



**Committee of the Whole Report  
For the Meeting of Thursday, June 8, 2017**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date** Friday, June 2, 2017

**From:** Jocelyn Jenkyns, Deputy City Manager

**Subject:** Engagement Framework and 2017 – 2018 Public Engagement Road Map

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council endorse the Public Engagement Roadmap and direct staff to report back for final consideration after consultation.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Residents play an essential role in shaping the decisions which impact their daily lives. An effective approach to how we engage people in the topics that are important to them is critical to getting, and keeping, people involved in their local government.

In February of this year, the City hosted a Public Engagement Road Map workshop and drop-in session. The purpose of bringing everyone together was to develop, with the community, clear expectations on opportunities for the public to participate in City decision-making.

The feedback collected led to the development of a Public Engagement Road Map, which outlines when the community can anticipate to provide feedback on decisions planned for 2017 and 2018. The goal of the Road Map is to make engagement more predictable and to let people know what they can expect and when; this will help to prevent “engagement fatigue.”

The feedback from the sessions also informed and led to, the development of the Engagement Framework, which will replace the City’s 2012 Civic Engagement Strategy. The framework has been created to articulate the City’s on-going commitment to meaningful and effective two-way dialogue. It is intended to be a tool for both the community and staff, providing a consistent, transparent approach to how people participate in the decisions the City makes. It formalizes current engagement practices and introduces improvements based on national best practices, feedback received and lessons learned. Some improvements include:

- Better ‘telling the story’ and managing expectations by clearly stating what decisions have already been made, and how people can participate in shaping what is being considered now.
- Involving the community in the design and evaluation of engagement where possible.
- An in-depth review of the framework annually to ensure it’s relevant, effective and addresses the needs of the community.
- Updating the Road Map annually to ensure everyone knows what we’ll be looking for input on in the coming year and how everyone can participate.

An effective approach to engagement is key to connecting with our residents and business owners to make our city, even better.

## **PURPOSE**

This report presents the Engagement Framework and 2017 - 2018 Public Engagement Road Map.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2012, the Civic Engagement Strategy was developed to help improve how we involve residents in decisions that affect their daily lives. The Strategy addressed how to overcome existing challenges to meaningful and productive engagement. Since 2012, much has changed, requiring the City to develop a framework that reflects existing best practices and community participation needs.

Council is committed to meaningful, two-way conversations with the community as identified by Objective #2 in their Strategic Plan to "Engage and Empower the community". They have developed identified the action to "Create a Public Engagement Road Map" to accompany the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan action items as a means to reach this objective.

The desire to develop the Road Map originated as a result of the community voicing concern regarding engagement fatigue. Last year alone the City hosted over 80 engagement events, engaged nearly 8,000 people in person and received over 6,000 completed surveys.

In 2017, hundreds of people have already participated in conversations around improvements and changes that impact their daily lives. We've been reaching out to community members on how best to plan for future growth and development of our neighbourhoods, seeking refinements on the detailed design of bike lanes, looking for confirmation on the proposed look and feel of the downtown, starting to create the vision for Topaz Park, and identifying how we can support creative minds as we develop an Arts and Culture Master Plan, to name a few.

Some Neighbourhood Associations have voiced concern that there are not enough opportunities to provide meaningful input, feeling that their feedback isn't always reflected in the decisions being made.

In response to the concerns raised, the City hosted a Public Engagement Road Map workshop and drop-in, in February of this year. The purpose of the event was to develop, with the community, clear expectations on opportunities for the public to participate in City decision-making.

Following the community sessions, Directors and staff reviewed feedback received and discussed how best to integrate the community's recommendations. Based on the need to update our existing Civic Engagement Strategy and in response to the input shared, it was decided that in addition to creating a 2017 -2018 Public Engagement Road Map, the content would be developed further into a framework that will guide the City's engagement initiatives.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

At the City, we want to be inclusive, proactive and transparent when it comes to engaging our residents. We need to ensure our engagement framework is current while allowing for flexibility to keep up with changing practices and tools on how best to engage people. Increasingly, using a variety and a mix of engagement techniques and tools is important.

How people receive, share and respond to information has also evolved since 2012. Technology including online engagement platforms and social media has become a great way to communicate with residents as it provides an immediate, interactive and cost-effective tool for conversing about municipal services and topics. The City continues to increase our Twitter following by 1,000 followers each month, now at approximately 45,000 followers. The City's Facebook and Instagram accounts are also growing.

These new channels have changed how we connect with people, adapting our content to the communication tool and diverse audiences which use them. Character restrictions, a greater reliance on photos over words to tell the story, real-time information and competing stories for community attention have implications on how we engage our community and how they participate in the decisions we make.

Understanding the value of people's time, we have also introduced new tools to make it easier and more convenient for people to share their perspectives. From sounding boards positioned in high traffic areas, to webcasting of Council meetings and e-Townhalls offering residents the ability to engage remotely, we're continuously looking to make public participation accessible for everyone.

Researching the engagement policies and frameworks of other municipalities such as those from Kingston, Niagara Falls, Calgary, Toronto and Guelph, we found we share many of the same challenges. We all place great importance on the community's time, feedback and the value it brings as we consider the best solution. Through a transparent process that encourages diverse perspectives, we aim to build credibility and trust with residents and business owners, securing their ongoing contribution to help us make good decisions.

At the February Public Engagement Road Map workshop, we worked with the community to address some of the challenges they presented as well as some of our own.

Approximately 38 people attended the workshop and 12 dropped by the subsequent drop in session. The highest neighbourhood representation was from James Bay and Fernwood. The level of involvement in previous City engagement efforts was varied with some participants noting long-term involvement, some representing Community and Neighbourhood Associations who were quite familiar with past engagement initiatives and others who were interacting with the City for the first time.

### **What We Heard**

Some common themes heard were:

- **Be inclusive:** Ensure broad stakeholder representation in engagement initiatives including hard to reach demographics such as seniors and youth.
- **Manage expectations:** Provide clear information on what decisions have been made, the feedback the City is seeking, what the community can actually influence and be candid about any notable changes in the project.
- **Use existing networks:** Many strong networks exist in the community that the City can use to help engage residents and business owners. Educational institutions and Parent Advisory Committees can help reach out to families and students. Community Associations are well-established and can help inform residents of land use process and other important City news. Time should also be spent on identifying key influencers in the community who can



become champions for City initiatives. The role of Community Associations as a voice for the community was also highlighted.

- **Foster a safe environment:** Ensure people feel comfortable while providing feedback by developing a safe environment through strong facilitation and a welcoming, environment.
- **Provide different levels of information:** Provide a variety of clear, accessible information to meet the needs of all audiences. Many stakeholders have a high level of technical and local knowledge and would like to be provided with more detailed information. Others prefer to receive summaries, highlighting key points that are clear and easy to understand.

The community also shared their desired level of engagement on the variety of City projects, which caused staff to reflect and consider how we could best meet those levels. This conversation formed the foundation of the 2017 – 2018 Public Engagement Road Map which outlines how and when the community can participate in the projects we have underway. The categories identified for public participation for each project phase are based on the input received, technical considerations and the information being sought. The goal of the Road Map is to make engagement more predictable and to let people know what they can expect and when.

The feedback received also led to and informed the Engagement Framework which has been developed to articulate the City's commitment to meaningful and effective two-way dialogue with the community. It will replace the existing Civic Engagement Strategy to better reflect the current environment, provide transparency to the process, respond to what the community has identified would improve their experience and level of participation in City decision-making. It is intended to be a tool for both the community and staff, providing a consistent, transparent approach to how people participate in Council decision-making.

The framework formalizes the City's current approach to engagement, identifying the six steps cross-departmental teams use to develop engagement strategies. It shares, why, when, how we engage and guiding principles.

Effective engagement requires the active involvement from all participants. The role of Council, staff and how we see the role of the community are outlined to help ensure everyone's aware of how they participate and shape the decisions being made.

## WHAT'S NEW

Based on the feedback we have received from the Road Map workshop and drop-in session, evaluation of recent engagement initiatives and lessons learned, we have introduced new practices:

**More advance notice of opportunities for input:** We aim to provide at least two weeks' notice of an engagement event once we have confirmed our dates. For the initiatives we have planned for the more distant future, we'll be sharing an engagement calendar online to identify when people can generally expect us to be out in their community talking about the issues which matter to them.

**Greater community involvement in the design of engagement:** When possible, the community will be involved in the design of engagement through working groups and stakeholder meetings.

**Telling the story:** In order for people to provide meaningful input, they need to understand the project, what the City is trying to achieve and what their role is in shaping the outcome. To bring the community along and better manage expectations 11 key questions will be shared for each initiative

to explain past decisions, where we are today and what the community has the ability to influence. The answers to the questions below will shape each project's engagement strategy.

### **How We Got Here**

- What is the decision that has been made?
- When the decision was made?
- Who made the decision?
- What information informed the decision?
- What was the level of community involvement?

### **Today**

- What is the decision being made?
- What input are we seeking now?
- What is the level of community involvement?
- When will we seek your feedback?
- How will public input be sought?
- How will public input be used?

Project and engagement timelines will also be shared for each initiative, sharing high-level milestones and opportunities.

**Two-tiered information:** Both high-level summaries and more detailed information will be provided to accommodate varying preferences for information.

**Closing the loop:** To ensure everyone who participated in the engagement process is aware of how their input was used and of Council's final decision, reporting out is important. Once Council makes their final decision, we'll notify everyone who participated to ensure they're aware of the outcome.

**Evaluating participation:** Interdepartmental debrief meetings will be organized after the engagement window closes to discuss how well engagement objectives were met and lessons learned. Community representatives will be invited to debrief when possible.

Engagement metrics will continue to be reported to Council through the quarterly report. To ensure the City's engagement practices remain relevant and effective, the framework will be reviewed in-depth annually and updated as needed.

**Alignment with the Project Management Framework:** The Framework will be integrated into of the City's Project Management Framework. As part of the completion of a Project Brief in the initiate stage, determining the opportunities for community participation will be required. If opportunities exist, an engagement strategy will be developed and imbedded into the project plan. The evaluation of citizen and stakeholder participation is also included as part of the formal evaluation at project close.

**Living document:** As engagement is an ever-evolving practice, we will encourage feedback on an ongoing basis via [engage@victoria.ca](mailto:engage@victoria.ca) as well as more formally through the annual review.

Prior to seeking Council adoption of the Engagement Framework Road Map, those who participated in the Public Engagement Road Map session will be reconvened to provide any additional feedback. The meeting will be held in late June and will also provide community members with the opportunity



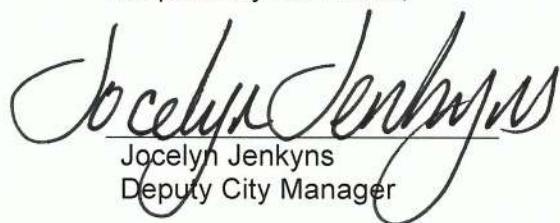
to meet the new Department Head. Feedback and any proposed changes will be shared with Council in July for their consideration.

In 2018, the community will be invited back to provide feedback on their level of participation in City decision-making, what improvements they have noticed and what new areas can be explored.

## CONCLUSIONS

Getting people involved in local government helps Council make informed decisions that reflect the needs and desires of our neighbourhoods. The Engagement Framework and Road Map are intended to help build credibility, clarity and trust by being responsive to community feedback, introducing improvements based on lessons learned and being committed to progress through an annual review of how we involve our residents in the decisions that affect their daily lives.

Respectfully submitted,



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Deputy City Manager



Julie Potter  
Manager, Engagement

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date:

June 2, 2017

Appendix A: Engagement Framework  
Appendix B: 2017 – 2018 Public Engagement Road Map  
Appendix C: 2017 – 2018 Public Engagement Road Map (full)  
Appendix D: Public Engagement Road Map: Engagement Summary  
Appendix E: What We Heard: Raw Data