

The Next Chapter for Public Square Communities

BY LIZ SOZA



Liz Soza

Ten years ago, a passionate civic leader was provoked to begin a journey to build figurative bridges connecting citizens and communities through positive, facilitated conversation. This “rebuilding” of the public square through civic engagement became his mission and the premise of our current organization, Public Square Communities.

Now, that same civic leader, Terry Woodbury himself, is bidding adieu to the hands-on formalized process he so carefully crafted and the succession plan he so thoughtfully executed to begin the next chapter of his life—a combination of continued civic work, consulting, and semi-retirement.

Throughout his journey, he exhibited a constant, mindful approach to how this civic work would be sustained much like the community process model it created.

Terry’s genuine desire to see new leadership fostered and an authentic effort to



Terry Woodbury, founder of Public Square Communities, discusses the importance of civic engagement with the 2013 Leadership Kansas Class.

“Mobilizing individuals to serve as catalysts for change is no easy task ...”

serve in a coaching role provided the necessary transition to allow a seamless transfer of authority over the past 18 months. While still providing a historical perspective, he relinquished control and subsequently empowered his fellow colleagues and me, his “new” boss to take the lead.

In this time and with his unwavering support, we’ve adapted our traditional community engagement process—interviewing citizens, hosting community conversations, initiating supporting action teams, convening the four sectors, accrediting sustainable efforts—to accommodate the need for specific organization or issue-driven special projects, cataloged our publications and community resources for expanded training opportunities, and expanded our network nationally.

And that’s just the beginning of our new journey into the next decade of work!

Facilitating positive dialogue about a community’s or organization’s preferred future remains the core of the services provided by PSC. Mobilizing individuals to serve as catalysts for change is no easy task; especially when serving in a neutral capacity around tough and often emotionally charged issues. Terry’s commitment to building capacity within citizens, groups, and communities continues to serve as a model for those he’s served.

It’s also a commitment that serves as an essential benchmark for our PSC colleagues to endeavor to meet and exceed as we carry forward the proverbial torch. **KCL**

LIZ SOZA is CEO of Public Square Communities; www.publicsquarecommunities.com.