Conduct annual reviews of civic engagement performance following the first year of implementation of the What's Next Alexandria process and the utilization of this handbook, including the outcomes of each principle, and recommendations for improvement and revisions to the Civic Engagement Handbook, if needed." Pages 57-59 also cover evaluating performance and determining whether changes to the handbook are needed.

2. The City will apply the What's Next Alexandria process to the 4 projects you mention. Those processes will be evaluated along the way and at completion to determine what adjustments are needed to the process to achieve continued improvement.

3. As stated above, staff is recommending that Council consider approval of the full handbook rather than principles alone in the interest of moving forward. **As you recommend, the staff interdepartmental team will use the upcoming year to troubleshoot and address any deficiencies in the handbook, the framework or the principles.** Staff will consult with the City's experienced civic engagement community experts, like yourself, and others in proposing any improvements. The City does not intend to create a formal taskforce at this time. However, it is possible that community and staff evaluation of the civic engagement outcomes over this or future years may indicate the need for a community led taskforce focused on evaluation of outcomes and revision as needed of the Handbook.

4. Staff has developed some initial measures that are included in the implementation plan accompanying the revised draft handbook for council consideration. In addition, Office of Performance Accountability staff will work with us to develop appropriate evaluation tools, and will address your suggestion for a rating scale of performance against each of the nine Civic Engagement Principles.

5. As stated above, the full final draft will be considered by Council in January, but this is a document that will be subject to community and staff review on an annual basis.
Additional suggestions for edits to the handbook have been incorporated throughout the document. |
| RESPONSE 5b | 6. The City Manager's Office of Performance Accountability is working with the Interdepartmental team to develop and refine a final set of performance measures. In addition, OPA will be working to incorporate the civic engagement effort into Results Alexandria and develop an accompanying logic model for measuring and achieving results. This will be shared with the community after it is vetted internally.

7. **The language on page 32 referencing costs and benefits has been removed.** The implementation plan recommends an annual evaluation of civic engagement performance, which will inform an annual review of the framework we have put in place (handbook, principles, evaluation tools, etc.).

8. We sincerely apologize for this oversight. Your letter deserved a personal response acknowledging the time and effort you have dedicated to this issue. Instead, as we originally stated when seeking comments on the draft outline, we grouped all of the comments submitted to the City during the June 2013 comment period on the preliminary draft outline and responded to them in the "Responses to Public Comments PDF" posted on the website. Because you submitted a personal letter and extensive comments, you should have also received a personal response. Despite the lack of a personal response, staff did incorporate some of your key suggestions as well as many of the handwritten edits you provided.

9. **Your idea to post the civic engagement principles in City meeting rooms and other locations is a good one that has been recommended in the implementation plan and on page 7 introducing the principles. In addition, as you suggest, staff will develop a very short brochure highlighting the principles and other key elements in a simple way for distribution in public places throughout the City.**

10. **We have added the following sentence to the introduction in response to your point: "There are many avenues for civic engagement, such as serving on Commissions, volunteering for city activities and functions, as well as volunteering, and of course, voting."**

11. **This Action of "demonstrate active listening" has been added to the Respect principle on page 8** . The procedural change you suggest to re-set the clock for speakers during a public hearing if they are not afforded that respect can be considered as we begin implementation.

12. **The respect principle has been added to the framework graphic on page 19 at each phase.**

13.Because we were trying to make this both a staff and community handbook, we did not go into a great level of detail about how best to tailor a project or a phase of a project using the tools listed (page 23). The same holds for providing a comprehensive discussion of techniques to be employed to reach common ground. Both of these topics will be covered in detail in the staff training and accompanying materials. There is a great deal on page 19 of material already produced by experts in the field that will be drawn upon for this purpose.

14. **Your suggestion to reword the goal of shared responsibility on page 21 more accurately captures the reason for participation. The following phrase "…sustains and improves the quality of life for all Alexandrians" has replaced the words "impacts how the city grows and develops."**

15. **Thank you for your feedback regarding the quote on the back of the handbook. The use of the participant's quote was not intended to be inflammatory or offensive. Since it was taken as such, it has been removed.**

16 **. We have incorporated your suggestion to add a rating scale into the community evaluation form. Both the community and staff evaluation forms have been marked draft, and will undergo further refinement by the Office of Performance Accountability.**

17. **We have incorporated your suggestion to shift the focus to reviewing citizen ratings and suggestions for improvement in the staff evaluation form. Both the community and staff evaluation forms have been marked draft, and will undergo further refinement by the Office of Performance Accountability.**

18. **OPA staff will help us refine our surveys/evaluation forms and data gathering to ensure that we capture quantitative ratings and measurements.**

19. **Per your suggestion, the text regarding costs and benefits with regard to an annual review has been removed from the handbook on page 32 and was not carried forward into the implementation plan** |

RESPONSE 5b	In addition, staff incorporated many of your suggested edits shown in your annotated draft. Some suggested edits were not incorporated because they either substantively changed the meaning of a sentence or concept or were not perceived as enhancing the language.
	20. P4 crop photo
	21. P5 insert: "and see outcomes reflective of their input" to the goal of WNA is to…
	22. P6 replace "City" with "its" in the last bullet
	23. P7 insert "those who participated from" to the first sentence
	24. P7 replace "public participation" with "civic engagement" in the sentence that begins "the following principles serve as the foundation…"
	25. P7 insert "In the first year of implementation, staff will develop performance measures for each principle to inform any necessary improvements
	26. P8 add "respond to all input" and "demonstrate active listening" as new actions
	27. P8 add "participants feel they have been heard and their ideas fairly evaluated" to outcomes
	28. P8 strike "meaningful" in first bullet
	29. P8 strike "with one another" in first bullet
	30. P8 add "participants see the outcome as reflective of the common ground reached through the community process even if they do not agree with all the recommendations"
	31. P9 insert "with emphasis on ensuring engagement of the population most affected by a project" in 1st bullet
	32. P9 insert "of issues" in 3rd bullet
	33. P10 insert "(validate/expand issues involved)" and "all sectors" in 2nd bullet
	34. P10 insert "especially those most affected" into first bullet
	35. P11 1st bullet remove "and at least 1 week before the"
	36. P12 insert "from stakeholders at each phase of the process from issue definition to conclusion" in first bullet
	37. P12 insert "and why" at the end of the 2nd bullet
	38. P14 insert "clear, simply expressed" in the 2nd bullet, insert "as well as City response" to 3rd bullet, insert "completed" in last bullet
	39. P15 replace "streamlined" with "improved", strike "easily"
	40. P18 insert "and principles have been observed" in the last sentence of the 2nd to last paragraph
	41. P23, insert "documenting ideas put forward and evaluation of options, as well as decision points along the way" into the first bullet
	42. P34 add new 1st checkbox: "Provide advance notice of meeting date. While it is not always possible, given multiple factors, the City's goal is to provide three weeks notice of a meeting date. Meeting agenda should be provided one week in advance.
	43. P35 merge first three checkboxes to read: "Provide concise background information, demonstrating that the City has spent time reviewing past plans, feedback, history, and current events."
	44. P59 insert "based on input received from community evaluations" into the last paragraph.
COMMENT 6	Calvord		4-Oct	6-Sep	The draft handbook is a good idea for politics. It needs a section on transportation and another on safety. In general it seems somewhat ambiguous. If tax-paying residents want the city to address certain issues We are aware of there needs to be better venues than the vague text I read in the sections about working together and sharing responsibility.
RESPONSE 6	The handbook addresses the overall need for and suggestions for improving the civic engagement process on important public decisions, such as transportation improvements. The handbook itself does not include a section on transportation or safety as those are topics covered in other City plans.
COMMENT 7	Scheye	Jim	4-Oct	6-Sep	Terrific document to frame and document input for future civic engagements. I would consider being a volunteer facilitator. Based on a quick scan, I did not see accommodations for Spanish speakers addressed. We have a large Spanish population on the north and south sides of town.
RESPONSE 7	The handbook addresses the importance of engaging the city's diverse population. The document itself is available in both English and Spanish, as was the What's Next Alexandria website and the materials used during the community dialogues and online engagement. Pages 51-54 outline specific tools and strategies for engaging the city's diverse population, including but not limited to providing translation services, meeting with resident in their communities, and developing relationships with community leaders.
COMMENT 8	Sullivan	Roger	4-Oct	6-Sep	I commend the City for trying harder to solicit citizens' input. Use of the City web site, e-mails, etc. is a positive development. My main comment on the Civic Engagement Handbook concerns page 47, "Mail". Many people, especially elderly people, do not use e-mail. Many others are busy and not aware of the City's electronic communications, or of posters, flyers, and newspaper articles. I believe that, at least once a year, if not more often, the City should mail to every citizen a brochure (perhaps 20 pages or so) summarizing key City-related information, especially upcoming potential changes that may be controversial, key scheduled key meetings of City Council and other groups, etc. Then, if someone later said, "I didn't hear about it", the response should be, "If you live in the City, you received this information in the annual summary brochure." If people ignore this mailing, it is their own fault. It is important to be sure that every citizen be informed about important, upcoming potential changes. Yes, direct mail to all citizens is expensive, but it is worth the cost at least once or twice a year.
RESPONSE 8	We agree that mailings can be a great way to reach some populations who we can't reach by email. The interdepartmental implementation team will take your suggestion into consideration. **We have added a bullet to page 47 consistent with your comment: Updates to residents summarizing key city-related information, major upcoming projects, and how to participate in public decision making processes.**

COMMENT 9	Conn	Michelle	6-Oct	6-Sep	Page 7- Typo?- "Blue" dot should be "Green" dot
RESPONSE 9	Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Unfortunately, different printers can sometimes result in significant color variations.				
COMMENT 10	Lomax	Marjorie	6-Oct	6-Sep	Need to define what a project is. Page 56 mentions small area plan and technical study; however more examples would be helpful Page 19--hard to read red overtype. Could you define approximate timeframes for different (small-large) projects vs. current processing(realize we now get to implementation and have citizens who did not know about project and have concerns)? Will beginning date for this process be publication of handbook?
RESPONSE 10	page 56: We have added examples and text. "Examples of City projects that will require a civic engagement framework and the most comprehensive levels of outreach and public participation include the City Strategic Plan, City Budget, Small Area Plans, and Citywide Chapters of the Master Plan. Small area plans (SAPs) tend to provide an opportunity for a great deal of public input and discretion because they establish a long term vision for an area, at the beginning of that "long term," although the plans must be consistent with the City's's strategic plan, funding capacity, and developer contributions. At the other end of the continuum is development review, where applicants have existing property rights for development and an obligation to comply with previously adopted Small Area Plan, which the public has presumably already participated in developing. The community can weigh in on a development project's consistency with the Small Area Plan, zoning, and a variety of details, but the major issues such as use, scale, density have already been established by the community in the Small Area Plan. " We have also developed a matrix outlining criteria to help determine what level of civic engagement process each type of project should undergo. The matrix has been added to the appendix of the Handbook and to the Implementation Plan. page 19: We have edited the framework graphic for improved legibility on this page Re timeframes: Timeframes vary significantly depending on the project. In general, Small Area Plan processes take about 18-36 months, depending on the complexity of issues and size of the area. Smaller technical studies or regulatory changes typically take between 6-12 months. Timelines are shown in the applicability matrix referred to above. Re Official implementation of the Civic Engagement Handbook: Council adoption of the handbook will mark the official beginning, however, staff has already begun planning for integration of the key principles into planning processes that have started or will soon start.				
COMMENT 11	Pennington		7-Oct	6-Sep	Time is a very expensive resource. I see mention of setting a timeline, but little mention of keeping to it, or revising it. At the micro level, meetings should not go on til 2.00am, at the macro level discussion should not go on until the project dies through boredom.
RESPONSE 11	As you mention, the handbook does discuss the importance of setting timelines. On the micro level, we have added a bullet to pages 32 and 35 to address the importance of adhering to scheduled meeting times and agendas. On the macro level, the handbook emphasizes the importance of documenting the process and decision points at each phase to avoid re-hashing of topics. We have added the following language to page 18 to further assert the point: Adhering to the established project timeline is an important step in establishing credibility and trust in the process, as well as respecting participants' time and making efficient use of City resources. While it is not always possible and some factors can't be controlled, it is important to set the expectation that staff will always strive to adhere to the project timeline.				
COMMENT 12	White	Maria Mercedes	7-Oct	6-Sep	Coming from a culture where citizen participation does not exist, I am very appreciative of the City's efforts to include in their work, those the City serves. I only hope that those who still do not see this democracy in action, eventually come to appreciate this wonderful place where they live and where they are taken into account.
RESPONSE 12	Thank you for your comment and participation in the process.				
COMMENT 13	Thomas	Amy	10-Oct	6-Sep	This framework represents what I viewed online and in person throughout the civic engagement process and demonstrates citizen involvement in decision-making. In talking with residents who participated, I know many of us have learned new ways to present our opinions and have made new friends. In response to the Draft Handbook, I'd like to suggest one more evaluation form for use during an Engagement Strategy. This form would be a simple checklist that follows the Table of Contents to assure that the following were taken into consideration.: 1. Handbook was consulted 2. Focused Outcome was stated 3. Shared Responsibility took place and was measured 4. Engagement Strategy(ies) listed 5. Communication and Outreach used for this strategy/step/phase 6. Reaching the Community's Diversity took place in these ways 7. Implementation will take place 8. Evaluation took place 8. Date, time, place, facilitator 9. How this evaluation will be shared (online, kept in project binder, etc.)
RESPONSE 13	In response to your suggestion, we have developed a Community Evaluation form that mirrors the Staff Project Evaluation form and takes into consideration the points below. It has been added to the appendix of the handbook with the other evaluation forms.				

COMMENT 14	Pearson	Sarah	10-Oct	6-Sep	Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the What's Next Handbook for Civic Engagement. Civic engagement has been part of my career and a passion of mine (examples below). I'm fairly active in the Alexandria community and I wish I had known this work was in progress as I would have happily volunteered my time to help. I've reviewed the handbook draft and I have some suggestions and concerns. • Reduce size by at least 40%! There is considerable repetition that can be edited out. The doc is far too long for the casual reader to review. • Page 1 -- Cut 4th paragraph and last paragraph. • Page 2 -- Great page! This could be the basis for a Prezi (prezi.com/) on the handbook. • Page 3 -- Cut first sentence of first para. • Page 5 -- Repetitive. Cut first sentence of first para. From 4th para, please provide examples of "representative groups of residents." • Page 7 -- Seems that the following principles of engagement were left behind: voting, knowledge of your elected official, knowledge of how city government works and Alexandria's public policy process. I'm concerned that these important elements are left out of the conversation and while they may not form the basis for your handbook, whenever civic engagement is mentioned, these are paramount. • The center of the handbook looks nice, but, again, there is a good deal of repetition---words/sentences could/should be cut. • Appendix A-3 -- This reveals another concern for me. I see that in-person meetings were all held in the same church. This compromises a sense of diversity and accessibility. Yikes. • Also, I only see that the poll was featured on one website. Yikes, again. • I realize my comments are critical and I apologize. I only mean to offer suggestions to streamline the handbook and facilitate accessibility. Please let me know if I can be of assistance in helping your team move the report forward.
RESPONSE 14					*Thank you for your offer to help. If you are still interested, we would like to discuss tapping your expertise as we move into implementation. In response to your comment regarding the length of the document, we felt it was important to include the key items and results of community discussion during the WNA process. Staff will develop a summary document once the handbook is approved by City Council to serve as a quick guide to the City's civic engagement principles. Response to specific page number comments:* *• **Page 1** - The Connected Communities ICMA paper served as a foundation for this effort and therefore we consider it essential to include key points in the introduction. We have kept this text.* *• **Page 3** - We kept this sentence.* *• **Page 5** - We kept this sentence, but **deleted the word "representative" as it is confusing.*** *• **Page 7** - The community developed the principles and framework through multiple iterations, and therefore we wouldn't change them at this late stage, unless the suggestion came from many people, rather than just one. However, you raise an important point about actions essential to the core of a civically engaged community. **To your point, on page 6 under "What does success look like?" we've revised/added the following bullets +Fully informed public that knows how its city government works and Alexandria's public policy process. +a community that regularly votes in elections and has knowledge of their elected officials.*** *• The venue for the community dialogues was chosen because of the large number of participants, availability of breakout tables, its central location within the city, its accessibility to bus routes as well as parking, and for consistency . **Page 29 of the handbook has been updated to stress the importance of selecting locations that are easily accessible to a broad diversity of people. The meeting venue paragraph now reads: "Select a meeting venue that is a neutral place where all people feel comfortable going. The venue should be easily accessible by transit, accessible to persons with disabilities, and conveniently located within the project/planning area. If the project has citywide impact, meetings should be centrally located or be held in multiple different sections of the city over the course of the process."*** *• All of the WNA polls were made available on the city website, ACTion Alexandria's website, as well as via hardcopy distribution in public libraries, and they were promoted through social media, community listservs, and printed flyers and posters distributed throughout the City.*
COMMENT 15	Benavage	Pete	11-Oct	6-Sep	• p. 18: "Project can move on...when the majority is satisfied..." Majority of what? There needs to be some definite deadline on participation as a voting member in groups that require votes. Otherwise, factions pack the meetings at the last minute and obstruct progress. I have seen this happen. • p. 27: "Stakeholders' Groups" should be specifically mentioned and included • p. 34: Though mentioned later, NEWSPAPERS and LIBRARIES should be included. • p. 46: Again, please do not overlook LIBRARIES. • p. 51: In the side note, "Democratic" should be "democratic"; capital "D" implies the Democratic Party, while lower case "d" refers to the participation of people in governmental decisions. • p. 52: Mention should be made of free translation software. I have in fact used it to produce Spanish language flyers, and it really does work • .p. 52: Getting "permission to post flyers in condos" -- good luck. Condominium rules are a major stumbling block to communications with residents, and a very large segment of Alexandria lives in condos. Unless it is electronic media or mail, it is exceedingly difficult to post materials in condos, and in fact, any multi-family residential area with strong association regulations. This is a real problem for local political candidates as well, and actually is becoming a very major issue. • p. 53: With respect to translators at meetings, a real caveat needs to be added that such translation services must not impede the general audience's ability to hear or see the proceedings. Some translators have actually interfered with members on the dais conducting a meeting, and have frequently been so loud in there translating efforts that members of the audience could not hear the ongoing debate. There should be a protocol to allow for proper translation without it interfering with the overwhelming majority of the participants/audience. • A-12: This should be noted specifically as a BLANK FORM (for people who are easily confused, like me). Resource Listings: The Beauregard Corridor Stakeholders' Group should be listed as an example of community outreach and input. This was a major success in Alexandria, and we should build on lessons learned from that process.

RESPONSE 15	*page 18 - Language has been changed to "when participants are satisfied.."* *Page 27 - Add Beauregard Corridor Stakeholder's Group as one of the examples provided.* *page 34 - Add second sentence: Notice of where the community can access post-meeting materials and project information should be included on meeting flyers provided to libraries and newspapers."* *page 46 - Add libraries to first sentence of the paragraph beginning, "Print materials can be distributed at..."* *page 51 - In sidebar quote, change "Democratic" to "democratic"* *page 52 - Free translation software does not always translate accurately, so we don't suggest it. We use bilingual staff, community volunteers, or in some cases professional translators to ensure accurate translations. page 52 - We have had success with condo associations agreeing to post flyers on their website as well as in elevators or on bulletin boards.* page 53 - You make a good point. Typically, we have translators using headsets and have not had issues, but this is something to keep in mind when setting up a meeting space. *A12 - We have added "Blank Form" to the top of the page.* We have added BCSG to page 27 as an example of a successful advisory group.				
COMMENT 16	DB		11-Oct	6-Sep	I appreciated being able to participate in some of these discussions. I think the draft handbook is an excellent start. I do think the achieving engagement will be a difficult road and hope this can have some measure of success.
RESPONSE 16	*Successful implementation of the handbook will certainly require significant commitment on the part of city staff, elected and appointed officials, and members of the community. The handbook establishes the foundation for moving forward.*				
COMMENT 17	James	Carol	9-Oct	6-Sep	Congratulations on this process and acknowledging the needs it seeks to serve. Alexandria's living legacy and brand identity are served by the best possible means of civic engagement and exercise of freedom of speech. This process helps to underscore who we are as a community. One point I do not see addressed as a matter of diversity is the need to involve and include impartial, informed sources where available. "Celebrate small victories" (p. 59) is a very worthy goal deserving of a process - as is embracing the understanding that "increasing public engagement across the city will require years of sustained collaboration and considered progress." The use of a civic engagement advisory commission could extend and enhance this project.
RESPONSE 17	*Re: involving/including impartial sources - The civic engagement principles "Respect" and "Transparency" specifically address neutrality and impartiality, as well as sections on Facilitation and MCs (pg 22, 30 and 31)* *Re: Civic Engagement Advisory commission - In the first year, staff will focus on setting up the foundation for implementation of the civic engagement work through an Interdepartmental Implementation team. It may be that a Civic Engagement Advisory Commission is an appropriate future step to ensure continued successful implementation and accountability.*				
COMMENT 18	Enriquez	Edith	4-Oct	6-Sep	Manual draft looks very good. It is easy to read in Spanish and the format of the presentation takes me slowly to each of the information points and easy to understand concepts. I am very happy to see how well is explained the community participation and the city is embracing our city diversity. I know it will be a hard work but the city already know that and recognize some of the challenges come along with bringing everyone to the table to talk. (Need of translation and child care services. Just to mentioned some the Manual is point out.) I love the comments are in the pages from the participants. The expectations are very clear for all the participants: city, community members, volunteers, facilitators. Definitely it is a Manual that will be use to go back and forth through the whole process for any one who participate because clarify each concept for any member who participates will be in the same line walking forward the outcome with the ingredients the Manual provides. I will encourage my network neighborhoods to review and send the feedback before the date line. I just need to let you know some typing mistakes in Spanish: Page #52 "Estratgegia" better "Estrategia". My recommendation will be also to change in Page 19 Phase 2 "enrolar" better "involucrar"and Page 21 at second paragraph same "enrolar" better "involucrar"
RESPONSE 18	*Thank you for your participation and suggested improvements.* *The following edits have been made to the Spanish version of the handbook based on your suggestions:* *Page 52 "Estratgegia" change to "Estrategia"* *Page 19 Phase 2 "enrolar" is changed to "involucrar"* *Page 21 second paragraph "enrolar" is changed to "involucrar".*				

COMMENT 19	Hertel	Poul	11-Oct	6-Sep	Thank you taking the time to listen to our comments on the revised Handbook for Civic Engagement. However, there is a real need for citizens to affect the outcome of major decisions in a meaningful way. Because citizens will only participate if there is a credible organizational process that gives them reason to believe they have the ability to affect the outcome.
					Although a lot of work obviously went into the Handbook, the City Growth Policy of the City Council is holding the civic engagement process back from addressing some of the core issues that precipitated the need for it in the first place.
					The primary Civic Engagement goal is to improve the quality of Alexandria's public participation process, so that "members of the community are actively, constructively, and meaningfully involved in the public decisions that affect their lives."
					This goal was intended to address the opinion of some that the Alexandria engagement process consists of one or more of the following objectives, which the White Paper; The Connected Community: Local Governments as Partners in Citizen Engagement and Community Building specifically states "that citizen engagement is not:" Selling the public on; Getting votes for; Convincing the public to; A meeting to complain/find fault with; A process where staff controls [the] outcome" As Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 7) state: "To simply inform and to consult are 'thin,' frequently pro-forma techniques of participation that often fail to meet the public's expectations for involvement, and typically yield little in the way of new knowledge." In the comprehensive review of the literature on Citizen participation, the White Paper concludes that "What appears to be most important from a citizen's perspective and from the standpoint of attaining ongoing engagement is not the strategy employed, but how government responds when citizens voice their preferences.
					1. For citizens, there are two questions that are paramount:" Did the government listen and take action based on what they heard from us? Was it worth my time and effort?" These are simple, but vitally important questions that need to become objectives for each major decision and be inculcated into the in the Handbook and City Hall.
					2. By emphasizing form, the Handbook offers the citizens to have opportunity to comment, but it does not address the core issue of ensuring that citizens will have influence over the outcome. Nor does it ensure that public servants treat service recipients, not as customers, but as citizens with whom they want to build a positive relationship, a sense of responsibility, and mutual trust.
					3. Moreover, if the "Growth Policy" is set outside the engagement process by the City Council, to what end is the engagement process? As in the past, unpopular or ill-conceived projects will merely degrade into mass protest movements, causing more damage than good.
					4. Furthermore, although the current version of the Handbook is rich in expectations placed on citizen behavior, it is surprisingly silent on the conduct of City entities, giving credence to the belief that engagement is not truly a bilateral process.
					(Numbers added above by staff to facilitate response below).
RESPONSE 19	*1. We agree that an affirmative response to the questions you pose are fundamental to encouraging ongoing return engagement from members of the community. Depending on the issue at hand however, there may be opposing preferences within the community and therefore, there will always be people who are unhappy with the decision. What is important in those cases is being able to say, I didn't agree with the outcome but I thought the process was fair. **We have added your essential questions to page 6 under the heading "What does success look like?": There are two simple, but vitally important questions that should be objectives for each major decision: Did the government listen and take action based on what they heard from us? Was it worth my time and effort to participate?"***				
	2. The Handbook does establish expectations throughout to ensure and to show how citizens have influence over the outcome. For example, on page 35, "The hallmark of an iterative process is that participants know how their work informs the progression of the project." This goal is also spelled out in the Principles of Meaningful Engagement and Transparency.				
	3. The Handbook cannot ensure that public servants treat members of the community as people with whom they want to build a positive relationship, a sense of responsibility, and mutual trust, however these are valuable and many of these sentiments are spelled out in the principles.				
	3. City Council's strategic plan is developed through a community process, and the strategic plan in turn informs city policy and small area planning.				
	4. The Handbook largely sets a shared understanding and expectations for how City staff (and elected and appointed officials) should conduct the engagement process for major City decisions, and the principles that they should abide by in doing so. The onus is on staff to ensure that each of these processes starts off on the right foot and follows a process that complies with the framework, the principles, and the guidelines established. The handbook acknowledges however, that decisionmaking in the best interest of the city needs to happen in partnership with members of the community. For that reason, we added a 2 page section on Shared Responsibility illustrating ways in which members of the community can and should be a partner in the effort to engage a broad cross section of the community most meaningfully in the decisions that shape and affect their City. The principles of Respect, Mutual Accountability and Sustained Collaboration (generated from community input) also reference the importance of mutual trust and partnership in the best interest of our City.				

20	Hobbs	Michael	11-Oct	6-Sep	"What's Next Alexandria" 's draft Handbook for Civic Engagement is largely unobjectionable. Individuals might differ on some of the details, but the broad "Principles of Engagement" at the core of the undertaking seem sound and appropriate, and are accompanied by a broadly comprehensive "tool box" for implementation.
					Standing alone, however, the Handbook and its implementation run the risk of disappointing and discouraging rather than fulfilling public expectations, and thus failing to achieve the eloquently stated goal of "improv[ing] the quality of Alexandria's public participation process so that members of the community are actively, constructively, and meaningfully involved in the public decisions that affect their lives." The principal flaw is not in what the draft Handbook contains-but in what it does not.
					The principal lack is a clear, concise and credible statement by the City Council itself that its commitment to this objective and these principles is not superficial but substantial, not cursory but compelling, not peripheral but central to its determination as to how the City of Alexandria will conduct its public policy decision-making processes.
					Council's having commissioned the "What's Next Alexandria" project, and attendance by individual members of the Council and of City management at several of the community meetings, were welcome, but are not alone a sufficient demonstration of the depth of its commitment and the importance it attaches to the goal.
					When it adopts the Handbook, the Council should demonstrate that commitment by predicating it on the adoption of a Statement of Policy on Public Participation in the City of Alexandria's Public Policy Decision-Making Process-a policy which Council is willing to measure the City's governmental processes against; for the implementation of which Council is willing to be held primarily and ultimately accountable; and which Council is prepared to apply fully to its own proceedings, as a hallmark for the practice of all other governmental bodies and agencies in the City. A suggested statement of principle proposed more than four years ago by the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations (with some additional language to reflect some of the key conclusions and recommendations of the current "What's Next Alexandria" project) could be a useful starting point for the drafting of such a Statement of Policy by the Council:
					It shall be the policy of the City of Alexandria that significant public policies will be adopted, and significant governmental action taken, only after (1) the nature of the proposed policy or action has been fully disclosed, (2) the public has had full and fair opportunity to learn of the proposed action, and to comment on it, and (3) the decision-making body has had sufficient opportunity fairly to consider and reflect on such comment, before acting. It is the purpose of this policy to ensure that public participation in all of the City's public policy processes shall be welcomed and encouraged to the optimum degree, so that all citizens of Alexandria, regardless of their station or their circumstances, shall have no less access to and opportunity for participation in those processes, and their views afforded no less full, fair and respectful consideration, than is afforded to any public or private parties at interest.
RESPONSE 20	*We agree with and appreciate your suggestion to adopt a strong policy statement supporting and holding the city accountable for its civic engagement work. **Staff has incorporated your suggested language into a draft Resolution establishing Alexandria's Policy on Civic Engagement for City Council's consideration when it adopts the Handbook.***				
COMMENT 21	Linehan	Patrice	11-Oct	6-Sep	The Handbook outlines the "What's Next Alexandria?" civic engagement process well, and captures the recommendations made during the public meetings (and online interaction)... Excellent work!
					Descriptions of what a "community organizer" does, and the purpose of different communication methods adds clarity and promotes common understanding. Nice work!
					Some general recommendations:
					-I like the idea of a basic evaluation as suggested by Amy Thomas.
					-Consider "chunking" the information into sections for the online version so the reader is not overwhelmed -Existing leadership groups might need to adjust their current structure (e.g., inviting City staff to speak at monthly meetings) to better align with the new process and could benefit from some training (similar to City staff training that is being planned).
					More detailed edits to consider:
					p. 23 (2nd paragraph) - Consider breaking up the one long, wordy sentence p. 26 - Mobile Workshop & ... (out of place? - Move to #2?) p. 36 "benefits and constraints" repeated twice in paragraph 3
					Other considerations:
					-Flyers also helpful in places where people gather and have to wait (e.g. bus stops) -Print distribution can use existing infrastructure (e.g. inter library, recreation center, City departments and/or school distribution systems)
					Thank you for the opportunity to participate and comment. I'm committed to carrying this work forward and hope to see the results of this work implemented in upcoming City projects.
RESPONSE 21	*Evaluation: Staff has added a basic process evaluation form and added to the appendix with the other templates.*				
	Online Version: Per your suggestion, once approved by City Council, the online version will be "chunked" to facilitate easier access to the different sections by staff and community alike.				
	page 23 (2nd paragraph) - Sentence edited to: Included in the appendix is a civic engagement toolbox, which provides a comprehensive list, description and suggested use for many tools available.				
	page 26 - the misplaced header "Mobile Workshops &..." at the bottom of the page has been moved to the top of the right column				
	page 36 - duplication of "benefits and constraints" has been removed in paragraph 3				
	page 46 - second bullet has been edited to: "Print materials can be distributed using existing City infrastructure, including libraries, recreation centers, other City facilities and school distribution systems, as well as at religious institutions, local shops, restaurants, gyms, bus stops, and waiting rooms. Flyers should be considered for any place that residents congregate, spend time, or have to wait.				
COMMENT 22	Dyer	Marc	11-Oct	6-Sep	Looks like it could be a useful resource for folks interested in getting involved in their community. I'm glad it's also available online. Are there plans for translations (e.g., Spanish, Amharic)? From Library Comment Form
RESPONSE 22	*The City has translated the document into Spanish, now available online and at City Libraries. In future, it may be recommended that additional language translations be provided, at least for the summary document.*				

COMMENT 23	Developer Attorneys	Developer Attorneys suggested the addition of clarifying language regarding what projects are required to use the civic engagement framework template and follow the principles. Their question was one of applicability and whether development projects (or more generally, changes initiated by non-City entities) will be required to undergo the same process as small area plans, for example.
RESPONSE 23		*Language has been added to page 3, page 56 (see above) and the Appendix, to help clarify expectations about applicability. Introduction, page 3: "A chart has been added to the appendix of this handbook and to the implementation plan to clarify how the civic engagement framework and principles apply to the range of projects the City undertakes. In general, projects initiated by the City will be expected to apply the outcomes of What's Next Alexandria. Projects initiated by others, such as development applications, will still require community outreach and feedback as always, but not at the level required of City projects.*