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Reimagining Public Participation in the City of Hamilton

Are they really listening?



OUTREACH

Invitations to 20 organizations connected to

- Immigrants/Newcomers
- Racialized people
- Seniors
- Youth
- Indigenous people
- 2SLGBTQ+ people
- People in poverty
- People with mental health challenges
- People with physical disabilities

SPRC Twitter, Facebook, Eventbrite accounts used for Youth and Senior Focus groups, with specific intention to include racialized, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and others in traditionally marginalized communities.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

Focus Groups and Interviews with over 50 people

- Indigenous
- Seniors
- Youth
- Immigrant/newcomer
- Racialized
- People with mental health challenges
- People with physical disabilities
- LGBTQ+ people



Intersections of race, LGBTQ+, physically disabled, mental health challenges, rural



WHAT WE HEARD

“Are they really listening?”

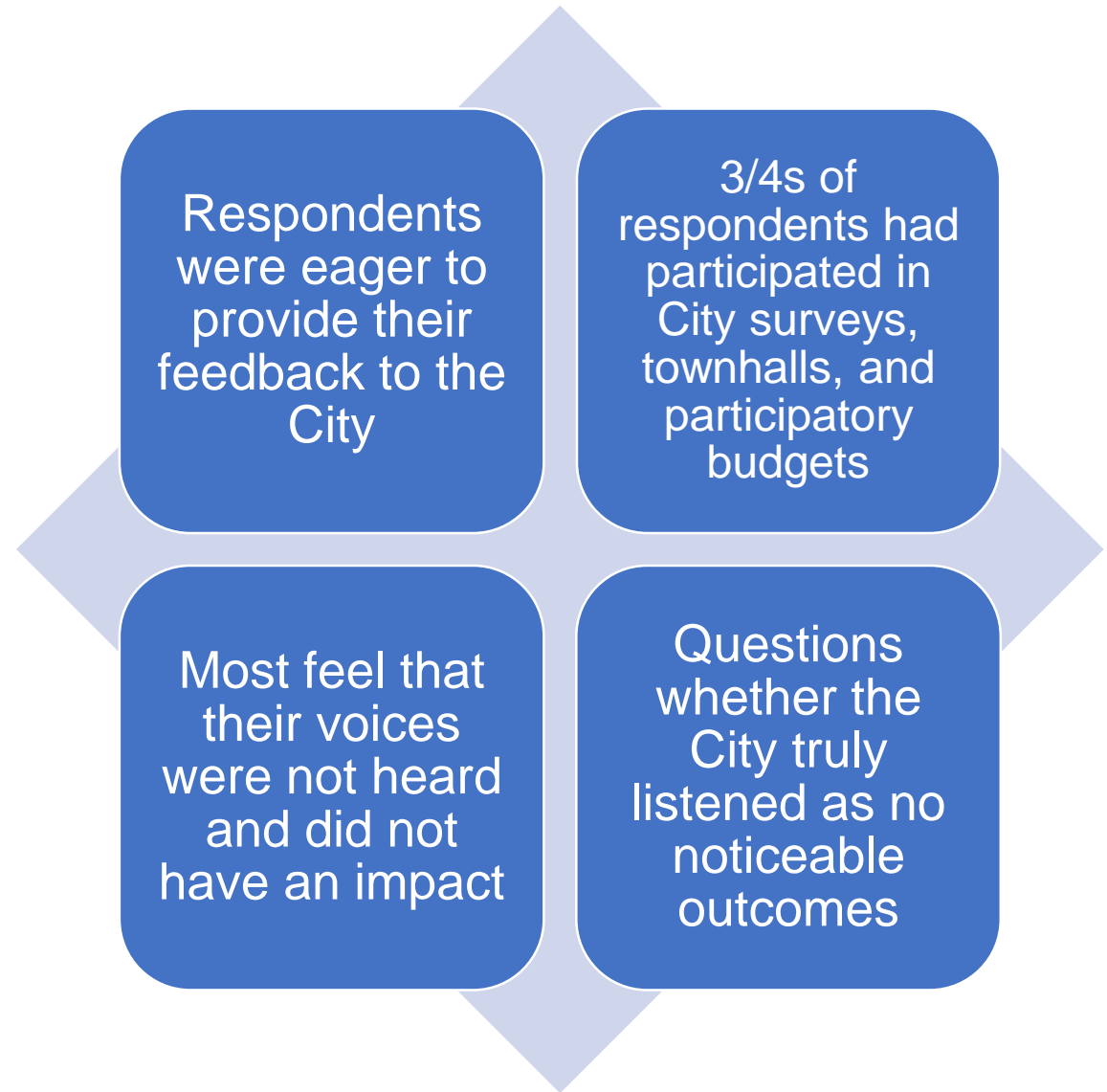


- 1. PEOPLE WERE HAPPY TO BE ASKED THEIR OPINIONS, BUT...**
“We keep coming but is it really making change?”
- 2. WANT TO OFFER INPUT BUT DON'T SEE OPPPORTUNITIES**
“The City’s website is so inaccessible.”
- 3. PEOPLE FELT HEARD BUT DID NOT SEE IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE**
“We feel heard but there is no action.”
- 4. BARRIERS ARE PHYSICAL AND ATTITUDINAL**
“Come to a queer friendly coffee place or community program.”

1. Have you ever participated in a City-led engagement session in any form?

If yes, did you feel your voice was heard?

Did it make a difference?



2. Participants in the City's recent survey reported a slight preference for virtual meetings over in-person meetings.

How would you like to provide your input or feedback to the City?

A hybrid model of participation is favoured to ensure participants can choose a modality suited to their preferences and accessibility needs, reducing current barriers

Enhance accessibility: provide orientation to City Hall, fund transportation, host meetings at alternative locations, expand accessible formats, etc.

Flexible meeting times, small group sizes

Incentivize participation (offering transportation, complimentary snacks and beverages, etc.)

Have a variety of methods to collect feedback (surveys, interviews, door-to-door outreach, social media, phone calls, e-mails, webinars, etc.)

3. Participants in the survey noted a variety of barriers that prevented their participation in City engagement opportunities.

What would prevent you from sharing feedback with the City?

What barriers do you face in providing input or feedback?

Attitudinal barriers

- i. unapproachable demeanor of city staff
- ii. perceived bias towards English-speaking individuals
- iii. lack of follow-up with participants

Lack of awareness

- i. majority unaware of engagement opportunities

Accessibility barriers

- i. social and economic barriers
- ii. digital illiteracy, lack of access to technology
- iii. meetings - locations, crowds, social phobias, lack of breaks, complex language

3. (Cont'd) What would prevent you from sharing feedback with the city?

What barriers do you face in providing input or feedback?

Newcomers and refugees

- i. may avoid or fear interactions with government
- ii. may not have access to participation in their language

People with disabilities

- i. City website “horrendously inaccessible” and incompatible with assistive equipment
- ii. transportation barriers to city hall

Seniors


- i. technology barriers
- ii. need engagement initiatives that come to them

Indigenous community

- i. looking for authenticity in relationship and connection
- ii. Discouraged by participating in sessions without noticeable changes

LGBTQ+ people

- i. systemic homophobia
- ii. some councillors make it unsafe to delegate



4. How would you like the City of Hamilton to let you know what was done with your feedback and how it was used?

Need for multiple formats

- i. website, e-mail, phone, mail, accessible formats, various languages
- ii. Hybrid collective meetings for follow-up and acknowledgement of contributions

Desire to see feedback used in practice

- i. participants want to see the data they have contributed to
- ii. understand how it will be implemented,
- iii. desire regular updates on issues and opportunity to affirm or raise concerns

5. In an ideal world, how would you like the City of Hamilton to engage with you on issues that matter most to you and members of your community(ies)?

- Regular townhalls and community forums that are accessible to all
- Connect with service providers to spread awareness and invitations to participate
- Celebrate diversity and give everyone a voice, including people experiencing homelessness
- Facilitate relationships between citizens and councillors
- Provide people with lived experience leadership roles in addressing pertinent issues
- Go to space where people are comfortable, directly engaging and acknowledging their contributions



“Are they really listening?”

BOTTOM LINE

**PEOPLE WERE HAPPY TO BE ASKED FOR THEIR OPINIONS BUT
LACKED THE EVIDENCE TO KNOW IF IT MADE A DIFFERENCE**

THANK YOU!



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