

OCP 10-Year Update Proposed Engagement Approach

Engagement Objectives

Direct and Clear: Provide clear direction for the community to respond to and strive to build a clear understanding of how the update could shape the future of Victoria.

Collaborative: Work toward shared goals to meet housing needs in the context of climate solutions (i.e., not asking *if* we add housing capacity, but *how* in alignment with climate goals).

Genuine: Engage where engagement is needed and only when the community's input can meaningfully inform City decisions.

Equitable: Strive for diverse representation and inclusion across neighbourhood boundaries and leverage the City's updated Engagement Framework to centre equity, welcome all voices and honour our communities' diverse ways of knowing, learning and sharing.

Efficient: Target outreach to communities most impacted by proposed changes.

Transparent: Be clear about how decisions will be made and how feedback was used to shape important policy decisions, seeking to build strong civic health.

A Genuine and Efficient Approach

The proposed approach to community engagement recognizes an imperative to be both genuine and efficient while also reaching our housing and climate goals. The City would provide rich and innovative opportunities that make the most of people's scarce time and attention by focusing on questions where community feedback is required to clarify priorities and navigate trade-offs. It would include up-front, transparent sharing of what's already confirmed through specific Council direction, existing City policy and technical analysis.

To be clear, this is not about doing less, it's about doing better. This OCP 10-year Update will seek to create one citywide plan to foster an equitable, nimble Victoria that can meaningfully confront the housing crisis and increase our resilience to climate change. As the guiding document that informs and shapes our city, we recognize the policies are complex and it is not always straightforward how proposed changes could impact communities. Therefore, a key component of our approach will be creating clear and understandable updates centred on key themes that link to our communities' shared values and goals.

Striking a Balance

We've engaged a lot as a city in recent years and we know it can be fatiguing for community members to stay informed on multiple initiatives that each seek high levels of public participation. We also acknowledge global trends that point to declining civic health and frustration with what, for some, feels like rapid and uncomfortable change. A citywide approach, focused on diversity and targeted conversations, strives for genuine engagement and equitable empowerment in planning for Victoria's future, while balancing the need for immediate housing and climate action.

Picking up Where We Left Off

With a strong foundation of City plans, policies, and strategies that are each a product of substantial public participation, community engagement on this OCP Update can be understood as picking up where we left off in previous conversations. The engagement process is proposed to move directly into substantive discussions. These will include choices for optimizing strategies and balancing trade-offs associated with realizing key moves for meeting housing needs while progressing climate solutions and the balancing of strategic objectives of the City.

Providing Opportunity to Engage on What Matters

While the process will focus on six policy topic themes, the associated objectives are primarily related to the City's land management tools and how we use them to add needed housing supply while integrating broader objectives. To simplify this complex topic, themes of engagement will focus on housing supply and how new supply relates to themes that people care about, such as mobility and transportation needs, parks and public spaces, environment and the local economy.

Part of this effort will include direct and targeted engagement with diverse stakeholders, such as non-profit housing organizations, local builders and developers, adjacent municipalities, the Greater Victoria School District, BC Transit, advocacy groups, and diverse community groups and organizations.

Place-Based Planning with Citywide Input

Limited place-based planning would occur in the form of workshops/charrettes for areas with outdated plans, specifically the city's network of villages and centres (in-person as able). The outcomes of these workshops would be made available for all to review and provide feedback on, maintaining an equitable and transparent approach.

Meeting People Where They Are

A key principle of good community engagement is to reach people in the locations and times where they naturally find themselves.

In recent years, digital engagement has necessarily played a larger role in our engagement methods, and we have heard this has been an effective strategy for reaching people where they are – especially for families with children and other who find it difficult to make time to attend an in-person event. This format also allows for recording webinars and Q&A sessions so that others with different schedules (e.g., shift work) may catch-up by watching at another time. Of course, some still strongly prefer in-person interactions, and both in-person events and pop-ups in busy locations are important methods to offer.

Print and digital advertising or mailouts also play an indispensable role in reaching people where they're at, ensuring they at least have the awareness to make their own decision about participating through whichever options are most convenient. Word-of-mouth can be one of the strongest methods for awareness-raising and another key strategy for achieving this principle is to tap into existing social and neighbourhood networks to help spread the word about opportunities to participate. The City's recently updated Engagement Framework will help guide our communication and outreach to ensure it is equitable, welcomes all voices and honours our communities' diverse ways of knowing, learning and sharing.

Community Advisory Panel

In previous planning processes, the City has relied on working groups to support the process. For local area planning, these groups were often made up of active members of the community, including from the local community association. While these groups were valuable to the process, they didn't always reflect the diversity of the city. The recent approach to Village and Corridor Planning included a terms of reference that ensured greater diversity in representation and a clear purpose and mandate for the group, focused on helping to reach and reflect typically underrepresented voices. While successful, holding regular meetings of these groups was resource intensive, time-consuming, and in some cases ineffective at engaging participants over a long period.

The 2012 OCP was created with Citizen Advisory Committee established by Council to advise on

the preparation of a plan. The Committee, comprising a wide range of expertise, served as a sounding board on the planning process, and advised on the structure and content of the plan. It consisted of nine members with a wide range of expertise, appointed for 12 months.

The proposed approach would draw on lessons learned and successes from the past. The City would establish a citywide Community Advisory Panel, similar to that of the last round of Village and Corridor Planning to ensure diversity. This would include representation from local communities across the entire city and diverse populations and interests. The group would meet a limited number of times to respect people’s time while ensuring interest and capacity is sustained. They would serve as sounding board to check in on policy directions and provide members of the community an opportunity to hear from neighbours they may not know well.

Engage Twice for a Streamlined Timeline

The envisioned process would span approximately two years. Since we are able to pick up where we left off in recent processes, the primary phase of engagement would begin with substantive content and a deep dive into topics that require public consultation and input (not high-level questions we know the answer to). A final check-in would reflect what was heard and prepare stakeholders for the public hearing.

Summary of Key Strategies

Citywide Scope	One City Plan and Implementation Strategies for Victoria’s Future.
Community Advisory Panel	Panel with diverse, citywide representation to act as a sounding board at key stops along the way.
Targeted Place-based Planning	Targeted workshops for areas with outdated local plans, focused on villages – the hearts of the community.
Sharing What We Know	Letting the community know where we’re starting from and what is guiding us through clear communications in diverse forms (e.g., Have Your Say project page, video, community information sessions and other background materials).
Clearly Asking About What We Don’t Know	Key questions centred around themes that matter most to people and clearly relating them to the decisions at hand.
Bringing People Together	Focus on events and opportunities that bring diverse community members together to hear a range of perspectives that are representative of the city as a whole.
Virtual Opportunities	Online surveys and targeted virtual focus groups that allow for diverse representation and at-your-pace engagement on what matters most.
Strategic In-person Opportunities	Meeting people where they are through targeted open houses and pop-ups at planned events, community spaces and key locations where substantial updates are proposed.
Inspiring and creative communication	Holding the public’s attention and clearly communicating how the proposed changes could shape Victoria and address the housing and climate crisis.

Timeline

