

# Technology Enabled Civic Engagement Program Specifications

Ananthi Al Ramiah, Desiree Martinez, Charlotte Shurtz, Hannah Somers, Kiran Suryadevara

## GOAL

Expedite site selection and community engagement for transitional modular housing by transforming public input into actionable civic intelligence. The solution would **reduce NIMBY (not in my backyard) resistance through proactive transparency and inclusion**, while also **building a replicable, tech-enabled model** for future affordable housing development citywide.

## SOLUTION OVERVIEW

This solution would reframe community engagement as a **scalable, data driven signal** that informs site selection rather than a blocking or delaying factor. By codifying themes like crime, traffic, proximity to schools, and equity concerns, the platform would transform fragmented engagement into a **dynamic, feedback informed loop**—thereby shifting from reactive to proactive governance.

This solution would provide political leadership with real time insight into community sentiment, actionable intelligence for decisionmaking, and political cover for bold, time-sensitive actions.

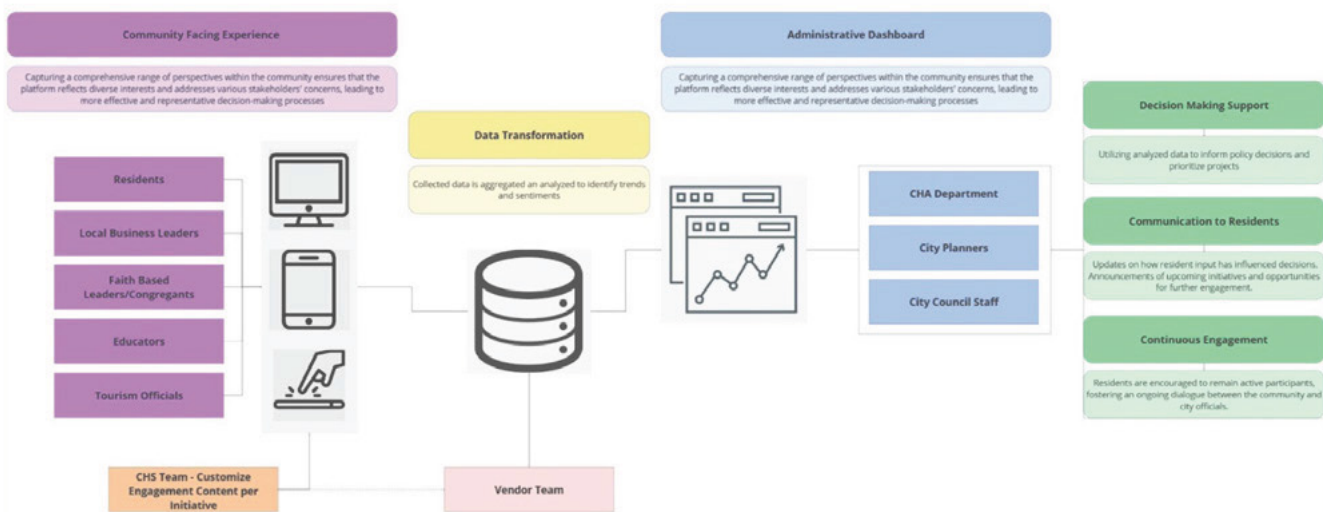
## COMMUNITY FACING EXPERIENCE

- **Target users:** Residents, community organizations
- **Accessibility:** Provide access via mobile applications, web portals, and physical access in public spaces to accommodate diverse user preferences (e.g., QR codes at local businesses, tablets at fairs or sporting events)
- **Sample features:** Real time feedback mechanisms, multilingual support, adherence to accessibility standards
  - “Tap to Support”
  - Surveys
  - Interactive map of proposed sites and community features—Visualize proposed housing locations alongside overlays of schools, daycares, parks and playgrounds, small businesses, public transit access, flood zones, transit, traffic: density constraints

- Instagram-style stories with comment sections for intuitive feedback
- Push notifications and live streams of community board meetings
- Watch or engage with past meetings on demand
- Gamification elements to reward civic participation (e.g., gift cards for superusers, lottery prizes)

## ADMINISTRATIVE DASHBOARD

- **Target Users:** Department of Community Health and Safety, city planners, city council members and staff, and other decisionmakers responsible for public engagement
- **Sample features:** Tools for real time data analysis, visualization, and reporting to inform decisionmaking
  - Support vs. opposition rates: Gauge the political viability of potential sites
  - Sentiment themes over time: Auto-clustered feedback to surface shifting community concerns and priorities
  - Engagement metrics by zip code: Track how communities are interacting
  - Community readiness index: Scores neighborhood readiness for sites based on engagement, equity, and historical sentiment.



## DRAFT PROJECT PLAN

Phase	Description
<b>Procurement</b>	
Needs assessment	Identify specific stakeholder goals, requirements, and functional needs to guide platform selection and implementation
Infrastructure evaluation	Assess existing infrastructure to identify compatibility and integration risks
Vendor assessment	Evaluate potential vendors—platform and capabilities, scalability, privacy/security (e.g., GovPilot, PublicInput, CitizenLab, Bang the Table [EngagementHQ], OpenGov)
Cost–benefit analysis	Conduct analyses to ensure that platform delivers value commensurate with costs
<b>Implementation</b>	
Community engagement strategy	Create a user friendly, accessible design with high, medium, and low touch community requirements
Dashboard metric design	Define public signal key performance indicators relevant to site selection
<b>Deployment</b>	
Pilot testing	Launch a pilot program with a phased rollout in a selected area to evaluate platform performance and user experience
Feedback integration	Collect and analyze feedback from pilot users before full deployment
<b>Training and Support</b>	
Staff training	Develop training sessions covering platform functionalities and user support protocols; designate community ambassadors
Community outreach	Create materials, launch marketing campaign, and host events to educate community about platforms purpose and benefits
Support and troubleshooting	Establish help desks and online forums to assist community or municipality users with tech support

## SUCCESS STORIES

Initiative	Location	Outcome
<a href="#">iTeam Initiative</a>	Austin, Texas	Platform collected community input through multiple channels and visualized data on a public dashboard, which directly informed the Housing First policy approach

<a href="#">Find It, Fix It</a>	Seattle, Washington	Platform enabled citizens to report encampments while simultaneously connecting outreach to unhoused people; process of identifying areas of need and deploying resources
<a href="#">LA-HOP</a>	Los Angeles, California	Collected valuable data that shaped the city's comprehensive homelessness strategy; the platform's success contributed to Measure H (the city's homelessness plan) with strong public support
PocketGov	Denver, Colorado	Engagement tool helped officials identify optimal locations for service centers with minimal community pushback, expediting the approval process for several projects; platform's transparency reduced NIMBY opposition
Homelessness Toolkit	Portland, Oregon	Digital engagement platform that combined educational components with feedback mechanisms; transformed public sentiment and facilitated the passage of a housing bond measure by building informed consensus through technology-mediated dialogue

## SAMPLE VENDOR ASSESSMENT

Vendor	Est. Annual Cost	Pricing Model	Key Features	Considerations
GovPilot	\$3,000/year	Flat rate based on population and modules	Unlimited users, GIS mapping, mobile access, dedicated account manager	Cost effective for smaller municipalities; pricing scales with modules selected
PublicInput	Varies; starts at \$9.99/user/month	Per user/month, sliding scale based on population	Surveys, interactive maps, multilingual support, real time feedback	Flexible pricing; suitable for varying community sizes
CitizenLab	\$15,500–\$45,000	Annual license	Customizable platform, multilingual support, engagement tracking	Comprehensive features; higher cost may be offset by discounts for longer contracts
EngagementHQ	\$2,500 onboarding and \$20,000/year	Annual license and 1-time onboarding fee	Surveys, forums, interactive tools, 24/7 support	Robust engagement tools; initial onboarding cost to consider
OpenGov	\$61,572/year	Custom pricing based on modules and services	Budgeting, planning, permitting, performance management	Comprehensive suite; higher cost justified by extensive features



## Policy Primer

### OPERATIONAL DOCUMENT

#### ABOUT THE ASPEN POLICY ACADEMY

The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy helps community leaders and experts across the political spectrum elevate their voices, influence key decisions, and strengthen democracy from the ground up. Our innovative training programs and resources equip people across sectors – from tech to the environment, science to civic engagement – with the skills to shape critical policy efforts. Learn more at [aspenpolicyacademy.org](https://aspenpolicyacademy.org).

