




CITY OF HAMILTON
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
Government and Community Relations

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
COMMITTEE DATE:	July 4, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Public Engagement Policy and Administrative Framework (CM21011(a)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Cindy Mutch, Manager of Community Initiatives (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4992
SUBMITTED BY:	Morgan Stahl, Director of Government Relations and Community Engagement
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That staff be directed to develop a corporate-wide Public Engagement Policy and Administrative Framework that is informed by public feedback and consultation efforts with relevant stakeholder groups including residents, community partners, the City's Public Engagement Community of Practice cross-departmental staff members, City's Senior Leadership Team, special workshop with City Council, and priority City-led equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives;
- (b) That temporary resources for 9 months for an amount up to but not exceeding \$225,000.00 be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve #110046 be approved for estimated operating costs to support the development of a corporate-wide public engagement policy and framework, corporate-wide public engagement programming and training, and Our Future Hamilton Public Engagement Summit be occurred in order to continue the momentum of existing work;
- (c) That the equivalent of 2 FTE and the associated program budget of \$300,000.00 be referred to the 2023 budget for the Government and Community Relations team, to facilitate corporate-wide public engagement programming, training, and annual costs associated with the Our Future Annual Public Engagement Summit, in order to provide the necessary resources and structure to the support the Government and Community Relations team;

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- (d) That staff be directed to identify and source options to support corporate-wide public engagement efforts that are accessible and meet the City's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion goals;
- (e) That staff be directed to update the City's Public Engagement Charter in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure alignment with the City's Public Engagement Policy, Administrative Framework, and Implementation Plan; and,
- (f) That staff report back to the General Issues Committee by December 31, 2023 with a status update respecting the Public Engagement Policy and Administrative Framework.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community engagement is a key pillar of the City's 25-year Community Vision (Our Future Hamilton), 2016-2025 Strategic Plan, and 2018-2022 Term of Council Priorities. Community engagement builds transparency, trust and confidence in City government through increased public access to City information and participation in decision-making processes that impact residents and their community. Many City services rely on community engagement as a critical component of City building initiatives, placemaking, legislative-required processes, and as a best practice to help inform the development of City projects, policies and initiatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted public engagement. From March 13, 2020 through to May 25, 2022, in-person public engagement was placed on hold in accordance with public health guidelines and safety measures. In addressing the emerging challenges of conducting public consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to establish a corporate-wide Public Engagement Policy was identified as a leading priority for the City Manager's Office, as indicated discussed during the City Manager's 2021 budget presentation to the General Issues Committee (GIC) on February 5, 2021.

Following the October 6, 2021 GIC meeting (Report CM21011), Council unanimously supported the direction for staff to establish a corporate-wide Public Engagement Policy and Administrative Framework. A consistent, transparent and accountable City-led public engagement process requires input from residents and stakeholders using an equity, diversity and inclusion lens as well as various communication tactics to share how public input has influenced the outcome.

In accordance with Council's direction, on February 23, 2022, the City launched a multi-faceted "*Reimagining Public Participation*" campaign to better understand resident preferences and experiences with City-led public engagement. Public participation opportunities supporting this initiative included a city-wide public engagement survey in addition two online polls (results attached as Appendix A); one-on-one interviews with

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City Councillors, City staff, and key community stakeholder groups (results attached as Appendix B); as well as specialized consultation sessions with racialized, equity-seeking, and traditionally under-represented groups (results attached as Appendix C).

Feedback collected through the campaign's various engagement methodologies illustrate consistent insights, themes, and core recommendations that will inform the development of the City's Public Engagement Policy and Framework. These themes, feedback, results and training opportunities were presented to Council in the form of a special training General Issues Committee session on June 23, 2022 in order to inform Council on the campaign's feedback. This feedback will also contribute to improving current City-led public engagement processes and instil a corporate culture of effective, meaningful, decision-oriented and goal-driven public engagement practices.

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: Budget forecast of up to \$50,000 annually to support corporate-wide public engagement programming, training, and annual costs associated with the Our Future Hamilton Public Engagement Summit. Additional ongoing budget to support 2 FTE starting in 2023 with an annual estimated forecast of \$250,000. Total estimated annualized project budget forecast of \$300,000 inclusive of programming, training and staffing.

Staffing: Two (2) staff required to provide the necessary resources to develop the City's Public Engagement Policy, Administrative Framework, Implementation Plan, and Evaluation Framework. To be successful, this Council-recommended priority initiative requires dedicated resources to deliver this work. It is recommended that a Senior Project Manager, full-time permanent role, and a Project Coordinator, full-time permanent role, be committed to support this initiative and related corporate-wide cross-departmental public engagement efforts.

In the interim, it is recommended that temporary resources for 9 months for an amount up to but not exceeding \$225,000.00 be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve #110046 be approved to adequately implement a consistent corporate-wide public engagement policy and framework between now and the 2023 budget process.

Legal: There are no legal impacts of Public Engagement Policy and Administrative Framework (CM21011(a)) Report (City Wide)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Public engagement at the City of Hamilton is continuously evolving. Following the City's controversial Our Voice, Our Hamilton engagement strategy in 2013, the City has made significant progress towards improving public engagement practices. In 2014, the City established the resident-driven Hamilton's Engagement Committee to advise staff on how to actively involve residents in the City's decision-making processes. A key outcome of the Committee was the creation of the Hamilton's first Public Engagement Charter in 2015.

Using the eight core principles of the Public Engagement Charter as guide, the City's Our Future Hamilton engagement initiative captured the voices of over 55,000 residents from 2015-2016, making it the broadest and most inclusive engagement strategy ever conducted by the City of Hamilton. Our Future Hamilton is the city's 25-year community vision. It builds on the legacy of Vision 2020, Hamilton's first community vision that was approved by City Council in 1992.

Our Future Hamilton Community Vision was approved by Council in 2016 and features six community priorities that were adopted by the City of Hamilton to inform and guide the City's Strategic Plan priorities. Over 125 community organizations have also adopted the community vision and are using the vision to guide their strategic priorities and lead collaborative community-wide initiatives that support collective progress towards the achievement of Our Future Hamilton.

Hamilton's annual public engagement summit is one of the legacies of the City's Our Future Hamilton Community Vision and has been successfully bringing over 450 residents, partners, and stakeholders together every year to explore key issues prioritized by the community since 2017. The annual summit is a leading best practice in municipal-led public engagement. It provides an opportunity inform the public on key priorities, collectively explore issues, generate ideas, and obtain feedback while simultaneously fostering community collaboration and collective-action involving government, community partners and residents. As a result of the COVID-pandemic, the summit has been on hold since 2020 and could resume in 2023 pending approval of recommendations outlined in this report.

In 2019, the Community Initiatives Unit within the City Manager's Office established an internal Public Engagement Community of Practice that currently consists of over 85 cross-departmental staff that meet regularly to share knowledge, explore best practices, and improve public engagement outcomes for residents and staff. In 2020, the City's Community Initiatives and Practice, launched the first internal Public Engagement Survey to better understand the breadth of City-led public engagement initiatives planned over the year.

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Feedback from the 2021 internal survey identified a total of 76 City-led public engagement projects and initiatives; an increase from 71 projects identified in 2020. Despite the significant impacts of COVID-19 on City-led public engagement practices during this timeframe, annual survey results continued to depict a diverse mix of City engagement projects ranging from public art, park renewal, recreation, and community well-being to public transit, roadway improvements, transportation networks, infrastructure growth, land use, and sustainability plans.

Internal survey results also indicated that a substantial proportion of all City-led public engagement projects are Council directed and/or directly related a Term of Council Priority, representing a combined total of 80% of identified projects. More than half of all projects are Department, Division or Senior Leadership directed and 30% of all City-led engagement initiatives are legislatively required. For more details, please refer to Appendix D).

Another key priority of the Practice's four-year workplan was the creation of a centralized online public engagement platform. In 2020, the City launched engage.hamilton.ca, a new interactive website for residents to learn about important City initiatives, share their feedback, and engage with community. From June 15, 2020 to December 31, 2021, Engage Hamilton featured 62 projects and welcomed 63,382 individual visitors to the site. During this timeframe, 28,038 participants undertook further action such as clicking a link or downloading a document and 14,041 individuals actively contributed their feedback by using one of the sites many engagement tools.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The City of Hamilton has various policies and related guidelines that are relevant to the establishment of Public Engagement Policy and Administrative Framework. These include:

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policies and Procedures
- Accessible Customer Service Principles
- Assistive Devices Policy
- Clear, Accessible and Large Print Guidelines
- Communications Policy
- Disruption Notice Policy
- Equity and Inclusion Policy
- General Guidelines for Providing Services to People with Disabilities
- Protocol for Gender Identity and Gender Expression
- Service Animals Policy
- Support Persons for Person with Disabilities Policy
- Resident and Visitor Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Training Policy

- Use of Indigenous Medicines Policy

Additional relevant legislation includes:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Integrated Accessibility Standards
- Environmental Assessment Act
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Ontario Planning Act
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)

Staff acknowledge that there are legislated requirements for specific public engagement activities. Federal and provincial regulations dictate a minimum level of engagement that must be carried out for certain projects. The corporate-wide public engagement policy and framework is intended to act as a support to augment the abilities of staff to conduct those engagement activities and fully comply with all applicable legislation.

Legal requirements will be outlined in a core section of the City's public engagement policy. The legal requirement section will stipulate that the policy does not supersede any legal requirements for public consultation. For example, this would include provincially legislated community consultation requirements under a legislative authority such as the Environmental Assessment Act and Ontario Planning Act.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Reimagining Public Participation Campaign: Overview

As part of key efforts to involve the public and relevant stakeholders in identifying areas for improvement and use public feedback to inform the development of corporate-wide public engagement policy and framework, the City launched a multi-faceted public engagement and awareness campaign in February 2022. The Reimagining Public Participation Campaign kicked-off with a city-wide public survey inviting residents to share their thoughts and experiences with City-led public engagement on February 23, 2022 along with two community polls on the City's engage.hamilton.ca website.

Additional public engagement activities included one-on-one interviews with City Councillors, senior City staff, and key community stakeholder groups, as well as specialized consultation sessions with racialized, equity-seeking, and traditionally under-represented groups taking place from March through to May 2022.

The project utilized a variety of communications tactics to ensure broad and inclusive participation across all municipal wards and geographical regions including rural residents. Key methods comprised of the City's digital communication and social media

channels, city-wide electronic billboards, community and stakeholder e-newsletters, paid digital advertising, print advertisements in nine community newspapers, direct mail marketing, printed campaign posters and surveys, and local radio announcements. The project's awareness campaign also coincided with the public release of the City's first Engage Hamilton Summary Report (Attached as Appendix E).

City-wide Public Engagement Survey and Online Polls

To help better understand resident preferences and experiences with City-led public engagement initiatives and to help make our engagement efforts and interactions better, the City's *Reimagining Public Participation* online survey and polls were open for public feedback on engage.hamilton.ca from February 23 – April 3, 2022. During the six-week period, the online project page received 3,696 visitors. A total of 669 residents completed the survey, including both online and hard copy submissions. The project's two quick polls received a total of 319 responses for both polls combined.

Survey respondents included individuals who had participated in City-led engagement activities as well as those who had not previously participated (81% and 19% respectively). Responses were received from all municipal wards, with Ward 1 reflecting the highest percentage of respondents (10-12%) followed by Wards 2, 3, 7, 13 and 15 (5-9.9%). Close to half of all survey respondents were in the 30-54 age group (47%) and 30% of respondents self-identified with at least one equity-seeking or racialized group. For additional results, refer to Appendix A.

Specialized Consultation Sessions

To ensure inclusive public participation through additional measures, the City of Hamilton partnered with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to conduct specialized engagement sessions with diverse community stakeholders using an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens. SPRC is a non-profit local organization that strives to improve the quality of life for everyone in Hamilton through research, community development, community engagement, and system and service planning.

Through their trusted and collaborative relationships with local community groups and networks, SPRC led a combination of targeted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with over 50 participants including individuals representing youth, senior, Indigenous, racialized, equity-seeking and traditionally under-represented groups. Outreach, collaboration, and consultation efforts included diverse community groups and networks such as the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leaders, Hispanic Association of Hamilton, Immigrant Workers' Centre, Hamilton Organizing for Poverty Elimination, Empowerment Squared, Disability Justice Network, HamOnt Youth Table, St. Matthew's House Virtual Seniors, and various Citizen Committees of Council. For more details, refer to Appendix C.

One-on-One Interviews with Key Stakeholders

In order to support authentic and meaningful dialogue through a fully transparent and unbiased process, the City of Hamilton retained a local Hamilton-based third-party consulting group, Enterprise Canada, to conduct one-on-one interviews with the Mayor and City Councillors, City staff, and key public stakeholder groups. More than 60 individuals received requests to participate in the comprehensive one-hour interview process, with a total of 34 interviews being conducted from March to May 2022.

A series of comprehensive discussion guides were developed to engage each of the three target groups. Discussion topics ranged from defining the purpose of public engagement and gathering perceptions of City-led public engagement practices to understanding barriers to engagement and assessing equity, diversity and inclusion efforts. For more details, refer to Appendix B.

Municipal Best Practice Research and Consultation

Extensive research regarding municipal best practices in public engagement was conducted through a student placement opportunity with McMaster University through the School of Social Work. Research efforts included an environmental scan and comparative analysis of municipal public engagement policies, frameworks, and staffing levels as well as one-on-one interviews with municipal public engagement leads from across Canada.

Several Canadian municipalities have policies for public engagement. These are often accompanied by an administrative document that outlines procedures and provides further guidance for staff. Some municipalities may have an overall “Public Engagement Strategy” or an all-encompassing “Public Engagement Framework” which contains similar content to a Council Policy, in addition to standardized procedures and/or administrative guidelines. Table 1 indicates the approaches taken by a variety of Canadian municipalities based on consultation findings and available public information.

Based on cross-comparison research efforts, municipalities across Canada all vary in how they structure and staff public engagement. Some municipalities have a dedicated Engagement Section or Engagement Division that supports a unified public engagement approach while others may hire engagement specialists that conduct engagement activities independently from other units and departments. Table 2 outlines the staffing structure of comparator municipalities consulted through this initiative.

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Table 1: Municipal Public Engagement Approaches

Municipality	Engagement Policy	Engagement Framework	Engagement Procedures	Online Platform	Evaluation Framework
City of Calgary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Edmonton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Guelph	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Hamilton				✓	
City of London	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Kingston		✓	✓	✓	
City of Kitchener	✓	✓	✓	✓	
City of St. John's	✓		✓	✓	✓
City of Toronto*					
City of Thunder Bay		✓	✓	✓	
City of Victoria		✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Windsor				✓	
City of Winnipeg	✓	✓	✓	✓	

**Note:* The City of Toronto recently received Council-direction to explore municipal best practices in public engagement to assist with informing the development of centralized public engagement processes and procedures. These efforts are currently being supported by three dedicated FTE staff.

Table 2: Public Engagement Staffing Structure Comparison

Municipality	Population	Size of Municipal Corporate-wide Engagement Team / Dedicated FTE Staff
City of Calgary	1.239 million	(20) Twenty FTE staff members
City of Edmonton	981,280	(9) Nine FTE staff members

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Municipality	Population	Size of Municipal Corporate-wide Engagement Team / Dedicated FTE Staff
City of Guelph	145,000	(4) Four FTE staff members
City of Hamilton	776,000	(0.5) ½ FTE staff member
City of London	422,324	(11) Eleven FTE staff members
City of Kingston	136,685	(8) Eight FTE staff members
City of Kitchener	256,885	(1) One FTE staff member
City of St. John's	108,860	(2) Two FTE staff members
City of Toronto	2.732 million	(3) Three FTE staff members* (note pg.9)
City of Thunder Bay	108,843	(3) Three FTE staff members
City of Victoria	91,867	(11) Eleven FTE staff members
City of Windsor	336,000	(7) Seven FTE staff members
City of Winnipeg	705,244	(4) Four FTE staff members

Additional research activities were conducted by volunteer graduate-level students participating in McMaster University's Research Shop. These research efforts included an environmental scan and comparative analysis of various Canadian municipality's core principles of public engagement along with potential recommendations for consideration. This work is currently being drafted and will be used towards informing the guiding principles section of the City's future Public Engagement Policy.

Internal Consultation and Collaboration

Additional collaboration and consultation efforts were conducted with priority City initiatives such as the Youth Engagement Strategy, Age-Friendly Strategy, Hate Prevention and Mitigation Action Plan, and relevant Citizen Advisory Committees of Council along with key internal City Division's including Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development Division, Early Years Operations, Recreation, and Hamilton Public Library. Select City staff including members of the City's Senior Leadership were also invited to participate in one-on-one interviews led by Enterprise.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

To ensure the engagement process for this initiative was robust, staff gathered feedback from the following stakeholders:

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1. Residents
2. Community Stakeholders
3. City of Hamilton's Senior Leadership Team
4. City Council

Residents – Residents are stakeholders in all of the City's public engagement activities. As part of the City's engagement efforts, staff reached out to residents via an online survey and community polls to seek feedback on our engagement practices and activities and to gather opinions on how the City could enhance public engagement moving forward. Specialized consultation efforts led by Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) supported additional measures to ensure the inclusion of racialized, equity-seeking, and traditionally under-represented group voices.

Community Stakeholders – Public stakeholder groups have a vested interest in supporting public participation and community integration. They are valued partners in supporting the City to connect with residents, build relationships and community, and help shape City decisions. Community stakeholders were engaged in this initiative through the online survey, specialized consultation sessions and one-on-one interviews.

City Staff – City staff are responsible for leading the City's public engagement practices and for implementing the City's future engagement policy and framework. Senior staff members including all staff members comprised of the City's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) participated in one-on-one interviews. The City's Public Engagement Community of Practice played a key role in promoting the project's survey through their extensive networks and will continue to be engaged throughout the development of this initiative as they are on the frontline of public engagement.

Council – Council interacts with residents on a daily basis. As indicated earlier, 80% of City-led public engagement projects are Council directed and/or directly related a Term of Council Priority. Council members are the City's ultimate decision makers, determining when public engagement is required, at what level, and use the results of engagement activities to help inform the decisions they make on behalf of residents. Members of City Council were engaged in this initiative to better understand their perspectives, to identify what is working and what could be improved.

What We Heard: Key Themes

The information collected from the project's survey, polls, specialized engagement sessions, one-on-one interviews, and related consultation activities has enabled staff to learn more about the City's overall public engagement processes and practices. Public engagement is important to, and valued by, staff, residents, community stakeholders, and Council. We also learned how well we are doing and what we can improve.

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Based on the comprehensive engagement findings from over 1,075 project participants, eight key themes emerged. These themes will inform the development of a corporate-wide public engagement policy and administrative framework.

1. Incorporate Public Input into Decision Making Efforts
2. Establish Clear and Consistent Public Engagement Processes and Expectations
3. Lead Authentic Community Collaboration and Outreach Efforts
4. Ensure Inclusive, Equitable and Accessible Public Engagement Planning and Design
5. Use Multiple Engagement Methods to Collect Feedback
6. Share Information Broadly, Listen and Report Back
7. Enhance Capacity through Public Engagement Training and Awareness
8. Strengthen Public Trust and Improve Transparency

Value of Consistent Corporate-wide Engagement Practices: Engage Hamilton

The enterprise-wide investment in the City’s Engage Hamilton website has been positively received by residents, staff and Council. The interactive public engagement site highlights the benefits of using consistent and unified approaches that can be further advanced through the corporate-wide development of effective engagement guidelines and standards of practice. Table 3 provides an overview of the current corporate-wide use of Engage Hamilton as listed by departmental use and number of projects key City service areas have featured on the site.

Table 3: Projects Featured on Engage Hamilton listed by Department and Service Area

Department	Projects Featured	City of Hamilton Service Areas			
		Transportation	Infrastructure	Landscape Architectural Services /Parks	Sustainable Mobility
Public Works	42	9	5	25	3
		Heritage, Tourism and Economic Development	Parking and By-law Enforcement	Policy & Art	Growth Management
Planning & Economic Development	22	4	2	12	4

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Department	Projects Featured	City of Hamilton Service Areas			
		Housing	Priority Strategies	Recreation	Public Health Services
Healthy & Safe Communities	7	1	2	2	2
City Manager's Office	10	Public Engagement	Strategic Services	Community Initiatives	Communications
		4		3	3
Corporate Services	3	Budget and Tax	Human Resources	Elections	
		2		1	

The current cost to maintain the City's external digital engagement software platform (Engage Hamilton) as an enterprise tool, including annual licencing costs and strategic support services, is covered by existing Council-approved budget.

The City's public engagement processes can continue to advance by building upon existing achievements such as the City's Public Engagement Charter, Annual Engagement Summit, Internal Community of Practice, and Engage Hamilton online platform. The recommendations contained within this report directly contribute to advancing a consistent, transparent, accountable, equitable and inclusive public engagement process for the City Hamilton. A dedicated and effectively-resourced effort is required to establish a corporate-wide public engagement policy and framework.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Economic Prosperity and Growth

Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

Healthy and Safe Communities

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Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

Culture and Diversity

Hamilton is a thriving, vibrant place for arts, culture, and heritage where diversity and inclusivity are embraced and celebrated.

Our People and Performance

Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report CM21011(a): Reimagining Public Participation Survey Summary

Appendix “B” to Report CM21011(a): Reimagining Public Participation Report – Enterprise

Appendix “C” to Report CM21011(a): Reimagining Public Participation in the City of Hamilton – Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

Appendix “D” to Report CM21011(a): Annual Public Engagement Survey and Project Inventory Summary Report

Appendix “E” to Report CM21011(a): Community Engagement Review: June 2020 – December 31, 2021