



Continuing the Conversation

COUNCIL INITIATIVE ON PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PHASE 2 INTERIM UPDATE



**MESSAGE FROM
ROB KLATCHUK,
BRANCH MANAGER
OF ENGAGEMENT**

The work of the Council Initiative on Public Engagement heralds a significant turning point for the City of Edmonton in the way we engage Edmontonians to help shape our city. We have embarked on a tremendous journey for envisioning and implementing a pivotal cultural shift within the City in our approach to public engagement. And we have realized some monumental successes in seeing the evidence of that transformation already.

At this juncture in our progress, I wish to thank everyone who has participated in this process right from the very beginning and assisted us in implementing change presently with the view to continuously improve and refine our processes as we move forward.

The collaborative efforts of community members and City staff in co-creating a renewed framework for engagement will help lay the foundation for better policies and practices that will guide us into the future. And will position the City of Edmonton as a beacon of engagement innovation and excellence across municipalities.



BACKGROUND

During Phase 1 of the Council Initiative's work, the City consulted with a broad cross section of stakeholders that included Edmontonians, community groups, City staff, City Councillors and the Mayor about public engagement at the City of Edmonton. They were asked why they believe public engagement matters (the benefits) and what good public engagement looks like (elements of effective public engagement).

Through a variety of engagement events and more than 40 workshops, over 1,000 voices were heard. Those who participated identified a number of opportunities and challenges related to the City's approach to public engagement, some of which include:

- Responding to evolving citizen expectations
- Supporting growth
- Ensuring consistent and quality processes
- Capitalizing on opportunities for innovation

The Council Initiative was given a broad mandate to examine public engagement practices at the City, while also striving to implement immediate continuous improvement efforts. It was hoped the Phase 1 engagement process would also provide a foundation for rebuilding relationships and trust with the community, fostering greater understanding and building a shared voice for the next phase of work. The input gathered from participants directly informed and shaped the work of Phase 2, which commenced in the fall of 2015.

Those involved recognized that making lasting improvements to public engagement must be part of a larger organizational change effort, and that a focus on internal transformation must be balanced by an effort to understand and enable the city's broader civil society.

Public engagement is also a key aspect of the City's Open City policy, and therefore, the Council Initiative provided an opportunity to better align the City's engagement approach with this wider approach to open government, which is changing the relationship Edmontonians have with their city.

"The Council Initiative's process is what makes it so unique. From the outset of Phase 1, we began the conversation with citizens and City staff to get different perspectives while supporting collaboration for building a great city together. Given the changing nature of society, municipal government needs to be even more adaptive and responsive to citizens' needs, particularly when it comes to transparency, communication and timely information sharing."

John Simmons,
Chair, Community Leadership Working Group

MILESTONES ACHIEVED

Composed of community members, City Branch Managers and the three Council leads who have championed this initiative, an Advisory Committee was created to achieve collaborative accountability and leadership for public engagement between City Council, City Administration and the community.

"I joined the Council Initiative because the notion of inclusivity was very attractive to me, and it provided an opportunity for me to help our urban Indigenous people feel included in City decisions."

Cheryl Whiskeyjack
Community Co-Chair, Tools, Techniques & Practices Working Group

In November 2015, the Advisory Committee began its work based on an approved Terms of Reference. Since that time, it has achieved a number of its goals, including developing a new definition, vision, guiding principles, continuum of engagement, as well as foundational elements, goals and outcomes, for public engagement at the City of Edmonton.

Definition

Public engagement creates opportunities for people to contribute to decisions about Edmonton's policies, programs, projects and services, and communicates how public input is collected and used.

Public Engagement Continuum

Public engagement can happen in four ways, with increasing commitment, expectations and accountability at each level:



Foundational Elements

The following are foundational elements for effective public engagement, but only doing these activities is not considered public engagement:

<p>Communications</p> <p>Delivering clear and transparent communications focused on informing, listening and learning.</p>	<p>Project management</p> <p>Carrying out engagement within an effective and aligned project management process.</p>	<p>Decisions</p> <p>Identifying clear decisions, decision makers and decision making processes for every public engagement process.</p>	<p>Relationships</p> <p>Developing and enhancing relationships through meaningful dialogue that is based on respect and trust.</p>	<p>Capacity</p> <p>Providing the knowledge and tools to engage by building capacity internally and within communities.</p>	<p>Leadership</p> <p>Building community and staff leadership by facilitating leadership development opportunities.</p>
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Overall, the City aspires to engage more effectively with Edmontonians in making decisions about policies, programs, projects and services. However, we recognize that every project or initiative will have an appropriate level of engagement, which may be to consult, involve, collaborate or, in some cases, empower. The desired level of engagement should be transparent, clearly communicated and, where possible, agreed to by participants.

Vision

A city where we are connected, invested, and proud to participate in shaping our community.

Guiding Principles

A shared responsibility – Engagement of people in an authentic way contributes to robust solutions to challenging issues and encourages participation that supports democratic decision making.

Relationship-building and perspective seeking – Meaningful engagement values local perspectives and community experiences; it recognizes that respect and equitable processes foster trust and stronger relationships.

Proactive, timely, and transparent – People have enough time and notice to engage early in the process, which enables considered input and impact on decision making. How input will be assessed and used is clearly communicated during engagement and reported on afterwards

Inclusive and accessible – Engagement planning and delivery is inclusive and accessible to best serve our city by encouraging two-way conversations and strategies that reach diverse communities and ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued.

Innovative and continuously improving – As Edmonton grows and evolves, we aspire to co-create and embrace new and better engagement processes, tools and tactics based on a sound approach to evaluating success.



WORKING GROUPS UPDATE

VISION, POLICY & FRAMEWORK

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

LEARNING & TRAINING

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES & PRACTICES

EVALUATION, REPORTING & RECOGNITION

The findings from Phase 1 helped to answer some fundamental questions around the work needed to be done for improving the City's public engagement practices. And from this, five key areas of focus were identified around which Working Groups were assembled for tackling that work.

The Working Groups were formed via a broad call put out to the community with those interested going through an initial application process. Working Group members were then chosen based on their background and expertise to help ensure a wide representation of the city's diversity. Each Working Group is led by a Chair and Co-Chair (comprising City staff and community member representatives), and works under the oversight of the Advisory Committee.

Since their creation in winter 2015, the Working Groups have focused on implementing their individual action plans based on the results of Phase 1 with each Working Group's deliverables linking back to the feedback received during that initial phase.



Vision, Policy & Framework

Outcomes Achieved to Date:

- Completed extensive testing, and secured approval, of the newly developed vision, definition, continuum, foundational elements and guiding principles for the City of Edmonton's public engagement.
- Worked collaboratively with the Evaluation, Reporting and Recognition Working Group to devise draft public engagement outcomes and evaluation measures based on those outcomes.

Work in Progress:

- Conducting good practice research from other municipalities worldwide in regards to public engagement policy and frameworks.
- Developing an overarching public engagement framework to support public engagement planning
- Generating a renewed policy and procedure (based on the new vision, definition, continuum, guiding principles and foundational elements) for guiding the City's public engagement activities into the future.
- Designing a visual representation of the public engagement continuum, which outlines the increasing levels of public involvement in decision making.

PURPOSE

Create organizational foundations that inspire, support and guide effective public engagement.



Connect and build relationships to increase community leadership. To accomplish this, we will:

1. Foster connections and build relationships amongst the City, community, partners (e.g., Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues) and community leadership.
2. Provide recommendations on community leadership systems approach (i.e., recommend improvements and additions).
3. Invite community leadership, existing and newly identified, to engage.



Outcomes Achieved to Date:

- Conducted good practice research on the role of municipalities in the development of civil society.
- Defined what community leadership means within the context of public engagement at the City.
- Established a sub-committee with the Learning & Training Working Group to explore learning and training opportunities for building community leadership capacity.
- Established a sub-committee to research and develop recommendations for a Public Engagement Ombudsman or Advisory Committee.
- Constructed the initial version of an online mapping tool that will help identify who to connect with at the community level on engagement projects.

Work in Progress:

- Completing a gap analysis with respect to community leadership capacity.
- Developing recommendations for a community leadership systems approach.

Outcomes Achieved to Date:

- Completed a range of learning and training pilot projects in 2015.
- Generated a results report on the engagement projects where some of the Council Initiative's work was piloted in 2015 for improving public engagement practices.
- Conducted a needs assessment, environmental scan, good practice research and a research findings report based on the information gathered.
- Completed a learning and training framework testing report, along with a learning plan pilot project.
- Developed and delivered the following public engagement learning and training opportunities:
 - › Diversity in Engagement (for City staff)
 - › Emotion and Outrage (for City staff)
 - › Facilitation for Public Participation (for City staff)
 - › IAP2 Certificate Training Sponsorship (for City staff and the public)
 - › Storytelling Workshops (for City staff and the public)
 - › Strengthening Engagement in Edmonton with Matt Lehninger (for City staff and the public)
 - › Towards Inclusive Public Engagement (a City of Edmonton intercultural learning workshop for staff)
 - › Understanding Public Engagement and the City of Edmonton (for City staff and the public)

Work in Progress:

- Completing a learning plan pilot project analysis and report, along with drafting a learning and training framework and a learning plan.



Create a framework for learning and training that enables citizens and staff to participate in engagement fostering a culture of continuous learning.



The City has innovative and evidence-based tools, techniques and practices that enable strategic, coordinated, collaborative and effective public engagement.



Outcomes Achieved to Date:

- Created a project charter and research plan, as well as conducted innovation and current research along with an environmental scan.
- Identified a need for an online tool for City project managers to use when planning and delivering engagement projects, with the aim to identify scope and functional requirements for this knowledge management tool by the end of the Council Initiative.
- Formed five sub-committees to develop and scope public engagement tools, techniques and practices, which include:
 - › Communications Task Force: Enhance awareness of how to get involved, our ability to build shared understanding and better reporting tools.
 - › Planning: Define the engagement planning process, with more upfront research and planning requirements.
 - › Implementation: Define the engagement toolbox with supports to help City project managers implement the work.
 - › Reporting and Evaluation: Tools to help report on how information on engagement has been used.
 - › Project Management Reference Guide: Enhance where, and how, the engagement planning process connects with the capital project planning process.

Work in Progress:

- Conducting a needs assessment and then creating a digital engagement strategy based on the information collected.
- Building a suite of communications templates and tools for supporting public engagement processes, as well as a guidebook for application and use.
- Determining tools, techniques and practices priorities, as well developing a repository and tool classification system.
- Creating a public engagement planning framework that defines planning stages and identifies what happens at each stage, along with an engagement planning template (new public involvement plan) and resource materials.
- Developing and finalizing recommended updates to the project management reference guide (PMRG).
- Updating reporting templates and completing the scope for the knowledge management tool.

Outcomes Achieved to Date:

- Completed preliminary return on investment (ROI) research, including the cost/benefit process and methods.
- Created an interdependencies map, research plan (including glossary, pilot project selection) and evaluation framework, which is currently being tested.

Work in Progress:

- Conducting research on public/City staff public engagement recognition programs, as well as a focus group and series of interviews with internal public engagement practitioners.
- Drafting public engagement outcomes and evaluation measures based on those outcomes, in collaboration with the Vision, Policy & Framework Working Group.
- Developing reporting guidelines and process evaluation framework, performance measures and recognition program.
- Building a report template for evaluations.
- Continuing ROI research.



"What makes the Council Initiative so unique is that it is being driven by City Council and it's also corporate-wide in its impact at the City. It also brings together existing best practices while allowing us to reach beyond the city structure to draw on the knowledge and experience of other municipalities and organizations for helping the City of Edmonton be the best at public engagement."

Gary Redmond
 Foundational Community Co-Chair, Evaluation, Recognition and Reporting Working Group

- Deliver an evaluation framework with measures for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the public engagement system that includes context, process and impact
- Develop a process and method for return on investment and cost/benefit for public engagement

- Design effective approaches to how we report
- Design effective approaches to recognize and honour citizen and employee contributions



"The Council Initiative is important because it involves such a broad range of people working together – citizens, City Councillors and City Administration. And the relationships being built through this collaborative work will provide significant value that will continue to exist long after the initiative officially ends."

Michelle Chalifoux,
Chair, Tools, Techniques & Practices Working Group

CULTURAL AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Through their work, the Working Groups are helping to create the foundational, tactical and inspirational tools for supporting better public engagement, as well as shifting the corporate culture, at the City. And these advancements are well underway.

By applying what has been learned so far through the Council Initiative, City staff have been able to pilot some of the new approaches that have been developed in current City projects involving engagement. And they continue to demonstrate an openness to trying new techniques and processes that are based on the Council Initiative's findings. As a result, real, positive change is already being seen in how the City is delivering public engagement.

And there have been a number of City project examples where the approach to public engagement has now shifted at the City of Edmonton reflecting the work coming out of the Council Initiative. Some of these include:

- [Building Great Neighbourhoods](#)
- [Building House Choices](#)
- [Breathe: Green Network Strategy](#)
- Canada 150 Advisory Committee
- Citizen Relationship Working Group (in the new Integrated Infrastructure Services department)
- [Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy](#)
- [Edmonton Insight Community](#)
- [Engage 106 St./ 76 Ave. Collector Plan](#)
- [Engaging 40 Avenue \(bike lanes\)](#)
- [ELEVATE](#) – Greater Hardisty Community Sustainability Coalition (GHSC) and the 101 Avenue Commercial Corridor
- [Lewis Farms Facility and Park](#)
- [Mature Neighbourhood Overlay \(MNO\)](#)
- Planning Coordination Section
- [Transit Strategy](#)
- Winter Road Maintenance Program and Service Review
- Zoning and Rezoning Meetings

BREATHE: GREEN NETWORK STRATEGY

One of Council's top priorities for 2016, Breathe is a transformative strategy for ensuring that each neighbourhood will continue to be supported by a network of open space as the city grows. The primary aim of the green network strategy is to plan and sustain a healthy city by encouraging connection and integration of open space at the neighbourhood, city and regional levels.



Engaging early with citizens before decisions are made was identified as a priority through the Council Initiative's work, which was demonstrated on this project. In addition, the "street knowledge" of affected citizens and stakeholders is being tapped and people are being engaged where they are (i.e., the City has come to them) as part of the process. The opportunities provided to citizens for engaging with the City were also diversified, including a speaker series, pop-up and formal open houses, surveys, mapping tools, a stakeholder discussion guide, as well as meetings, workshops and an online contest with prizes, such as a Twitter scavenger hunt. Engagement opportunities were also tailored to some groups (e.g., newcomers and low-income populations) to ensure their voices were heard.

EDMONTON INSIGHT COMMUNITY

In June 2014, the Edmonton Insight Community was developed to provide an easy, convenient way for citizens to give input on a range of city issues through an inclusive, accessible online citizens' panel. Currently, it has close to 6,500 diverse community members, with the data collected being used to support the City's Open City Initiative. This aligns with the Council Initiative's reference to the need for providing a wide variety of

opportunities to engage including online as part of a digital engagement strategy.

The City is considered a leader in North America using technology to connect with the community in this way, having been recently announced as a finalist for the [2016 Customer Experience Visionary Award](#) from [Vision Critical](#).



LEWIS FARMS FACILITY AND PARK

Beginning in 2007, the City embarked on the development of a community recreation centre for Lewis Farms. Conducted over three phases, the public engagement process has focused on storytelling and creating opportunities for dialogue with community members where everyone's input was honoured, with the final phase taking place in fall 2016.

To help inform the approach, staff used the newly developed guiding principles from the Council Initiative, and created interactive ways to engage citizens, including inviting Rapid Fire Theatre to facilitate conversations and developing an interactive video. Engagement activities included open houses and online surveys (through the Lewis Farms Web Link and the Insight Panel). During the first two engagement phases, over 2,000 responses were received from participants and those involved expressed a high level of satisfaction with the process.

MATURE NEIGHBOURHOOD OVERLAY (MNO)

Since its creation in 2001, the MNO has been a part of the zoning bylaw addressing development in older communities. With the influx of development in mature neighbourhoods, the MNO is undergoing review, with the aim to improve it as a tool for shaping redevelopment in mature areas.

Adhering to the Council Initiative's call for more diversity with whom the City engages, the MNO Review has reached beyond engaging typical stakeholders and involved multicultural groups, faith groups, new Canadians, youth and seniors. And is another example of the City engaging early on in the process before decisions have been made. Engagement activities include stakeholder interviews, a Jane's Walk held in the Bonnie Doon neighbourhood, Community Infill Panel bi-monthly meetings, drop-in sessions, surveys (stand-alone and via the Insight Community), facilitated workshops and bi-monthly multi-stakeholder meetings.



NEXT STEPS

The vision, new definition and guiding principles for engagement will continue to be implemented into spring 2017 as they're applied and used in engagement activities supporting City projects.

The Council Initiative on Public Engagement will produce a strategy and implementation plan based on the culmination of its work (from all Working Groups). This report will outline policy and detailed procedures to support a new framework for public engagement practices at the City into the future. City Council will be asked to approve the policy and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) will be in charge of approving the procedures that will guide implementation.



If you would like to share your feedback on these changes or about public engagement at the City in general, please contact us at: councilinitiativeonpublicengagement@edmonton.ca

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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WE THANK EVERYONE WHO'S PARTICIPATED FROM PHASE I THROUGH TO THE PRESENT, AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE COUNCIL INITIATIVE'S WORK ALONG THE JOURNEY.

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