



# Folsom City Council Staff Report

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	3/24/2026
<b>AGENDA SECTION:</b>	New Business
<b>ITEM TITLE:</b>	Consideration of Partnership with Change.org for Community Survey and Civic Dialogue
<b>FROM:</b>	City Manager's Office

## **RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

Receive information and provide direction on partnering with Change.org to conduct a community survey and civic dialogue process to gather resident input on key city issues.

## **BACKGROUND / ISSUE**

The City is exploring additional ways to gather meaningful, representative input from residents on important community issues. This effort is intended to provide City Council with reliable, data-driven insights that reflect a broader cross-section of the community, helping inform thoughtful, balanced decision-making on key policies, priorities, and long-term planning.

Traditional engagement methods often result in feedback from a limited group of participants rather than a broad cross-section of the community. Nonprofit civic engagement platform Change.org has developed a “Local Civic Dialogues” platform designed to help cities collect input from a large and more representative group of residents. The platform is intended to surface common priorities, identify areas of agreement, and provide insights into community perspectives. It is designed to increase public trust, reduce polarization, and provide more balanced and informed community input.

The program is offered at no cost to participating cities. The platform has been piloted in several cities, including Bozeman, Montana; Kansas City, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; and Columbia, South Carolina.

## **ANALYSIS**

Over eight weeks, Change.org will run a two-part program in Folsom to enable broad and representative participation of residents.

- **Broad Input Phase:** Residents submit ideas to address key community challenges and vote on proposals from others. The platform uses algorithms to surface ideas that reflect broad community support, not just the most vocal voices. Change.org engages community organizations, conducts in-person outreach, and uses tools such as advertising and email to inform residents and direct them to an online platform where they can submit ideas and vote on others. All submissions are moderated by Change.org.
- **Representative Dialogue Phase:** A demographically representative group of approximately 50 to 100 residents participates in a facilitated discussion to review and deliberate on the most supported ideas.

Following the process, the City will receive a detailed report that includes:

- Key themes and top issues identified by residents.
- Data on how ideas perform across different groups.
- Results of the facilitated discussions.
- Summary insights and participant feedback.

Staff believe this approach could complement existing outreach efforts by reaching a broader and more representative group of residents.

This effort would supplement, not replace, existing community engagement tools such as public meetings, surveys, and outreach events by reaching residents who may not typically participate in traditional engagement opportunities. The results of this process would be advisory in nature and intended to inform City Council discussions, priority-setting, and future outreach efforts.

The City would retain input on topic selection and would have the opportunity to review materials for accuracy and local context prior to release. If directed to proceed, staff anticipates launching the process in April, with results available at the end of July.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no direct cost to the City to participate in the Change.org Local Civic Dialogues program. Communications Division staff time would be required to coordinate topics, review materials, and participate as needed in the process.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Program overview report prepared by Change.org.

Submitted,

Bryan Whitemyer  
City Manager

## Attachment 1

# Change.org Civic Dialogue: Folsom

## About Us

Change.org is the world's largest civic participation platform, with more than 500 million users globally. Our mission is to build better democracies. We are independent, nonpartisan and 100% non-profit owned.

## The Problem

Discourse can be dominated by a small number of the loudest voices that may not represent what most people think. As a result, it can be hard for a city to understand what issues most residents really care about. It's even more challenging to create opportunities for residents to discuss those issues constructively.

## Our Program

Civic Dialogues inform a city about what residents believe the city should do on the issues that matter most to them. Folsom residents share their ideas, deliberate on expert-informed solutions and provide policy recommendations to city officials.

Over eight weeks, we run a two-part program in Folsom to enable broad and representative participation of residents. We share a detailed report of the results with the city, summarizing the most unifying and divisive ideas, top issues that resonate with all residents, and the policies recommended by a representative group of residents.

### Stage 1: Civic Input

- **We invite local residents to post their ideas** for how to address the biggest challenges they see in the city and vote on the ideas of others.
- **We use bridging algorithms** to group residents according to their opinions and identify the ideas that resonate across all – not just those with the most votes.

### Stage 2: Civic Dialogue

- **We recruit 50-100 residents reflective of city demographics** to attend a live deliberation on the issues that resonate most with all residents. The group includes a balance of residents across age, race, gender, and political ideology.
- We facilitate a 1-3 hour video discussion, involving **small group discussions** with diverse groups of 6-8 residents. We share the policy recommendations that have **bipartisan super-majority support**.

## FAQs

- *Who pays for this?* All costs are fully covered by Change.org.

- *What is Change.org's role?* Change.org runs the civic dialogue end-to-end. We recruit residents to share their ideas, host the live deliberation and prepare the final report.
- *What is the City of Folsom's role?* Change.org is an independent third-party that is partnering with the City. The City would commit to reviewing the final report and meeting regularly with Change.org to ensure the project is being delivered in a way that works well for residents.
- *What is the timeframe?* We propose launching on April 6th. The program runs for three months.
- *What other cities have you worked with?* We've worked with Kansas City, MO, Memphis, TN, Hartford, CT, Bozeman, MT, Columbia, SC, Dearborn, MI, Albuquerque, NM, Columbia, MO, Parsippany-Troy Hills, NJ, and Tulsa, OK.
- *How can I learn more?* Reach out to us: [elijah.goldberg@change.org](mailto:elijah.goldberg@change.org)

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to facilitate double-sided printing  
and minimize paper use.*



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**FOLSOM**  
DISTINCTIVE BY NATURE