Edmonds: A Community Engagement Assessment

Cultural change: When community engagement is embedded in local decision-making, based on a shared commitment to collaborate across all levels to achieve agreed-to desired outcomes.

December 2025

An open letter to Edmonds – Why I did this assessment:

Many of us have become increasingly frustrated with our society's polarization and growing intolerance of other's points of view. Compared to federal and state levels, local communities were places where people could congregate, discuss, debate and then roll up their sleeves to work together to solve complex problems – through a shared common love for community, as well as living in proximity as neighbors, colleagues and friends.

Unfortunately, the polarization at the federal and state levels is seeping into local communities, affecting how people act and react to each other. How community engagement is structured can either bring a community together or further separate people.

Innovative leaders in the public, private, non-profit and tribal sectors recognize that they can't solve complex issues on their own – they must collaborate to tackle the most complex and thorny problems together. Diverging into separate corners and silos often ends up wasting tremendous talent and resources, repeats historical conflict, perpetuates the 'blame game' and eventually burns people out. At its worst – it can create enduring cynicism and destroy hope.

But this doesn't have to happen. If engagement is done well, bringing diverse and creative ideas together in a healthy civil manner is tremendously beneficial to both individuals and communities. People gain a deeper sense of belonging in their community. Opinions are genuinely valued. Consensus-based recommendations help leaders make better policy, when they see there is collective buy-in with shared values and across diverse beliefs.

This work is hard. Involving those who don't engage isn't easy – ask any advocacy group or elected official! And convincing folks who have become 'conflict-normalized' to try something different takes a lot of effort. But repeating the same processes over and over and expecting different results…. We all know how that quote ends.

This report summarizes over 40 assessment interviews. To begin this process. To hopefully help all of us in Edmonds get on a path towards consensus-building and trust in ourselves and our leaders. To learn from our history but not get consumed by it. To listen to each other – to be open to changing our own behaviors. And to change the way we invite and respect those who have not been able to engage in the past, for whatever reasons.

This assessment isn't perfect. It's not meant to be a statistically representative sample of all of Edmonds. It's not a how-to guide or one-size-fits-all template for engagement. It's a starting point to summarize a diverse set of beliefs and interests, before moving forward.

Some readers may feel validated from this report. Some may feel it re-organizes what they already know. Others may learn something new, feel defensive, or skeptical. I hope this helps us to think differently about how engagement could work in Edmonds. And to rebuild the trust needed to effectively solve problems together.

Thanks to all the folks who shared their interview time with me…. and to all of you for your interest in creating positive change in our hometown.

Kevin Harris - Edmonds, December 2025

Community Engagement in Edmonds: Synthesis of 2025 Assessment Interviews

Report Highlights

A culture of community engagement is described as *'a state where community engagement is embedded in local decision making, based on a shared commitment to collaborate across all levels to achieve agreed-to desired outcomes.'*

This report synthesizes individual interviews conducted with over 40 people, including residents, leaders across the private and non-profit sectors, city staff and elected officials about the state of community engagement in Edmonds, Washington. These interviews suggest that Edmonds has a high potential for engagement but has significant structural and cultural barriers. While Edmonds has an educated population, hardworking staff and a smart and dedicated volunteer base, existing engagement is sometimes described as 'transactional, 'reactive', or prone to 'politically performative outcomes.'

The following highlight some of the common perceptions and beliefs heard during the interviews:

- Functional engagement should be genuinely participatory, and at least a two-way dialogue, rather than repetitive presentation-style formats and 'three minutes at the microphone.' Others appreciate the need for a wide variety of engagement techniques, depending on the issue, timing and participants.
- The current culture of engagement tends to support polarized and performative behavior and does little to encourage true collaboration and consensus-building.
- Negative public behavior prevents many from wanting to engage.
- People often feel that government feedback is either inconsistent or missing.
- City staff often feel overwhelmed and demonized.
- Council members often note that improvements are needed but feel time constrained.
- Most people desire shared 'upstream' dialogue and problem-solving, but don't know how to change the existing culture on a scaled basis.
- Invitations to engage are based on obsolete technology and often ignore the needs of younger adults and working families, including those who live in the Hwy 99/Ballinger area.
- A lack of overall civic education prevents broader engagement, as well as the public's

ability to ask deeper questions.

This report summarizes interviewee's perceptions of community engagement, strengths, weaknesses, current gaps, process utility and participant suggestions.

The author's conclusions and overall recommendations include:

- The need to 're-boot' the way that community engagement is designed and implemented, with references to several organizations that address some of the needs that were heard.
- Why current fragmentation and siloing is wasting effort and inadvertently creating further polarization.
- When and when not to use third party impartial facilitators in low-trust environments.
- Which factors are critical to the development of a strong, positive community engagement culture in Edmonds.

The following discussion questions were sent to people to consider in advance of each individual interview:

Q1: *What does the term 'Community Engagement' mean to you? What might be the best attributes of successful community engagement in Edmonds?*
Q2*: What are the current community engagement strengths, barriers and gaps in Edmonds? What types of commitments from different parties (including the public) are needed to improve community engagement?*
Q3: *Are you aware of any existing 'platforms' (inside or outside of Edmonds) that could be leveraged to improve engagement effectiveness here?*

Except for Section 5, the following report summarizes only interviewee's key opinions and discussion points. Section 5 includes this report author's conclusions and recommendations.

Contents

Section 1: Defining Community Engagement & Identifying Barriers

A Vision for Engagement

Interviewees believed that functional community engagement should be **participative**. Currently in Edmonds, engagement is often viewed as reactive to crises rather than proactive. Engagement is described as moving beyond 'checking boxes' to genuine collaboration where community members feel heard, understand the decision-making process, ask informed questions throughout a real dialogue, and receive feedback on their input. Several others felt that community engagement is generally strong in Edmonds, citing relatively strong event turnout. Others believe that their **election of representative leaders** is enough and have neither the time nor capacity to engage beyond voting.

Many described strong engagement as a **two-way dialogue**, not one-way presentations or 'three minutes at the microphone'. Many noted that current processes misunderstand engagement as broadcasting information, rather than co-creating solutions. Some noted that engagement requires a broad spectrum of processes, including the above, to fit the needs of each issue, the participants and timing. They noted that engagement also includes surveying, focus groups and other means of communication.

Some called out a **lack of representation and inclusion** as a major barrier. Highway 99 communities, young adults, renters, working families, and marginalized groups (people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and others) were identified as lacking attention. Many compared disproportionate attention to the 'Bowl' versus other neighborhoods.

Others noted the need for relationship-building, trust and a sense of belonging, rather than what are perceived as 'transactional' interactions. People often noted the need for **acknowledgement, follow-up and continuity**.

Transparency was often cited. 'Showing work', explaining the *why* behind decisions, and clearly demonstrating *how* public input was considered were noted as important requirements.

Others mentioned the need for **process clarity** – knowing *how* to engage, *where, when* and *what happens next*. Some cited a lack of understanding of roles, timelines, outcomes or 'ripeness' of issues.

Many valued **shared problem-solving and constructive dialogue**, including listening, identifying tradeoffs, compromise and working towards the 'common good.'

Barriers fell into three categories: Structural/process barriers, trust/cultural barriers and social/practical barriers**.**

Structural barriers included the **reactive** nature of engagement. The recent conflict over Hummingbird Hill Park and Frances Anderson Center were examples of reaction-based engagement. **Lack of follow-through** (after one-off convenings) with no sense of closure; an **unclear playbook** (inconsistent process, 'quicksand culture') with unpredictable city response**; inaccessible formats** (three minutes at the microphone; limited Q&A after evening meetings**); staff capacity limits** (lack of frameworks to capture, store, analyze and use feedback; planners expected to be communicators; burnout); **data gatekeeping/difficulty accessing information** (no central 'well' to understand issues), and **boards and commission feeling ignored or overridden** – all perceived as structural barriers to effective engagement.

Noted **trust and cultural barriers** included: Low **trust in leadership** (many perceived leadership decisions as pre-determined or politically motivated); past experiences of **being dismissed, ghosted or misled**; **online public toxicity**, which also discourages others from engaging; **fear of personal attacks** (leading to polarization and perceived retribution); and feeling a **lack of belonging**.

Social/practical barrier comments included: **Lack of accessibility** (no transportation or childcare for single parents or young families, given inconvenient engagement timing**); language and cultural barriers**, especially for English as a second language residents and businesses**; lack of awareness of** how **local decision-making impacts** daily life (many younger residents feel local government has little relevance or impact on their lives), and **lack of accessible opportunities** to engage (e.g., no single landing webpage; no instructions, and no mentors/guides).

Divergent views include: The belief that Edmonds is **already highly engaged**, with strong turnout and active volunteers; that **engagement is skewed**, and dominated by older, affluent Bowl residents, and that the **city is generally transparent and open**. Some believe **advocacy groups** are helpful and educational– others see them as biased, polarizing and unrepresentative.

Commonalities and Differences in Perspectives

- **Commonalities:**
    - Many noted that the current environment feels toxic, polarized, and lacking in trust between parties.
    - A 'vocal minority' or loud voices often dominate the conversation.
    - There is a desire for a 'sense of belonging' and reduced polarization.
    - There is a longing for more participation, greater dialogue and feedback, and openness to diverse perspectives, without personal attack or retribution.

- **Differences:**
    - **Electeds and the public:** Elected officials feel overwhelmed, overly criticized, and feel the public has normalized taking ‘pot shots’ at them. The public often feels ignored, gaslit, or that decisions are already made before they engage.
    - **Generational/geographic:** Older residents in the ‘Bowl’ have time to engage in traditional formats, whereas younger families and residents (especially near Highway 99) feel isolated, lack time due to work schedules, lack childcare, and find 5:00 or 6:00 PM weekday meetings inaccessible.
    - **Within the public**: Varying levels of trust in city staff or elected officials.
    - **Advocacy groups:** Whether advocacy groups help or hinder engagement.
    - **Social media:** The role social media plays – is it a positive catalyst or a ‘poison’?
    - **Overall:** Whether Edmonds is civically strong or civically fractured?

Section 2: Strengths, Weaknesses, Gaps, Commitments, and Structural Deficiencies

General Strengths and Weaknesses

- **Perceived Strengths:**
    - Edmonds has a highly educated, dedicated, and skilled volunteer base.
    - Voter turnout is relatively high compared to other communities, and especially higher than most in Snohomish County.
    - Desire to rebuild sense of belonging and reduce polarization.
    - Desire for meaningful, sustained and structured engagement.
    - Recognition of a need to modernize tools, expectations and civic education.
    - Recent positive collaboration between Brad Shipley/City of Edmonds and Edmonds Environmental Council to review and edit the proposed Critical Areas Ordinance. Several interviewees referred to this as a ‘stand-out’ and positive example of how people can work together productively, when the city acknowledges a need for expertise and collaboration.

- **Weaknesses:**
    - The current culture is described by some as ‘NIMBYism’ or a disproportionate focus on ‘what we don't want Edmonds to be’.
    - There is a lack of diversity in voices; for example, excluding immigrants and renters.
    - Engagement is sometimes described as ‘scattershot’ or a ‘yo-yo’ process.
    - Frustration with reactive, ad-hoc and ‘opaque’ processes.
    - Overload on city staff and capacity.
    - Low trust between many in the public and city government – and sometimes between other groups.

Identified Gaps

To achieve the definition of civic engagement envisioned by interviewees, several categories of perceived gaps should be addressed:

1. **The Education Gap:** There is a widespread lack of understanding regarding how the city government functions, its budget, and its constraints, as well as growth mandates and planning processes. This leads to unrealistic expectations and conspiracy-like theories. More civic education leads to improved civic health. The public needs easy ways to understand issues without becoming experts. Elected leaders need training in critical thinking and facilitation. Staff need advanced training in public engagement best/better

practices.

2. **The Feedback Loop Gap:** The most cited process failure is the lack of ‘closing the loop’. For example, citizens speak at Council meetings, but Council cannot respond or engage in dialogue, creating a one-way transaction. Other examples follow in subsequent report sections.

3. **The ‘Middle’ Gap:** The city hears primarily from the extreme ‘tails of the bell curve’ (including the loudest critics). There is a significant gap attributed to the unengaged ‘moderate middle’, due to many of the noted interviewee comments.

4. **The Staff Capacity Gap:** City staff are described as ‘overworked,’ ‘burned out,’ and lacking the training or resources to be consistently effective. They often retreat to defensive postures rather than pursue open collaboration. Several participants and city staff expressed widely different perspectives and causes about this issue.

Perceptions of Needed Commitments

- **City Council:** ‘Be more transparent, less waffling’, with all seven engaging consistently in two-way public dialogue rather than just listening to three-minute comments. Move beyond the ‘Bowl’ – finally invest in Hwy 99, including development of neighborhood ‘captains’ and trusted messengers. Compensate citizen assemblies or long-term contributors. Engage with youth and young adults in ways that match their lives and needs (e.g., pub meet-ups, social events, flexible formats).

- **City Staff:** Provide data in a non-skewed fashion and be willing to admit when lacking expertise; invite community collaboration (as seen with the recent Critical Areas Ordinance work).

- **The Public:** Commit to ‘contribute, rather than complain’, engage in civil discourse, and avoid personal attacks. Commit to engagement in any way you can – helping your neighbors, volunteering, finding a new cohort/group with shared interests, meeting with an elected leader – convenient to your schedule and interests.

- **Community Groups:** Advocacy groups need to move from ‘herding cats’ to finding common ground and ‘rowing in a similar positive direction.’

Other Gaps/Structural Deficiencies

- **Legal Barriers:** The Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and city attorney’s interpretations are viewed by some as ‘draconian barriers’ to workshopping and informal deliberation.

- **No Institutional Memory:** High staff/volunteer turnover leads to a lack of continuity; new leaders and community members repeat old cycles without learning from past successes/failures.

- **The ‘Black Hole’:** Another barrier is the perception that engagement is futile; people provide input but receive no acknowledgment or visibility into how that input influenced or didn’t influence decisions.

- **Hostile Environment:** Toxic online behavior and personal attacks scare away the ‘silent majority’ and more moderate voices and intimidate and exhaust people.

- **Follow Through, Closure and Accountability:** There is a lack of structured routines for reporting back, tracking progress, identifying lessons learned and documenting decisions.

- **Lack of Agreed-To Processes:** There is no ‘gold standard’ or agreed-upon process for engagement, leading to a ‘quicksand culture’ (e.g., everyone getting stuck in a difficult situation or issue).

Divergent Views

- Some believe the city should lead engagement efforts; others believe the city should not lead until public trust is rebuilt.

- Some think that existing advocacy and educational groups can be positive vehicles for improvement; others believe that some of these groups are entrenched, biased or unwelcoming.

- Some believe that paying participants for engagement is essential, especially in lower income and underserved areas; others believe that could distort representation.

Section 3: Existing Platforms and Tools for Engagement

The third interview question resulted in limited response. Most interviewees were aware of (and highly complementary of) locally recognized individuals and organizations – especially those that moderate issue discussions and election candidate forums (e.g., Alicia Crank/Northwest Washington Civic Circle; Teresa Wippel/My Neighborhood News Network), as well as local organizations focused on public education around different issues (e.g., Edmonds Civic Roundtable and others). Very few interviewees were aware of regional, statewide or national organizations that offer 'better practice' processes of community engagement.

Existing Platforms: Strengths and Liabilities

- **My Edmonds News (MEN) and the Edmonds Beacon:**
  - *Role:* The primary sources of local news and information.
  - *Strength:* Widely accessible; anyone can access and post (MEN online).
  - *Liability:* The online public comment section was frequently cited as toxic, conspiracy-bent, and a source of vitriol that scares people away from engaging - and often creates 'echo chambers.'

- **City Council Meetings:**
  - *Role:* Official record.
  - *Strength:* Accessible downtown or on-line.
  - *Liability:* Described as 'sterile,' 'off-putting', and 'performative' regarding public engagement. The three minute public comment period is widely considered ineffective for genuine engagement.

- **Social Media (Facebook/Nextdoor/Others):**
  - *Role:* High volume of interaction, particularly for groups like 'Edmonds Moms'.
  - *Strength:* Accessible on-line. Easy to participate.
  - *Liability:* These platforms can be fragmented and subject to 'groupthink' and misinformation. Younger generations are moving away from these platforms or feel pigeonholed by them. Challenging for advocacy groups and others to convert 'likes' and quick survey responses into in-person engagement.

Emerging and Suggested Platforms/Tools

- **In-Person/Hybrid Models:** Interviewees had a strong preference for 'coffee chats', happy hours', and small group settings to humanize elected officials.

- **Other Tech-Enabled Solutions:** Suggestions include a 'digital democracy' portal for

tracking votes, AI-curated newsletters, and text-based engagement for younger residents.

- **The ‘Hub’** (in person)**:** A desire for a centralized community hub or ‘think tank’ (potentially via the Library or Waterfront Center) to facilitate ongoing, non-transactional convenings.

- **A Centralized Civic Information Hub** (online)**:** To access and summarize issue information that is included in Council’s weekly packets, as well as to document minutes, votes and other deliberative information - to help council and the public quickly access and process historical and current information.

- **‘Always-On’ Information Tools:** Open data portals, feedback platforms, searchable documents.

- **Improved Survey Tools and Practices:** To avoid leading questions and embrace survey science.

- **Multi-Language Materials**: To improve culturally competent outreach, often with the help of trusted messengers and neighborhood leaders.

Section 4: High-Level Conclusions

The interview results portray Edmonds as a community at a crossroads. While rich in human capital and passion, the city is hampered by obsolete engagement structures that prioritize reactive transactions over proactive and upstream collaboration.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Shift from Transactional to Relational:** The City should move beyond 'checking the box' with public hearings and informational PowerPoints and invest in deeper relationship-building *before* complex issues blow up.

2. **Break the Geographic Silos:** Engagement should be intentionally designed to reach beyond the 'Bowl' to include Highway 99, renters, and younger families, potentially through neighborhood-specific forums.

3. **Close the Loop:** The slow process of rebuilding trust requires a commitment to feedback loops—telling community members not just *what* was decided, but *why*, and *how* their input was or wasn't used.

Section 5: Author's Conclusions & Overall Recommendations

The interviews suggest the need for a 're-boot' of community engagement in Edmonds – including attention and intentional work to rebuild trust, properly leverage both paid and volunteer resources, and identify which gaps should be prioritized for future investment and sustainability, given scarce qualitative and financial resources. Edmonds simply cannot afford to continue to spend precious time, resources and collective energy on unproductive conflict. Frankly, our future resilience depends in large part on the benefits of durable engagement – to create and normalize engagement structures and inclusive relationships that can withstand both individual's turnover and external shocks.

Fortunately, we have the raw materials to successfully 're-boot', assuming good faith and collective interest in moving the discussion beyond defending individual positions. Collective love for this city and lots of 'common ground' are a strong foundation for changing engagement in Edmonds. Community members with leverageable skills to help the greater good are a huge bonus for us all – if everyone shifts their perspective to engage together in different and more productive ways. Those who may not have specific technical skills also serve an important

reality-checking role, to keep everyone grounded in differing perspectives and needs.

With careful attention and a bit of collective creativity, many of those who feel ignored, intimidated or too busy to engage will show up to the table – if the invitation makes sense to them. Some neighborhoods have no representation beyond a single voice – which runs the risk of distorting perspectives.

Successful engagement strategies in low-trust environments often require a 'hybrid' approach: Leveraging third-party impartial facilitators for complex, high-heat and conflicted policy discussions while simultaneously having elected officials and staff engage in low-heat, high-touch relationship building in the community.

Carefully designed and disciplined collaborative structures and processes, frameworks, measurement, and quality improvement methods are different than ad-hoc convenings, surveys, town halls and pop-up functions. Both categories serve a purpose, and neither is meant to supplant the other – but it's necessary to know how each fit into a larger systemic strategy for change. And this requires buy-in from everyone to work. That itself is a crucial part of the process.

The evidence for this type of strategy and larger systemic change is clear. This report won't go deeper into the 'sausage-making' aspects of collaborative governance and process design techniques – but that includes a wide range of research and practice that is internationally well-known, from more recent collaborative governance 'regimes' to older International Association for Public Participation principles. The many available tools should only be deployed after thoughtful and disciplined process design.

When to Use Third-Party Facilitation

- **High Conflict/Low Trust Issues:** When the topic has a history of polarization (e.g., RFA, Levy Lid Lift, the Connector) and the City is perceived as having a pre-determined agenda.

- **'Wicked' Problems:** Complex, multi-year issues requiring sustained dialogue (e.g., Comprehensive Plan, budget, Critical Areas) where staff capacity is insufficient.

- **Design & Visioning:** When the goal is to generate new ideas (ideation) rather than validating existing ones (e.g., 'What do we want Edmonds to be?').

- **Bridge Building:** When bringing together disparate groups (e.g., Environmentalists vs. Developers, or 'Bowl' vs. Hwy 99) to seek and build consensus.

When NOT to Use Third-Party Facilitation

- **Relationship Building:** When the primary goal is humanizing elected officials. The Mayor and Council need to show up personally and authentically (e.g., coffee chats, market booths) to continue to build direct trust.

- **Routine Operations:** For standard information sharing or simple transactional updates where a third party would add unnecessary bureaucracy.

- **Direct Accountability:** When community members specifically want to hear the rationale for a decision directly from the decision-maker (Mayor/Council).

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Beyond those already mentioned, there are external platforms that help to address some of the issues and barriers described in this report. Organizations such as the League of Women Voters, Braver Angels, Civic Genius, Seattle Civic Cocktail, Democracy Next, the Building Bridges project (Nate Nehring and Jared Mead in Snohomish County Council) and the collaborative partnerships formed through the Edmonds Food Bank all include important lessons learned or potential resources.

Seattle and New York City have examples of open information portals and artificial intelligence and query tools that help disseminate information to their public. Other small cities, including Lancaster PA, Lexington KY, Benicia CA and Allen TX have implemented engagement platforms or tools that address polarizing issues, comprehensive plan updates, new dialogue to address contentious topics, data-driven decision-making, and improved operating efficiency and community equity.

Some interviewees suggested that Edmonds' boards and commissions should help assist with collaboration and community input, while others argue they lack representation or are used tokenistically by leaders. The mayor began a review of the future role of boards and commissions, as Council put all non-mandatory units on hiatus at the end of 2024 for a period of two years. Any changes made to these volunteer groups might be considered in the greater context of community engagement needs. Also, stronger board and commission partnership on big issues could help to better inform recommendations to our decision-makers.

Common, agreed-to datasets and information are critical to a collaborative process. Lack of trust often begins with lack of data and information access, or the perception that data has been 'cherry-picked.' Impartial facilitation can help disparate groups negotiate and accept credible data and information sources – and mitigate the risk of misinformation and disinformation.

Civic education is a longer-term challenge, but an important function to 'lift all boats' and give community members the tools to ask informed questions and participate in productive dialogue. Teaching people how government works, budgeting and planning processes, and growth

mandates are typically dry topics that suggest the need for fun ways to engage. Possible partnerships with Edmonds College or other academic groups may help develop ‘gamified’ workshops or other types of covenings. Also, the public may be more inclined to participate in civic education after noticing more positive community engagement practices between parties – demonstrating to lead is often effective.

In addition, our elected officials and staff can benefit from capacity building, process design and facilitation training. The Washington Collaborative Elected Leaders Institute (WA-CELI) is an example of a three-month training program that equips cohorts of city elected officials with engagement and facilitation skills to build deeper understanding and community consensus (full disclosure: this program is taught and sponsored by my recent employer, the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, partnering with the UW Evans School and the Association of Washington Cities).

Advocacy and activist groups are important participants in a collaborative engagement process. As these groups continue to grow and mature beyond conflict, they might plan more broadly beyond single issue platforms, to strengthen collaboration with each other, the public and decision-makers. Those whose missions include public education could help to improve that process and scale their efforts through thoughtful partnerships. Fragmentation of similar efforts often leads to wasted resources and watered down results, regardless of noble intentions. We are fortunate to have a wide variety of active groups. It’s one of our city’s strengths.

Engagement goals should include breaking down silos between non-profits, advocacy groups, businesses, neighborhood groups and the city. Structures and frameworks should be agreed to and carefully designed for partnership, not competition. Cross-sector collaboration is key to a broader understanding of different perspectives, to seek out common ground and solutions and to make better use of scarce resources. A strong engagement culture requires three major components: **Ambition and agreement from elected leaders and city management; the presence of experienced resources and skills, and public recognition and hunger for change**.

In closing, Edmonds needs to transform from transactional engagement to a continuous, relational civic infrastructure supported by clear processes, transparent decision making, and inclusive outreach – using carefully thought-out collaborative strategies, frameworks, designs and tools.

Appendix: Interviewee List

My thanks to everyone who took their time to meet with me and explore community engagement in more depth.

- Adel Sefrioui
- Adrienne Fraley
- Alicia Crank
- Arlene Williams
- Casey Davis
- Chelsea Rudd
- Chris Eck/City Council
- Christian Anderson
- Dave Teitzel
- David Shaefer
- Elise Randall
- Erika Barnett/City-Council Elect
- Gary Haakenson
- Glenda Krull
- Jared Mead/County Council
- Jim Ogonoski
- Joan Bloom
- Joe Scordino
- John Zipper
- Joseph Ademofe
- Karen Haas-Herrick
- Lauren Davis/State Representative
- Lee Hankins
- Mackey Guenther
- Maggie Peterson
- Marko Liias/State Senator
- Michelle Dotsch/City Council
- Mike McMurray
- Mike Rosen/Mayor
- Nate Nehring/County Council
- Niall McShane
- Rob Rogers
- Roger Pence
- Ron Eber
- Rowan Soiset
- Sharon Burley
- Susan Paine/City Council
- Teresa Wippel
- Todd Tatum
- Tom Mesaros
- Vivian Olson/City Council
- Will Chen/City Council

Author's Bio

I've lived in Edmonds for…. a long time. That doesn't matter much – everyone's opinion counts, no matter how long they've lived or worked here.

The idea for this assessment started when I was still planning my retirement. I retired in July, after 40+ years in public policy and healthcare reform…. got an MBA in Finance in 1987 and built a national practice with a bunch of smart people working across 46 states, building teams, offices, a national firm - working with state agencies and public sector partners around the U.S.

Lots of facilitation work. State agencies, federal agencies, healthcare providers and payers, associations, unions, tribes, advocacy groups and community leaders. They rarely see eye-to-eye. Lots of conflict around helping poor, aged and disabled populations get better healthcare eligibility, access and new benefits. Lots of number crunching, analytics and engagement to reach agreements between states and the feds. Picked up a few certifications along the way, including a CMA.

Became a volunteer community mediator (on the side) for Snohomish County in 1990. Started on a longer journey to learn how to combine the science and art of facilitation processes with collaborative governance, conflict resolution, negotiation, organizational development, systems and design thinking. Served as a volunteer mediator for ten years and continued to hone the skills throughout my professional life. Serial learner.

Failed at retirement for the first time in 2013. Went back to school at age 57 for an MPA at the UW Evans School of Public Policy and Governance. Took a faculty position (practitioner) with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (co-hosted by UW and WSU). Built a health policy facilitation practice for the Center. Facilitated legislative task forces and other cross-sector workgroups around big, seemingly intractable issues: Housing and homelessness; behavioral health; statewide COVID response; land use; jail reform; developmental disabilities reform….and helped start up other initiatives, including statewide 'Civic Health' with the Lieutenant Governor, the Henry (Scoop) Jackson Foundation, the UW Evans School and the Ruckelshaus Center. Worked with 'Rs' and 'Ds', Eastern and Western Washington, Huskies and Cougars – across the public, private, non-profit, tribal and civic sectors…. bringing collaborative processes to build consensus and state policy recommendations, resulting in positive program implementation.

I teach a mediation clinic at the UW School of Law, taught a leadership class at a graduate school Public Health program, and guest lecture on collaborative governance at a few public policy and nursing graduate programs at several universities.

Spent the last seven years volunteering on the Edmonds Economic Development Commission. That gave me a glimpse into our local governance, and the satisfaction and challenges of volunteering and getting things done….and along the way have met and worked with a lot of great people in Edmonds.

And now I'm 'retired'- at least from professional life. There is still a lot for all of us to accomplish – hopefully together. My apologies for making this bio a long one. I felt you deserved to know my intentions for taking this on. No hidden agendas. No pitch. No desire for elected office. Not looking for a job. But I do look forward to working with you to make Edmonds more engaging!