



Connect Before Engagement

*Strengthening Transparent and Resident-Centered
Charlottesville*

LEADTeam Meeting

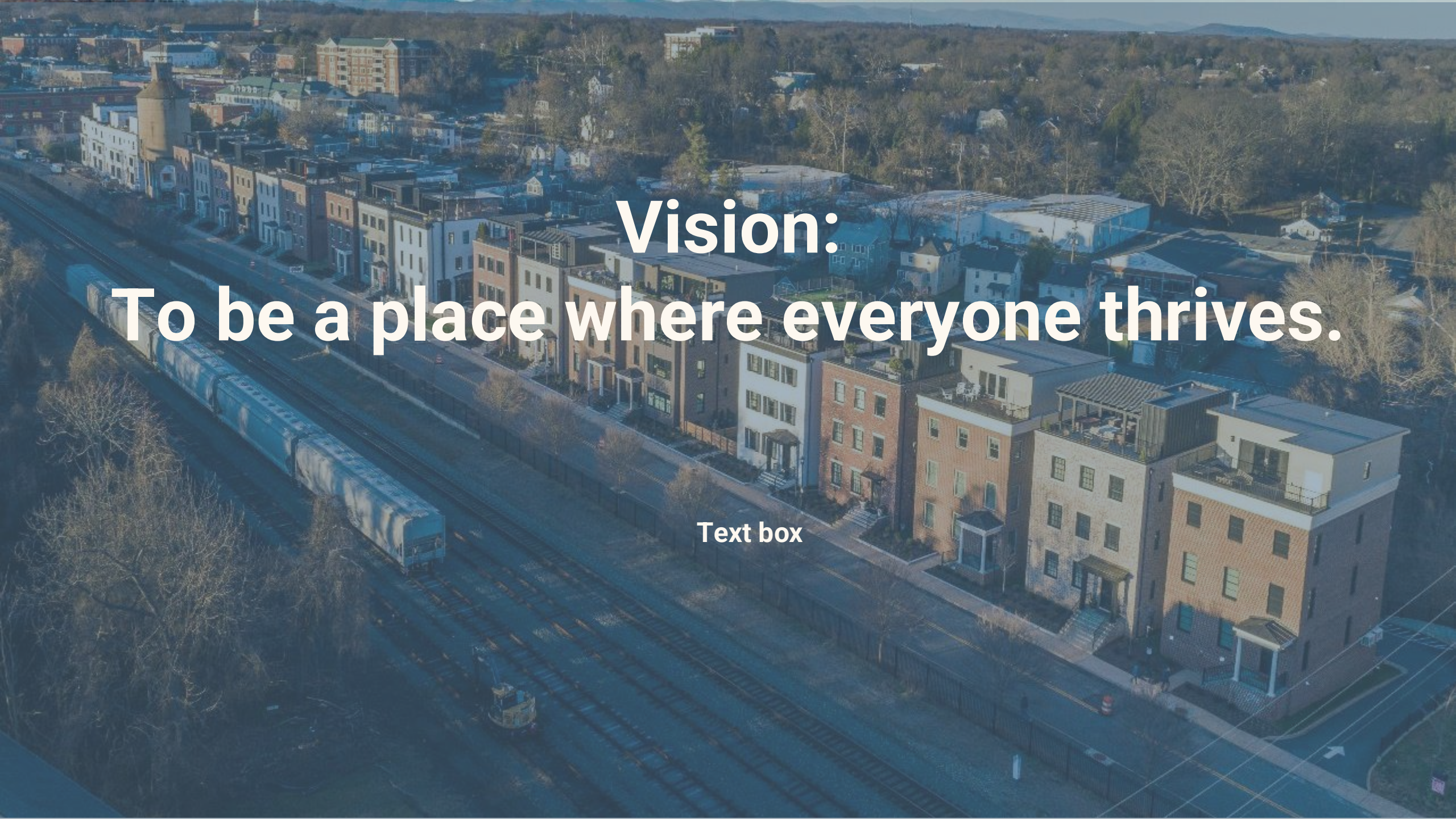
05.19.26

Office of Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE)

Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Why communications and public engagement matter**
- **Council's resident impact considerations**
- **CAPE's role as a strategic partner**
- **Connect Charlottesville overview**
- **Cross departmental value**
- **Questions and discussion**
- **Closing and next steps**





Vision:
To be a place where everyone thrives.

Text box

Why Communications and Public Engagement Matter

- ◆ Residents expect transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness.
- ◆ Trust is built through early and consistent communication.
- ◆ Meaningful engagement leads to stronger decisions and relationships.
- ◆ Public engagement is essential for successful project delivery.



Supporting Council's Resident Impact Considerations

Considerations



Who is impacted?



Earlier outreach and project visibility



Who has been engaged?



Transparent participation opportunities



How are residents informed?

Centralized updates and timelines



Are we reaching beyond the usual voices?



How are we building trust?

Ongoing communication and transparency



How do residents stay connected?

Continuous project visibility and updates

Executing Shared Language

Calibrating public commitments to manage expectations and protect staff capacity.

● INFORM

Used for regulatory maintenance, asset preservation, or emergency infrastructure repairs. Our goal is predictable notification, delivering plain language project overviews, schedules, and detour impacts without creating false expectations for feedback.

● CONSULT

Used when clear alternatives exist for a specific project layout, such as choosing between distinct amenities or striping plans e.g. Rose Hill Repaving. Our goal is targeted preference analysis, using structured surveys or listening sessions to gather feedback on specific options where resident input can directly alter the outcome.

● INVOLVE

Used during preliminary planning phases, corridor analyses, or neighborhood studies. Our goal is collaborative alternative generation, holding interactive workshops to ensure neighborhood concerns and spatial experiences directly shape the initial options developed by city staff.

● COLLABORATE

Used for high impact plans, resident planner groups, or charter steering committees. Our goal is joint problem solving, partnering with community stakeholders throughout the process to structurally build

THE EMPOWER LIMIT

The highest level of the traditional engagement spectrum, Empower, places final decision making authority entirely in the hands of the public.

Due to the structure of (municipal) operations, our teams cannot legitimately promise or execute this level:

Statutory Authority

Charter mandates place final voting and legislative responsibility strictly with City Council.

Technical Standards

Engineering, safety, and regulatory codes cannot be overridden by public preference.

Regulatory Duty

Staff responsibilities for compliance and enforcement.

Stewardship responsibility

City staff remain structurally legally responsible for public funds and resource allocations.

Right-Sizing Impact & Influence

Not every project requires feedback. Using an Engagement Level and Risk & Impact Matrix ensures efficiency and clarity.

IAP2 Level	Risk & Impact	Strategic Promise	Practical Example
Inform	Low / Low	"We will keep you informed."	Service notices (Trash, Paving)
Consult	Low / Med	"We will listen and acknowledge."	Surveys on utility billing clarity
Involve	Med / Med	"Your concerns will be reflected."	Intersection design workshops
Collaborate	High / Med	"We will partner with you."	Citizen equity advisory groups
Empower	High / High	"We will implement your decision."	Community-led program design

Core Principle: "Strategy Before Tactics"

A shared language prevents over-promising and under-delivering. Match engagement level to project scope.



Engagement

Impact

=

Trust
Value

Right Level + Right Scope = Community Trust

Role of the Office of Communications and Public Engagement

- ◆ Strategic partner to departments across the city.
- ◆ Supports communication planning and engagement strategy.
- ◆ Strengthens transparency, accessibility, and resident connection.
- ◆ Helps shift from reactive communication to intentional engagement.

What is Connect Charlottesville?

A centralized public engagement platform for residents to stay informed, participate, and connect with city projects.

Core Values:

Transparency Accessibility Accountability Consistency

Connect Charlottesville In Action

Consistent messaging and a central operational hub help departments deliver results and build civic infrastructure.

Plain-Language Overview

Saves staff capacity by proactively aligning expectations. Explicitly establishing the Inform Track up front prevents public friction by clearly stating that non-negotiable asset maintenance does not invite design variations.

Tangible Objectives

Defines exact infrastructure necessity from day one. Residents read straight-forward parameters of system reliability and asset updates without having to deconstruct dense, technical internal memos.

Explicit Influence Boundaries

Saves staff capacity by proactively aligning expectations. Explicitly establishing the Inform Track up front prevents public friction by clearly stating that non-negotiable asset maintenance does not invite design variations.

KPIs That Matter

- Participation Diversity
- Reduced Rework / Complaints
- Sentiment Improvement

The screenshot displays a project page for the 'West Main Utilities Replacement Project'. At the top, there is a circular logo for the project and the 'Utilities City of Charlottesville' logo. The page is organized into several sections:
1. **Project Overview**: A paragraph describing the project as a major infrastructure investment to replace aging gas and water mains.
2. **Project Purpose**: A section with a star icon stating the goal to replace aging, leak-prone mains to improve safety and reduce costs.
3. **What's Being Replaced**: A section with a key icon providing specific details on the materials and lengths of pipe to be replaced.
4. **Funding**: A section with a dollar sign icon explaining the funding sources, including enterprise funds and a grant from the Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization program.
5. **Community Impact**: A section with a person icon detailing the phased construction approach to minimize inconvenience and provide advance notice.
6. **Phase One is scheduled to begin in summer 2026!**: A prominent blue banner with white text.
7. **Stay Connected - Upcoming Kickoff Event & Project Updates**: A section encouraging email sign-ups for project updates and a kickoff event.
8. **Project Manager**: A box identifying Jim Keller as the Utilities Senior Project Manager, with 'Open' and 'Embed' buttons.
9. **Project Status**: A vertical timeline showing the project stages: Scoping, Procurement, Design and Planning, and Phase I Construction (marked with a star and 'Summer 2026'). A 'See less' link is below.
10. **Current Status**: A section with a photo of construction workers, stating the project is moving into procurement and that the Phase One Invitation for Bids is nearly complete.
11. **Quick Facts**: Two callout boxes. The first states that existing leak-prone water mains in the area have experienced 31 leaks since 2007. The second states that new HDPE gas pipe will reduce an estimated 3,607 metric tons of CO2e over 25 years.
12. **More Information on Utilities Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) available here**: A blue button.
13. **FAQs**: A section with two questions: 'Will my gas and water service be interrupted?' and 'Will there be noise and disruption?'.
14. **Phase One**: A section at the bottom with a map showing the project area between Beta Bridge and the Chancellor Street and University Avenue intersection, and stating the estimated construction time is four and a half months.

Reduction in Capacity Needed



Automated data collection & reporting

Reduces manual processing of feedback.



Centralized platform

Eliminates fragmented communication channels.



Self-service participation

Allows residents to engage independently, reducing facilitation needs.



Reusable templates & content tools

Cut down preparation time for new projects.

The Opportunity Ahead



"Connect before engagement"

Proactive communication before public frustration. Reaching residents early builds understanding and reduces conflict.



"Connect Charlottesville"

Reflects the city's commitment to transparency and accessibility. A centralized platform where residents stay informed and involved.

Effective public engagement is essential to transparent, responsive, and resident-centered local government.

Thank You

