



## CITY OF BEND

May 26, 2023

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### MAYOR PRO TEM

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### CITY COUNCILORS

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Barb Campbell  
Ariel Méndez  
Megan Norris  
Mike Riley

### CITY MANAGER

Eric King

Neighborhood Leadership Alliance Representatives,

Last week, at the Wednesday, May 17 City Council meeting, the Council held a **work session on community engagement around the 2023-25 Council Goals**. Part of this session included how to utilize existing advisory boards, committees and commissions to help accomplish the work set out in these goals. During the discussion, Council gave unanimous direction to pause the Neighborhood Leadership Alliance (NLA) indefinitely to support and focus on more direct engagement opportunities between Council and the broader community.

The direction to pause the NLA is supported by two recently completed assessments performed in the 2021-23 biennium. One assessment focused on the efficiency of the neighborhood program, and included input from the NLA, exiting NLA representatives, neighborhood leaders and the community at large. The other assessment focused on the City's overall outreach strategy and structure, including input from underrepresented groups in the Bend community. The two assessments overwhelmingly pointed to the need for more direct connections with decision-makers, in spaces outside of the typical public meeting format.

Specific to the NLA, the neighborhood assessment showed the committee, which was to be a conduit of information to the community and from the community, was not operating as intended. Likewise, NLA representatives and neighborhood leaders expressed concern and frustration about the current format of the NLA operating as an advisory committee. These concerns included the inability to have alternates for overwhelmed volunteers, turnover on neighborhood boards which led to vacancies on the NLA, lack of reach of neighbors to accurately represent them on a committee and frustration with having priorities driven by Council.

The City will continue to support individual Neighborhood Associations and Councilors will continue to be assigned as liaisons to NA's. And in the next two years, the City will work to create a number of new opportunities that Council believes will create better connections with neighborhoods. Here is what we will begin to roll out in the coming months:

- **Bend Block Party Trailer Program:** A new program focused on creating spaces for neighbors to gather and connect! The Bend Block Party is a resource for the City and Neighborhood Districts (formerly Neighborhood Associations), to host a pop-up block party in a neighborhood park or on a local street. Equipped with enough tables and chairs for 60 guests, a sound system, yard games and a BBQ – this party trailer is intended to make getting together easier! *Save the date – July 19 for a pop-up trailer launch for neighborhood leaders downtown before the City Council meeting.*
- **Quarterly Community Gatherings:** These are City-hosted celebratory events anticipated to take place in each of the four geographic quadrants of Bend once a year. Neighborhood Districts in the quadrant in which the event is taking place will be invited to have a presence at these events, and the Mayor and Councilors will have the opportunity to attend and speak with community members. *The first Community Gathering is planned to take place this fall during Welcoming Week, September 8 - 17. Details will be released with the other Welcoming Week events later this summer.*
- **Bi-Annual Roundtables and Listening Sessions with Neighborhoods:** These more informal and conversational style meetings will provide opportunities for a more topical discussion between City decision-makers and the community. The City plans to hold two meetings with neighborhood leaders and two meetings with BIPOC community members (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) each year. Topics for these meetings will be based on community input and Council’s two year goals and work plan, and the format will allow for education and discussion with staff and elected officials. The meetings will occur at alternating locations around the community. The first meeting date/time and discussion topics for each are yet to be determined, but we anticipate the first of these meetings to take place by the end of the calendar year.
- **Off-site Council Meetings:** City Council has also asked whether we can begin hosting some public meetings “off-site” or at locations other than downtown at City Hall. Staff are currently looking into the ways in which this can happen while meeting legal requirements of having open, hybrid meetings that are accessible to the public.

If you are interested in further discussing Council’s decision to pause the NLA, please feel free to reach out to me, or any of the Council at [council@bendoregon.gov](mailto:council@bendoregon.gov). I’m happy to find a time to talk with you if you have further questions or feedback.

Thank you for volunteering your time to make Bend a better place,

Melanie Kebler  
Mayor of Bend



**Accommodation Information for People with Disabilities**

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille, large print, electronic formats, etc. please contact Makayla Oliver at [moliver@bendoregon.gov](mailto:moliver@bendoregon.gov) or (541) 323-8571; Relay Users Dial 7-1-1.