

## ***Public Engagement Guiding Principles***

---

The following principles represent a road map to guide government officials and staff in establishing a consistent, effective and high-quality public engagement process. They incorporate examples from other communities and have been adapted for Council’s consideration.

These questions help define the engagement approach and provide clarity around expectations.

- 1) What is the decision?
- 2) Who decides?
- 3) What promise are we making to those involved?
- 4) How will the input inform the final outcome?
- 5) What is achieved by involving the public in the decision?

*These principles are intended to set out what the public can expect from the City, while retaining the flexibility in the way individual city departments carry out their work.*

Principles	Characteristics	Outcomes/Benefits
<p><b>1) Accountability</b></p> <p>City leaders and staff are accountable for ensuring meaningful public engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources are applied appropriately to public engagement activities</li> <li>• Community members’ time and resources are respected and used effectively</li> <li>• Public engagement processes are evaluated on a regular basis to foster ongoing learning and improvement</li> <li>• Evaluation methods are tailored to different audiences to ensure meaningful feedback from all parties involved in a process, including community members, stakeholder groups, staff and management</li> <li>• Best practices are identified and shared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved strategies and tools for outreach and decision-making</li> <li>• Increased sense of trust in government from the community</li> <li>• Improved internal reporting mechanisms</li> </ul>

Principles	Characteristics	Outcomes/Benefits
<p><b>2) Inclusiveness</b></p> <p>Public dialogue and decision-making processes, reach out to, and encourage participation of the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effort to accommodate diverse needs, background, values and challenges</li> <li>• Participation in the process reflects the diversity of the community affected by the outcome</li> <li>• Culturally appropriate and effective strategies and techniques are used to involve diverse constituencies directly affected</li> <li>• City staff follow-up with under-engaged groups to see how the process worked for their community members</li> <li>• Assessment is made to identify communities impacted by a program, project or policy. The active participation of these communities is identified early on, influence the process design and are reaffirmed throughout the process</li> <li>• Two-way channels to share information and provide opportunities for open and constructive dialogue</li> <li>• Community members feel heard and feel that their input is valued and informs the process</li> <li>• Community members trust the process</li> <li>• City staff engage in ongoing monitoring of relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City policies, projects and programs respond to the full range of needs and priorities in the community</li> <li>• Trust and respect for government increases among community members</li> <li>• City staff and members of more traditionally-engaged communities understand the value of including under-engaged communities</li> <li>• Equity is increased by actively involving communities that historically have been overlooked from decision-making processes</li> <li>• Members of under-engaged communities increase their participation in civic life</li> <li>• Process leaves neighbourhoods and communities stronger, better informed and increases their capacity to participate in the future; helps develop new leaders</li> </ul>

Principles	Characteristics	Outcomes/Benefits
<p><b>3) Transparency</b></p> <p>Public decision-making processes are accessible, honest and understandable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public decision-making processes are accessible, open, honest and understandable and occur with enough lead time to participate effectively</li> <li>• Closes the loop -- shows how input was used</li> <li>• Refines the purpose of the engagement to effectively manage relationships and expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members have a better understanding and are able to participate effectively</li> <li>• Builds credibility and trust</li> <li>• Continues to build on cooperation and respect</li> <li>• Government understanding of community opinions and needs is enhanced</li> </ul>
<p><b>4) Fiscally Sustainable</b></p> <p>Ensure methods and <i>resources</i> for public notice and engagement reflect the magnitude and complexity of the initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate level of resources are used effectively and efficiently</li> <li>• Helps manage expectations and prioritize corporate resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved resource allocation will achieve engagement goals</li> </ul>
<p><b>5) Early Involvement</b></p> <p>Helps identify issues and look at opportunities and challenges during concept development, design and implementation of City policies, projects and programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members are involved as early as possible</li> <li>• Community members help define the problem/ issues to inform the final outcome of policies, projects and programs</li> <li>• Community members help inform the process for outreach and decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better project scoping, more predictable processes and more realistic and pragmatic assessment of process time and resources needed</li> <li>• Early and broad community support for the policy, project or program</li> <li>• Identification of potential problem areas before they become an issue</li> </ul>

Principles	Characteristics	Outcomes/Benefits
<p><b>6) Timely communications</b></p> <p>Ensure there is enough time within the engagement process to provide information to the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the community is informed and kept up to date</li> <li>• Communications occur at appropriate defined stages</li> <li>• Communications includes two-way response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community trusts that the City will report out on in a timely manner on issues that affect them</li> </ul>
<p><b>7) Clear and accessible information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures the use of plain language in a wide variety of formats and channels of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members can easily access information and understand the goals and objectives and their opportunities for involvement</li> </ul>
<p><b>8) Suitable process</b></p> <p>Design and implementation of public engagement <i>processes</i> and <i>techniques</i> that reflect the magnitude and complexity of the initiative. Processes adapt to changing needs and issues as they move forward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members are allowed an opportunity to give meaningful input regarding what the community needs from government</li> <li>• Process facilitators have the skills, experience and resources needed to be effective</li> <li>• Careful planning of project timelines take into account the length of time for effective public engagement</li> <li>• Touch points in the process to periodically check in to see how it's working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds understanding around the purpose of the policy, project or program and why it's being done</li> <li>• Conflict is reduced as are challenges to the process</li> <li>• Communication is more efficient and effective</li> <li>• Outcomes are sustainable</li> <li>• Public confidence and trust built through good processes can carry on to future process</li> <li>• Clearly define purpose of engagement early on to manage expectations</li> </ul>

\*Guiding Principles endorsed by City Council on January 14, 2013

\*\*Guiding Principles Best Practices: Municipalities of Victoria, Burlington, Oakville, Edmonton and Portland

## Related Policies

### OCP Policy 10.2.1:

Stakeholder Involvement: Involve a broad range of interests identifying solutions for emerging issues, including residents, businesses, non-profits, major institutions, and utility providers, with a particular effort given to involving those typically not engaged in community decisions.

### Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure Policy 352:

The City will engage the public in the ongoing evolution of the “multiple-bottom line” framework to ensure that the public interest is met.

Council Policy 190: Healthy Community

Council Policy 272: Handling of Petitions Received by the Public

Council Policy 305: Guidelines for Communications and Cooperation Between the City and Residents Associations