



# COMMUNITY CONVERSATION KIT

City of Ridgefield

January 2023

ENVISION  
**RIDGEFIELD**  
2045



# Welcome, Discussion Leader!

In your hands, you hold the power to shape the future of our city. This kit is your go-to resource for organizing and leading impactful community discussions. Inside, you'll find everything you need to facilitate conversations that capture the voices and visions of our community.

Your commitment to being part of this community engagement effort is invaluable, and together, we are laying the foundation for a vibrant future. Thank you for helping us gain an understanding the community's vision for Ridgefield.

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# Preparation Checklist

## Before the Event

Familiarize yourself with the items in this guide. If you have any questions, contact Journie Gering [journie.gering@3j-consulting.com](mailto:journie.gering@3j-consulting.com), 503.946.9365 x256

### For In-Person Community Conversations

If you are able, print fresh copies of the materials, including:

- ☐ Sign-in sheet
- ☐ Discussion Questions (enough copies to share with participants)
- ☐ Notes page(s) for small groups
- ☐ This Community Conversations Kit as your quick reference guide

### For Virtual Community Conversations

Have the following materials handy (paper copies or on a computer) for note-taking:

- ☐ Sign-in sheet (*Tip: Kick off your virtual meeting by having attendees share their name and email address with you in the chat.*)
- ☐ Discussion Questions
- ☐ Notes page(s)
- ☐ This Community Conversations Kit as your quick reference guide

### Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have you confirmed the meeting location or video conference information?
2. If this Community Conversation is part of another meeting, have you confirmed a place on the agenda? How much time do you have?
3. Do you have enough materials to share with expected participants?

## After the Event - Submitting your Feedback

### Option 1

- ☐ Email the sign in sheet and your notes directly to Journie Gering within one week of your community conversation.

Journie Gering  
[journie.gering@3j-consulting.com](mailto:journie.gering@3j-consulting.com)

### Option 2

- ☐ Enter via the online survey form. For the online survey form, go to:

[RidgefieldRoundtable.org/vision-questionnaire](https://RidgefieldRoundtable.org/vision-questionnaire)

When prompted at the end of the survey, enter your name, email, and the name of your group into the Community Conversation prompt.

Please send additional email addresses for the project mailing list to Journie Gering.

# Discussion Leader's Guide

Please review this guide prior to leading your discussion. Prompts and explanatory text are included in bullets below. *Examples of "actions" are shown in the italicized print.*

**Remember:** It is OK if people disagree! There is no need for consensus or agreement.

## Guiding Principles

When leading a community conversation, your role is to help create an open and shared environment so that all participants have the opportunity for discussion. Use your time wisely and try to follow along with your agenda. Time flies when you're having fun, so make sure you have time to hear from everyone within the time allotted.

- Stick to the agenda and move the conversation forward.
- If a point is made that is off topic, write it down, then guide the discussion back to the question at hand.
- Encourage everyone to participate but do not allow anyone to dominate.
- Keep the discussion moving by summarizing and combining similar thoughts.
- Resist the temptation to voice your own opinions or to be the "expert" on the subject.
- Be punctual! Make sure to start and end each meeting on time.
- Have fun!

Community Conversations are designed to be flexible, adapting to the unique dynamics of your group and the time available on your agenda. While these discussions typically take around 20-40 minutes, the beauty of these discussions lies in their adaptability. Whether you have a brief 15-minute window or a more leisurely 60 minutes, feel free to customize the duration based on your participants' availability and enthusiasm. Use the graphic below as a guide to gauge how much time you might allocate to each section, ensuring a meaningful and tailored experience for all involved.

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

**Introductions**

5-10 Minutes

**Discussion**

15-45 Minutes

**Next Steps**

5 Minutes

# Introductions

## Group Sign-In and Overview

- 1. Distribute sign-in sheet.** Invite participants to sign up for the project email list.
  - For Virtual or Phone Community Conversations, identify the name and email address of participants expected prior to the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, have everyone confirm their name and email addresses, and whether they would like to be signed up for the project email list (or follow up via email or in a video-conferencing chatroom).
- 2. Introduce yourself and your role in the project.**
- 3. Provide a brief contextual overview of the project and your role.** A sample is provided below:

"The City of Ridgefield is launching a citywide effort to update the Ridgefield Comprehensive Plan that will help guide land use decisions over the next 20 years. The first step in the process is to create a community vision that reflects what community members enjoy and want to preserve about Ridgefield, and what they would like to see changed in the future. The Comprehensive Plan will consist of broad goals and policies to implement the vision and guide future growth and development in accordance with the Growth Management Act.

The purpose of these Community Conversations is to engage with a broad cross-section of Ridgefield residents, business owners, and partners around a Community Vision. These Community Conversations are anticipated through the fall 2023 and winter of 2024. The creation and adoption of the Community Vision will occur in the spring, which will inform the development of policy recommendations in the update to the Comprehensive Plan throughout 2024 and 2025. Thank you for talking with us!"

# Conversation

## Listening and Discussion

- 1. Lead the group discussion** around the Community Visioning Questions provided in this kit.
  - Emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Everyone's opinion is valid.
  - Give credence to differences, but do not dwell on them. *It's important that we have an open discussion.*
  - Follow the meeting flow. *That's a good question/idea/issue, I'll write it down to make sure we don't forget that point.*
- 2. Have participants affirm your understanding of the discussion** by repeating back any major themes or ideas.
  - Summarize the discussion as you go along, validating it with participants. *Have I captured all key points?*

- Do not hesitate to say you do not know the answers to a specific question. Make note of the question and let the individual know that you will follow up with them later. Don't be afraid to not have answers to all their questions. You can be the messenger of their questions and follow up later.

**3. Highlight frequently mentioned themes, ideas, or topics** by placing a check mark for each mention in your notes.

- If you are running up against time, move the group along politely but firmly. *I see we have only a few minutes left and we want to make sure we have time to hear from everyone before our time is up [or] thank you for your suggestion.*
- Make sure each participant has a chance to speak. *Who else has something to add?*
- Five minutes before the discussion ends, summarize the discussion. Ask participants for any final thoughts. *Is there anything we have missed?*

## Next Steps

### Continuing Engagement

- 1. Thank everyone for participating!**
- 2. Point participants to the project website** for access to materials and updates on meetings, events, and surveys. [RidgefieldRoundtable.org/comp-plan](https://RidgefieldRoundtable.org/comp-plan)
- 3. Invite members to the next community event or survey.**

## After the meeting

**Within a week:** Scan or email the discussion notes and sign-in sheet to Journie Gering.

Planner Contact: Journie Gering

Email Address: [journie.gering@3j-consulting.com](mailto:journie.gering@3j-consulting.com)

**Visit Ridgefield Roundtable Here!**



# Ridgefield Community Visioning Questions

Citizen participation and coordination is an important precursor to local planning and a tool to help communities better manage complex change and involve citizens in the planning process.

A comprehensive approach to visioning can be framed by the following **bolded** questions. Some of these questions include a list of bullets, which provide a menu of similar questions that get at the same idea. Based on your audience, choose the question type that feels most appropriate and resonates with the group. Feel free to use additional questions as follow-up, or if there is a need to frame the question differently.

## ***What makes Ridgefield special today? What should we strive to preserve or enhance? [OR]:***

- Why do you choose to live/work in Ridgefield?
- What are some of Ridgefield's most cherished attributes?
- Where do you spend time in Ridgefield? Specific parks, stores, restaurants, etc.
- What is being done well in Ridgefield?
- What about Ridgefield makes you proud?

## ***What about Ridgefield would you like to change in the future? What can improve? [OR]:***

- As the community develops this project, what is on the horizon that we should be sure to consider?
- What, if anything, causes you concern about the future of Ridgefield?
- How has Ridgefield changed over the last 5 years? 10 years? 20 years?
- What changes have you seen in Ridgefield that you like? What are changes you don't like?
- Describe your ideal Ridgefield in 2045. What has changed?

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## ***If you have additional time, wrap up the conversation with these last questions:***

### ***What people, groups, or communities should we contact to make this an inclusive process?***

### ***In what ways would you like to participate in this process? [Provide all potential examples below]***

- Attend public meetings
- Complete online surveys
- Follow on the City's Facebook page or other social media
- Through my school, place of worship or other group
- Stay informed by email
- Read through the Project Website
- Other

# Discussion Notes

Remember to place a check mark (✓) next to frequently mentioned themes, ideas, or topics. Feel free to use this provided note-taking sheet or your preferred method to capture your notes during the conversation. Just ensure that your notes find their way to Journie Gering once the discussion concludes.

## INTRODUCTIONS

What makes Ridgefield special today? What should we strive to preserve or enhance? [OR similar question]

What about Ridgefield would you like to change in the future? What can improve? [OR similar question]

What people, groups, or communities should we contact to make this an inclusive process?

In what ways would you like to participate in this process? [Share all potential examples]



# Ridgefield Community Conversation Sign-in Sheet

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Discussion Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]