

CORPORATE POLICY

POLICY TITLE: **STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

POLICY NO.: **17.C.05**

Section:	Public Information		
Effective Date:	January 26, 2021	Date of Last Review:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Approval Authority:	Policy Owner:		
Council	City Manager		

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Vaughan values the voice of its citizens and is dedicated to having constructive dialogue with the community that is open, transparent, accessible and inclusive. City building is a collective effort and a priority in the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan. The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy outlines a formalized directional process of and commitment to involving citizens, businesses and stakeholders in conversations about municipal decisions that interest and/or impact them. The City recognizes that insight collected through the community engagement process provides Vaughan Council and City staff with meaningful information to support sustainable decision-making.

PURPOSE

The purposes of the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy are to:

- Ensure the City’s community engagement efforts align with Council’s priorities for maintaining good governance through accountable decision-making.
- Ensure the City’s community engagement efforts align with Council’s priorities for providing an exceptional citizen-centred experience.
- Encourage an active and engaged community.
- Establish a common definition of “engagement” and what it means to engage.
- Introduce a consistent, strategic and corporate-wide approach for planning and executing community engagement with internal and external audiences.
- Identify City projects and initiatives where application of the policy would be appropriate and necessary.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of City staff and the public within the engagement process.

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- Encourage the use of more deliberative, collaborative and innovative approaches to and tools for engagement.
- Expand the City’s ability to facilitate and reach wider audiences through digital engagement, which is a lasting need in public consultation but also an immediate need during COVID-19.
- Contribute to increasing public trust and deepening the connection between the public and their local government.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All City of Vaughan departments;
- All full-time, part-time and casual employees responsible for the planning and execution of community engagement plans or activities; and,
- Consultants, specialists, vendors and other external organizations that are undertaking the planning and execution of community engagement plans or activities on behalf of the City of Vaughan.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

None.

Note: The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy is not a substitute or replacement for the legislative requirements for community engagement as outlined in the *Ontario Municipal Act*, the *Ontario Planning Act*, the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*, and the Vaughan Official Plan, among others. Departments that abide by these acts must strictly ensure these regulations for community engagement are met first. The framework outlined in this policy affords the City the opportunity to go above and beyond the minimum legislated requirements in appropriate circumstances to realize the purposes outlined above.

DEFINITIONS

- 1. Citizen:** An inhabitant or resident of the city of Vaughan. For the purposes of this policy, the terms *citizen* and *resident* can be used interchangeably.
- 2. City building:** The mindful intent to improve a city through planning and development, and supported by community engagement, to drive diversity, inclusivity, sustainability, mobility, and economic prosperity.
- 3. Community:** A group of people within an identified geographic area and/or who may share common interests or values.

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- 4. Community engagement (or public consultation or public participation or citizen engagement or public involvement):** The process of inviting the public to participate in conversations about municipal matters that interest and/or impact them for the purpose of making sustainable decisions.
- 5. Council:** Elected representatives of a community.
- 6. International Association of Public Participation (IAP2):** The preeminent international organization advancing the practice of public participation and promoting and improving the best practices associated with successful and meaningful public engagement in relation to individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.
- 7. Public:** All those who are impacted by, or may impact, the decision-making process. In a municipal context, this can mean: citizens; individuals who work in, go to school in, enjoy leisure activities in or travel through the city of Vaughan; people and organizations that own property or do business in Vaughan as well as internal stakeholders and other decision authorities who can impact the decision process.
- 8. Spectrum of Public Participation/Spectrum of Engagement:** A spectrum of participation designed by the International Association of Public Participation to assist with defining the public's role in any engagement process.
- 9. Stakeholders:** Includes individuals or groups with a vested interest in the outcome of a decision; impacted individuals, groups, communities and political entities; and individuals, groups or organizations that could be impacted by the decision-making process.

POLICY

1. Guiding Principles for Community Engagement

The following guiding principles were developed by the IAP2 to be used as a code of ethics to govern the development and execution of engagement processes. They align with and support the association's core values, which inherently define the expectations and aspirations for a community engagement process. These guiding principles help make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially impacted parties and serve to ensure and enhance the integrity of the community engagement process.

1.1. Purpose

The City supports community engagement as a process to make better decisions that incorporates the interests and concerns of affected stakeholders and meets the needs of the decision-making body.

- 1.1.1. Role of Practitioner: The City will enhance the citizens' and stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.
- 1.1.2. Trust: The City will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the engagement process among all the participants.
- 1.1.3. Defining the Public's Role: The City will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.
- 1.1.4. Openness: The City will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.
- 1.1.5. Access to the Process: The City will ensure stakeholders have fair and equal access to the community engagement process and the opportunity to influence decisions.
- 1.1.6. Respect for Communities: The City will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."
- 1.1.7. Advocacy: The City will advocate for the community engagement process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.
- 1.1.8. Commitments: The City will ensure all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.
- 1.1.9. Support of the Practice: The City will stay informed of new developments and standards in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of community engagement.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. Corporate and Strategic Communications engagement staff are responsible for:

- 2.1.1. Reinforcing the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy and Procedures and keeping it updated.
- 2.1.2. Professional IAP2 skills and knowledge development through interactive, practitioner-endorsed and IAP2-licensed training on the standards, best practices and methodology of the IAP2.
- 2.1.3. Educating City staff about the principles of, and approaches to, engagement as outlined in the policy and procedures, and providing the appropriate training, tools and supports.
- 2.1.4. Supporting staff and providing subject matter expertise and advice when planning and executing engagement activities to ensure they align with the principles and guidelines as outlined in the policy and procedures.

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2.1.5. Managing and providing oversight over the City's online engagement platform, including developing a governance model for the tool, providing training to staff on how to use the tool, assisting staff with creating and managing their project pages and assisting staff with troubleshooting.

2.1.6. Continuing to explore continuous improvement opportunities to ensure the policy and procedures evolve with the industry and the needs of the community.

2.1.7. Participating in open, constructive and respectful dialogue.

2.2. City staff are responsible for:

2.2.1. Understanding the principles of and approaches to engagement as outlined in the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy and Procedures, how it applies to the city-building process and when it is appropriate to use it.

2.2.2. Planning and executing engagement activities that align with the principles and guidelines as outlined in the policy and procedures.

2.2.3. Proactively soliciting subject matter expertise and advice from the Corporate and Strategic Communications department before a project begins to discuss planning for and executing engagement activities.

2.2.4. Ensuring consultants or other external agencies brought on to undertake engagement-related work for the City are aware of and are operating within the principles and guidelines of the policy and procedures.

2.2.5. Ensuring engagement activities are planned and executed in a timely manner to allow citizens, stakeholders and interested parties ample time to learn about and participate in an engagement process.

2.2.6. Ensuring citizens, stakeholders and interested parties have the information they require to be informed participants in an engagement process.

2.2.7. Visually presenting (when appropriate) and upholding the prescribed Rules of Engagement at in-person engagement meetings or events and using discretion when deciding to discontinue meetings or events when the actions of participants violate the Rules of Engagement and create an atmosphere that is not conducive to safe, open, inclusive and/or constructive dialogue.

2.2.8. Managing their project pages on the online engagement platform, including obtaining the appropriate training, maintaining and ensuring the upkeep of active project pages, responding to questions and comments from the online community, monitoring the activity of active projects and downloading relevant data analytic reports.

2.2.9. Ensuring relevant staff reports accurately reflect the issues, opportunities and feedback as shared by citizens, stakeholders and interested parties as part of the engagement process and are considered in the overall decision-making process.

- 2.2.10. Encouraging Members of Council to communicate about engagement opportunities, where feasible, to their constituents.
- 2.2.11. Participating as subject matter experts and support staff when requested by Council via an endorsed Member's Resolution to attend a community meeting.
- 2.2.12. Providing feedback to the Corporate and Strategic Communications department that will help strengthen the policy and procedures and ensure community engagement continues to make a meaningful impact on the decision-making process.
- 2.2.13. Budgeting for engagement materials and activities, including consultants or other external agencies brought on to undertake engagement-related work for the City.
- 2.2.14. Participating in open, constructive and respectful dialogue.

2.3. Senior Leadership Team is responsible for:

- 2.3.1. Ensuring staff are aware of the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy and Procedures.
- 2.3.2. Supporting the proper and effective application of the policy and procedures with support from the Corporate and Strategic Communications department.
- 2.3.3. Dedicating appropriate resources for executing engagement activities through the use of the policy and procedures.
- 2.3.4. Providing feedback to the Corporate and Strategic Communications department that will help strengthen the policy and procedures and ensure community engagement continues to make a meaningful impact on the decision-making process.
- 2.3.5. Participating in open, constructive and respectful dialogue.

2.4. Consultants, specialists, vendors and other external organizations undertaking the planning and execution of community engagement on behalf of the City are responsible for:

- 2.4.1. Acting as a neutral third-party.
- 2.4.2. Being informed about and understanding the City's Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy and Procedure.
- 2.4.3. Professional IAP2 skills and knowledge development through interactive, practitioner-endorsed and IAP2-licensed training on the standards, best practices and methodology of the IAP2.
- 2.4.4. Achieving licensed training in facilitation methods.
- 2.4.5. Ensuring conversations and feedback are centred on the decision to be made or the questions up for discussion.
- 2.4.6. Participating in and facilitating open, constructive and respectful dialogue.

2.5. Participants/Stakeholders are responsible for:

- 2.5.1. Being informed about and understanding the City's Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy and Procedures.
- 2.5.2. Ensuring conversations and feedback are centred on the decision to be made or the questions up for discussion.
- 2.5.3. Respecting the viewpoints of fellow citizens and stakeholders.
- 2.5.4. Participating on the online engagement platform in such a way that adheres to the Community Guidelines.
- 2.5.5. Participating in conversations within the identified timelines.
- 2.5.6. Participating in open, constructive and respectful dialogue.

3. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

- 3.1. An international standard for engagement, the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (Appendix A) is one of the pillars upon which the IAP2 global mission is built. The spectrum is used to facilitate a worldwide understanding and advancement of the practice of community engagement.
- 3.2. The City of Vaughan has adopted a modified version (Appendix B) of the spectrum (a made-for-Vaughan approach) and commits to adhering to this standard when planning for and undertaking engagement activities.
- 3.3. The spectrum is founded upon three varying levels of engagement — sharing information, collecting and compiling information and bringing people together — which effectively define the role of the City, the public, as well as the scope of participation that will drive the engagement process. At every level of the spectrum, the City will inform/communicate to ensure the public has the necessary context and background information to be informed participants in the process.

4. Online Engagement Platform

- 4.1. The City will seek a specialist provider of online stakeholder engagement services that provides software and service solutions to government, public sector and private enterprise clients.
- 4.2. Use of an online stakeholder engagement platform will aim to improve the quality of public debate and level of community involvement in public life, and ensure citizens and stakeholders have accessible and inclusive opportunities to learn about and contribute to the decisions that affect their daily lives.
- 4.3. An online engagement platform will elevate Vaughan's engagement infrastructure in a major way, expanding the City's ability to conduct digital

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engagement, which is a lasting need in public consultation but also an immediate need during COVID-19.

4.4. Use of online engagement platforms is an established and continually growing trend among North American governments with many Ontario and GTHA municipalities and nearly half of York Region opting to use this type of tool. The IAP2 also uses an online engagement platform to facilitate deliberations and community engagement. Joining these municipalities by procuring an online engagement platform means the City of Vaughan will be able to offer and contribute to a continuity of citizen experience in public engagement across all municipalities using a similar, if not the same, tool.

ADMINISTRATION

Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.

Review Schedule:	5 Years If other, specify here	Next Review Date:	January 26, 2026
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Related Policy(ies):

Related By-Law(s):

Procedural Document: PRC.19 – Stakeholder & Community Engagement

Revision History

Date:	Description:
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APPENDIX

APPENDIX TITLE: IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX NO.: A

APPENDIX					
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation					iap ² International Association for Public Participation
IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.					
					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
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APPENDIX

APPENDIX TITLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

APPENDIX NO.: B

APPENDIX

Community Engagement Spectrum

	SHARE INFORMATION	COLLECT AND COMPILE INFORMATION		BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER	
GOAL					
ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the necessary context and background information in a timely manner • Communicate in plain-language • Respond to questions for clarification • Provide additional information as needed • Report back on all outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and learn about views, ideas, concerns and expectations • Provide channels and opportunities for listening to take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect feedback on options and alternatives • Listen to and acknowledge views, ideas, concerns and expectations • Report back on all outcomes • Describe how input was considered/used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work directly with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered • Work with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are reflected in the options of alternatives developed • Describe how input was considered/used • Report back on all outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the public in various aspects • Look to the public for advice and innovation • Incorporate advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication channels are established • Impacted/interested parties feel adequately informed • Transactional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants feel heard • The City understands the community narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens are offered a high-level opportunity to contribute • Participants see their feedback in action • Participants feel heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate negative impacts • Element(s) of surprise are gone • Visible partnerships are created • Co-operation is increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and partnerships are built • Citizens/stakeholders advocate on behalf of the City • Negative impacts are reduced or eliminated

Adapted from the International Association of Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum