What We Heard
Stakeholder Panel Discussion on COVID-19 Impacts and Remote Engagement

SPC on Planning and Urban Development Committee – May 6, 2020
Committee Chair, Councillor J. Gondek

Panel Discussion Members:
1. **Derek Heric,** Engage Resource Unit, City of Calgary
2. **Fabian Neuhaus**, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, University of Calgary
3. **Chris Ollenberger**, NAIOP Calgary
4. **Jessica Revington**, outgoing University of Calgary Students Union President
5. **Gary Sarohia**, Richmond Knob-Hill Community Association
6. **Leslie Evans**, Federation of Calgary Communities
7. **Dave White**, CivicWorks
8. **Cal Schuler**, City of Calgary Advisory Committee on Accessibility
9. **Ali McMillan**, Bridgeland Riverside Community Association

Overview of Panel Discussion Format and Intent

At the 2020 May 6 meeting of Planning and Urban Development (PUD), a panel discussion was held to discuss the current COVID-19 pandemic situation and associated challenges and opportunities with respect to ongoing planning work and public engagement.

The panel consisted of nine stakeholder representatives, including members from Administration, NAIOP, the FCC, the University of Calgary, industry, and community associations.

The purpose of the panel discussion was to:
1) Bolster Administration's understanding of stakeholders' key concerns with respect to planning work during the pandemic.
2) Better understand the readiness to participate in planning and city building during the pandemic.
3) Learn how to apply our findings during the pandemic and inform new ways of fostering participation in city building.

Following the panel discussion, the input received through this process, in addition to other stakeholder feedback and best practice research, will be used to inform how to best move forward with ongoing and new policy work.

What We Heard

The panel members participated in a facilitated discussion and overall, there were a variety of opportunities and challenges shared with respect to engagement on planning and development matters during the pandemic and beyond.

The high-level themes that emerged from all of the perspectives shared include:

1. *Engagement options and barriers*

Panel members discussed that online engagement can be effective, but challenges, barriers and limitations exist. Panelists discussed the importance of two-way dialogue/ face-to-face and expressed the need to use a variety of tactics.

2. *Inclusive engagement & Increasing participation and diversity*

Panel members discussed that involvement has been limited among many specific hard-to-reach demographics and groups. Panelists indicated the need for engagement to be more inclusive and that people need to see themselves in the process, and shared specific challenges faced these groups as well as potential opportunities and proposed solutions.

3. *Public engagement process & Level of involvement*

Panel members discussed the Spectrum of Engagement and the associated levels of engagement, and the roles and responsibilities for organizers and participants. Panelists shared challenges and opportunities for improvement connected to good engagement practices and principles.

4. *Knowledge sharing*

Panel members discussed the importance of knowledge sharing and that ongoing open discussion and dialogue is critical to increase involvement, participant confidence, shared understanding and mutual trust. Panelists shared ideas for leveraging existing resources and stakeholder groups to make planning more inviting and interesting.

5. *City building & Working together*

Panel members discussed the importance of city building, and the notion of city building as a collective exercise, how work is undertaken and prioritized, who is involved and who should be involved, as well as considerations The City should keep in mind for working together moving forward.

A more detailed summary of each of the themes and sample comments associated to each theme have been provided with more detail below. A link to the session video and link to the paraphrased transcription of the discussion can be found in the Appendix.

Summary of Key Themes

Theme: Engagement options and barriers

There was a lot of discussion about how a broad range of both online and in-person participation options are desired to ensure we reach people with different needs and meet them where they are at. Currently, during the pandemic and while physical distancing measures are in place, online/digital/virtual engagement was described by many as being a robust option to ensure engagement can continue. That being said, many challenges, barriers and limitations connected to online engagement and engaging exclusively online were also raised. Moving forward, may expressed the need to continue to use a variety of in-person and online options and to further explore new alternatives and innovative options for both online and in-person engagement.

- Online engagement was noted as a key tool to support engagement during the pandemic and the preferred option for many (students/youth, families, shift workers, etc.) both now and in the future.
- Barriers related to online engagement were discussed including: online literacy, accessibility, reduced ability for organic participation, lack of true face-to-face interaction and reduced capability for organic two-way discussion.
- The need to continue to work to remove barriers and improve the overall participation experience (within both in-person and online engagement methods) was raised as an area where additional focus should be spent moving forward.
- Excitement was expressed connected to the opportunity for new and innovative alternatives and enhanced engagement options, methods and tools to emerge.

Sample comments:

- *The City is well placed to continue with engagement online.*
- *We also heard from the community that there are barriers with online literacy and accessibility. So, this is a big challenge – how do we deal with those barriers?*
- *There can be translations lost when you don't have that face-to-face in-person interaction so I think we still will need a variety of tools whenever we can reach out to those.*
- *Youth have grown up online. This is a medium that is familiar to us and that we understand. Online consultation is something that we are more than willing to engage in and adapt to.*
- *Online engagement is important in these times, but I don't think it will be able to replace in-person engagement. Specifically, with the learning curve that comes with technology.*
- *I can tell you that engaging in-person and having brainstorming sessions in-person are far superior than having them online.*
- *I think The City of Calgary in particular is well positioned to take on some new challenges with engagement.*
- *From an industry perspective, voluntary and baseline best practice engagement, there are a series of more of less robust options when it relates to digital and distanced and I think some of our clients are adapting quite well. I think there are inexpensive and easy ways of doing this. I think there are also quite expensive and enhanced ways of doing this – and other clients, depending on the scale of change, invest in that.*
- *I'm wondering going forward if we could put a system in where perhaps a public hearing or an opportunity to speak at Committee or Council and then the Clerk's Office assigns a time frame for them to either attend in person or to call in, their choice, because each person can engage in a different way.*

Theme: Inclusive engagement & Increasing participation and diversity

Interconnected in many ways to the discussion about barriers, there was a lot of discussion about how we are not seeing involvement among many specific hard-to-reach demographics and groups. Panelists indicated the need for engagement to be more inclusive and inviting to ensure a broader range and diversity of people participate in engagement opportunities. Many panelists discussed specific gaps and challenges faced by hard-to-reach groups as well as potential opportunities and proposed solutions.

- Panelists expressed the need to see themselves (specifically student/youth) in the engagement process and advocated that more work needs to be done to invite and involve hard-to-reach and marginalized populations.
- Hard-to-reach groups specifically mentioned included: marginalized populations, students/youth, cultural groups and people with disabilities.
- There was discussion about the people who often comes out to participate are primarily of a certain demographic (older, well-off, white) and although we want to hear from that segment of the population, The City needs to work to ensure we are hearing the perspectives and ideas from others beyond that group.
- The concept of universal inclusivity versus accessibility was raised as a way to reframe how we design our city and participation processes – ensuring we think beyond accessibly for people with disabilities, but rather, thinking of universal inclusivity for all upfront at the start of a program or process.
- Suggestions such as providing alternative options and incentives were raised as something that may be beneficial to ensure marginalized populations can participate.

Sample comments:

- *The key is making sure that everyone has the opportunity to engage with us. We don't want people left behind so we are figuring out different ways of getting to those people that may be behind those barriers.*
- *… until they are reached out to specifically, until they feel they are able to have a voice in the process and they can see themselves in that process, it is unlikely that youth will engage on their own.*
- *It's my perspective that there absolutely are spaces for youth to engage, they just need to be able to be supported in finding out what those spaces are and how their voices can be heard.*
- *A lot of the stakeholders that we represent are a little bit older and are not familiar with technology and that leads to trust issues with engagement.*
- *Some of the comments related to sharing information, plain language is a real big one because the organization that I work for deals with a lot of people with developmental disabilities or cognitive disabilities so accessing certain document, forms, and those types of things really has to be done in plain language.*
- *Some of the requests: plain language resources; in-person and online training; childcare, payment for participation (we have 20,000 volunteers in our network that don't get paid, but yet for equity purposes marginalized or disenfranchised folks might be needing to be compensated for their participation); reimbursement of transportation costs have been requested.*
- *When you take a look at people with disabilities, we don't have to be a certain age, we don't have to be a certain culture, it one of those groups or target populations that any one of us and any time in our life could become a part of - is that disability group.*

Theme: Public engagement process & Level of involvement

There was discussion about the engagement practices of The City, the development industry and community-based organizations with mention of how and where things have changed and improved over the years, but also where there is still room for growth and improvement.

Panelists referred to the Spectrum of Engagement (created by the International Association of Public Participation) and associated levels of engagement (inform, consult, etc.), noting that participation opportunities may be structured and look different within different levels. The roles and responsibilities of both engagement organizers and engagement participants were noted as well as topics connected good engagement practices and principles.

- Connected to good engagement practices and principles, there was discussion about a range of topics such as: stakeholder mapping, collaboration on engagement strategy development, how engagement could be undertaken differently (tools and methods), the need for iterative engagement with ongoing feedback loops and the ideal outcome of engagement.
- Additional collaboration and ongoing or circular dialogue were also brought up as areas where processes could shift to and lead to better outcomes.
- Reporting back to stakeholders through the engagement process in an iterative way and doing a better job connecting feedback and input that was provided with the considerations and actions that were taking (or explanations for why feedback could not be used if that was the case) was something that was also discussed.

Sample comments:

- *There is a difference between inform (to share and collect information) versus consult (which is really about more collaborative, involved, complex conversations). I think we need to have a conversation about that.*
- *There's some key responsibilities of industry and engagement organizers, but there's also some really important responsibilities of community actors and other stakeholders. That's a big conversation, but I wanted to emphasize the spectrum and the importance of our shared responsibilities in these processes.*
- *Even prior to COVID, changing our work lives and personal lives for everybody, I had already seen significant and very positive changes to the way The City of Calgary was engaging with their citizens and with its development community.*
- *Better outcomes are absolutely always a result of iterative feedback loops. Ideally all members are aware of how their input has been employed to shape the outcome. They understand how they've been involved in shaping the outcome and they become supporters of the direction things are going as a result of everyone coming together. I would suggest that we very seldom get to that level of engagement.*
- *Youth self-selecting out of processes, they see a lot of engagement processes that their parents, other community members are involved in – they don't see spaces for them.*
- *There's a ton of different, creative things out there that I don't think we've used within The City of Calgary yet that are digital and I am one that definitely encourages meeting people where they're at more than ever during this time.*
- *A much better approach would be if we have a circular collaboration process between the different parties. Every party has their own motivation and their own agenda, which is fair enough, but to have an ongoing discourse that is circular would probably resolve or dissolve the bomb to some extent.*
- *I think we need to think different about how we take our system and make it adaptable for all kinds of people to be able to participate to meet them where they're at.*

Theme: Knowledge sharing

A common thread through the panel discussion was the idea that ongoing knowledge sharing through open discussion and dialogue is critical to growth involvement, increase participant confidence, improve shared understanding and build mutual trust. Examples raised of how knowledge could be shared included:

- The panel itself (participants indicated they were thankful for the opportunity to participate in the panel and the desire to continue the conversation in some form was also expressed).
- Targeted training with specific stakeholder groups such as Action Dignity (and other cultural groups) as well as community association members.
- Connecting directly with community leaders such as student/youth leaders (Universities and High Schools throughout Calgary), community association boards, business improvement area representatives and community and special interest groups (such as Calgary Ability Network).
- In general, more open, transparent dialogue and discussion between all groups.

Sample comments:

- *Part of that is probably a high-level of education and knowledge transfer which should be a part of the participation process so that we have a shared platform that allows a higher level of accessibility for this.*
- *…I hold this perspective coming from a position where I've had the privilege of understanding how civic engagement works and I've felt welcome in the process of consultation engagement. I know that's not true for youth across our city.*
- *At the Federation, we've been trying to engage more cultural groups and community-based not-for-profits that serve marginalized populations. What we've heard from there members is that they're requesting customized urban planning training to get a baseline of understanding for them to be able to feel comfortable to participate.*
- *Sometimes we're going to have different tools for different groups of people and I think CAs can be a real connector at this time in terms of their knowledge of the community and those voices that maybe we're not getting.*
- *There has been a ton of discussion online within the public participation professional community about this – I've watched a ton of webinars about digital engagement in the time of COVID and there's so much to learn as we navigate this together.*
- *Trust, transparency and ease of ability to engage in those collaborative conversations and then thus the process is really important.*
- *We need to have more customized trainings for different groups to get them a base level of understanding.*
- *We've been requested to speak to Action Dignity on just how to interact with Council – what is the process, how do we talk – that kind of thing. I think they need a base of confidence or a base understanding of how our system works so they can participate more actively.*
- *Accessibility to information, also not necessarily knowing what was on the engagement portal or how to access different information.*

Theme: City building & Working together

Panelists talked about: the notion of city building as a collective exercise, how work is undertaken and prioritized, who is involved and who should be involved, as well as considerations The City should keep in mind moving forward. Panelists reflected on how things have been done in the past, discussed considerations for how things may need to change or be adjusted due to the current circumstances connected to the COVID pandemic, and shared ideas for how we may be able to shift and evolve the way we work together to discuss, plan and build our city in the future.

- The economy, economic recovery, finding the right balance, project prioritization, people's desire to continue engaging and people's wellbeing were all discussed as being important to consider as next steps are determined.
- Numerous examples were shared that provided insight into people's current realities (as students, the disabled, participants, community board members and developers) that highlighted adaptation, innovation and success in finding new ways and solutions to move forward in distanced and virtual ways.
- Many panelists shared their perspective that application reviews and approvals should be prioritized and continue during this time, but mixed opinions and perspectives were shared connected to what, when and how policy work should continue.
- The idea that we all (The City, community members, developers, professionals, youth, academics, etc.) care about our city and all have a role to play when it comes to city building was expressed through the discussion, as well as the idea that by working better together, we can build an even better city.

Sample comments:

- *The impact on the city and specifically on engagement and participation starts with the understanding that the city is really a shared good.*
- *The response to the ongoing impact to isolation is important in that we need to think about the kind of city that we want to be in a couple of months and a couple of years including the response to these new limitations that we are dealing with.*
- *Overall, we've adapted quite well from a client-project perspective and I'm excited to hear what other folks have to say today.*
- *Obviously, this is a massive change to the way that we all function and that is important to acknowledge.*
- *The key is to, as a city, foster civic discourse going forward – especially now.*
- *There needs to be an assumption of a level of trust and in a lot of ways, maybe we will never get there on the first few or first hundred few – I'm not sure what the right number is – but we can't lose sight of making sure that most people generally want to improve their city, they want to make their communities better, they want to make their homes better, they want to make their lives better.*
- *A robust engagement process must have both in-person and online and especially for the purposes of that meaningful two-way dialogue. That is what people need to be part of city building.*
- *Overwhelmingly we hear that changes to policy and some of the work to the Guidebook and the MDP and such should not be the priority right now, but rather, we all need to focus on supporting the economy and helping our citizens just get through it.*

- *I think the importance of being able to make sure that some of the policy initiatives are well understood before a decision is made on them might be some of our first objectives about how do we shift engagement patterns during this period of crisis.*

Next Steps

The Planning & Development department is constantly reviewing its engagement and communications efforts, internally with staff and externally with citizens and customers. While progress is always being made, PD is committed to continuous improvement on engagement and communications. During the COVID pandemic, there's an opportunity to gain perspective and re-evaluate these efforts, considering in-person events are not possible at this time or in the foreseeable future.

Using the themes above, we have developed some initial considerations and summarized the engagement and citizen outreach efforts already underway and how we may adapt our work during the COVID pandemic, and ultimately, improve our efforts moving forward. These have been informed by the panel conversation, in addition to other inputs and will be part of an ongoing dialogue with citizens and stakeholders. To review Administrations Considerations on What We Heard, please see Attachment 2.

Appendix: Paraphrased transcription of the Stakeholder Panel Discussion on COVID-19 Impacts and Remote Engagement

Introductory presentation by Debra Hamilton, Director of Community Planning and Kyle McManus, Acting Engage Team Lead.

To review the detailed paraphrased transcription from the panel discussion, please see below. Note that this has been paraphrased, if you would like to listen to the discussion in whole, please review the video recording of the panel discussion.

Councillor J. Gondek, Chair

Time stamp 54:04

A very big thank you to our panelists for joining us today remotely. I don't know if any of you have done a remote panel before, I certainly haven't, so thanks for joining us on this adventure. I appreciate the diversity of experience and experiences that we have with us today. Great nod of appreciation to you,

What we're trying to do today in our PUD (Planning and Urban Development) is definitely focused on Planning and Urban Development, because that is the focus of our committee, but we also play an important role in making sure that we're working with our colleagues in the different disciplines within the Corporation (The City of Calgary) so that we can ensure that we are as inclusive as we possibly can be in our collective mission to build a great city. With that, we thought it would be important to talk to our stakeholders today to find out: how did they feel about things pre-COVID (when it came to engagement), what's changed with COVID, and what do we think our future could and should look like? I will have some questions of the panelists and people can weigh in as their preference or experience dictates.

I also want to tell you a quick little anecdote. Last week, I was invited to listen to a presentation from a group of three urban studies students at the University of Calgary. The reason I am telling you this is because their presentation as a group of three was made to their instructor, myself as well as a couple of the land development industry and someone from City Administration – all of us had gone into their classroom at some point in the term to give them a presentation on what we do when it comes to City building. And I have to tell you that it was an eye opener to listed to these students tell us that they have compiled their entire presentation remotely, not being able to engage with each other in any way other than Zoom meetings, and they did the entire thing using pages and Word because that is all they had accessible to them not being able to get to the University to use other programs. My colleagues who were on that call will tell you, it was one of the most professional documents we had ever seen presented. It was from a group of third and fourth year students and they all said, we learned how to adapt to an environment that was unprecedented, but we still managed to execute on what we were supposed to do in the class and it blew me away. So, I'm just saying, it's not impossible to keep engaged at this time, but it certainly has its challenges and opportunities. With that, let's get to the business at hand here and the first question that I am going to pose to the panelists.

Tell us how you're feeling as a stakeholder at this time, during this pandemic. How do you feel that engagement has changed for you and tell us a bit about the positives and negatives associated with that?

Derek Heric (57:35)

- From my perspective as the leader of Engage at The City of Calgary, quite a bit has changed because we did a lot of in-person engagement in the past (large scale open houses, small-scale workshops, pop ups in the community, etc.) so obviously all of that has gone away, but I believe The City is well placed to continue with engagement online.
- With every project in the past 3 to 4 years there has been an online component and the uptake that we get when we go online is quite a bit more than in-person. With a really busy open house you might get a few hundred people, but online you might get ten thousand individuals inputting into an idea.
- One of the key things that I'm focusing on are the barriers to online engagement. I've been thinking a lot about that and, yes, there are barriers for some people online, there are no two ways about it. In the old days, we would tell people to go to a library and use a free computer, but you can't do that now, but we've always had barriers whether we're in-person or whether we're online.
- In-person barriers are things like working families, like myself, it is very difficult to go somewhere after hours to engage. This may open up doors for people who had barriers before and they may not have them now. There will be new barriers, we do have solutions for people (who are not wired, not online or don't have access) by calling 311 and one of the agents will walk through anything that's online that we have and get their input that way. So, we do have solutions for those barriers. Barriers have always been there, we just have to shift gears as The City to tackle those new barriers, but online really broadens our experience of engaging people. Getting the message out to people through marketing that the engagement occurring is paramount.
- Again, I see some significant challenges, but we are well placed. We have always done online engagement with all of our projects.

- We know that Calgary has an incredibly high wired rate. StatsCan says that 64 and under in Canada the market is saturated at 97.2% wired rates throughout the country. With Calgary being a younger city than most, that numbers are likely at least that high.
- We are well placed to do this. The key is making sure that everyone has the opportunity to engage with us. We don't want people left behind so we are figuring out different ways of getting to those people that may be behind those barriers.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

Thank you Mr. Heric, your closing comment is great, because that's why we have our other stakeholders with us to try and figure out what their needs are and how we can engage with them.

Fabian Neuhas (1:01:42)

- The impact on the city and specifically on engagement and participation starts with the understanding that the city is really a shared good. We at SAPL understand the city as a shared process where engagement and participation is key. The major problem at the moment is the isolation that came with the pandemic response. Physical distancing being the main key to the response to the pandemic, so the isolation that comes with this contradicts that understanding of the shared city and shared processes.
- There are some social implications that come with the isolation – how we deal with empathy, how we deal with caring for our communities, but also caring for our environment. Those are the big challenges – how can we maintain citizens' responsibility for their own environment and how can we maintain collaboration while doing so?
- I have been working with my students over the last term on a community participation project with a community in the N.E. and when the pandemic hit, we also had to change over and the students were tremendous in the way they approached this change and they did extremely good work and were very committed to making this work.
- We were engaging with this community throughout the term and the plan was to finish with a face-to-face workshop with the community, but this wasn't possible anymore and we had to change to an online format which worked extremely well. There were comments on this before that Calgary is equipped and people are up-to-date and they are ready to engage online. Within about ten days we had this platform running and the community was able to participate. We had over 1000 people participating in that online engagement process, which was amazing. We also heard from the community that there are barriers with online literacy and accessibility. So, this is a big challenge – how do we deal with those barriers?
- The other thing that we found in this very small case study is that online tools are great, they have the capacity to reach a wide audience and really showcase the connectedness of these communities, but they are very formal and controlled so what we are losing is the informal organic organization of our community participation process.
- It was commented on that trust building is more challenging online, but the effects that we usually see from participation or collaborative processes are also to be worked out.
- Processes that have to do with decision making and the building and forming of opinions are more challenging. It's great for collecting information, sharing information and

making personal statements. It's less equipped for decision-making processes and opinion forming, in my opinion.

- The response to the ongoing impact to isolation is important in that we need to think about the kind of city that we want to be in a couple of months and a couple of years including the response to these new limitations that we are dealing with. I think the participation of the broad range of our community is key and so the development of those tools is really important right now.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I really appreciate your introductory remarks and the example that you gave. It really highlights that you can engage some populations that you might not have otherwise been able to engage, but it is not the only solution. So, thank you for reminding us that there will have to be multiple ways that we have to do engagement in the future.

Chris Ollenberger (1:08:42)

- I think The City of Calgary in particular is well positioned to take on some new challenges with engagement.
- Even prior to COVID, changing our work lives and personal lives for everybody, I had already seen significant and very positive changes to the way The City of Calgary was engaging with their citizens and with its development community.
- The Engage portal continues to improve in its working relationship with those that are interested in projects.
- I am also very excited about the development mapping changes that are forthcoming where people are able to see more information that is more pertinent to the application. So, I think there are a lot of great tools that are going to be available to us.
- There can be translations lost when you don't have that face-to-face in-person interaction so I think we still will need a variety of tools whenever we can reach out to those.
- We need to make sure that while online is quite common and prevalent, there are citizens that may not have access to technology so I would suggest that the city could make available certain stations within the library system and make sure that all the tools are available to as many citizens as possible.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

It seems to be a common theme that we are not trying to replace existing pre-COVID means of engagement. We're simply trying to figure out what we've learned in this unexpected time so we can augment and bolster what we've traditionally done with some new techniques.

Jessica Revington (1:11:00)

- Speaking as a student and a youth in Calgary, to be quite frank I think the pre-COVID-19 landscape was limited for students and youth looking to interact with The City of Calgary. My background at the student's union, for example, works to engage students with municipal politics, particularly though election cycles, through our 'get out to vote' campaign. Outside of these efforts we recognize that youth are very limited in their

interactions and their overall engagement in Calgary's urban planning and development projects. That's not because we don't want to engage, we're often pressed for time and have several competing priorities that prevent us from getting engaged in some of the urban planning projects that are happening in our communities.

- Moving online in the face of COVID-19, while difficult, provides an incredible opportunity for more youth to become involved in The City's urban planning and development process.
- Youth have grown up online. This is a medium that is familiar to us and that we understand. Online consultation is something that we are more than willing to engage in and adapt to.
- Considering the fact that students and youth are the future, many students are looking for ways to get involved in the face of the lagging job market and uncertainty over what the next few months could look like.
- Despite COVID-19, there is no better time for The City of Calgary to look at how they engage youth in urban planning and development projects and use online consultation as a mechanism to engage more youth with projects that The City currently has going on in their communities.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I appreciate your comment about the fact that you've grown up online. I had to grow up super quickly online – I'm using two phones a computer and all my paper in front of me to help manage this process – so thanks for reminding us that our experiences are different and you've been able to get more engaged as a result of what we are going through.

Garry Sarohia (1:13:11)

- Online engagement is important in these times, but I don't think it will be able to replace in-person engagement. Specifically, with the learning curve that comes with technology.
- A lot of the stakeholders that we represent are a little bit older and are not familiar with technology and that leads to trust issues with engagement.
- There are also barriers for the underprivileged who cannot access computers.
- I also sit on the Westbrook multi-community plan working group and I can tell you that engaging in-person and having brainstorming sessions in-person are far superior than having them online. The results we get when you have 30 to 40 people in a room talking and breaking up in to different groups and having that live feedback – the results are definitely way better. I've tried this in Zoom and you don't get the same results.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I think you are echoing the comments that Dr. Neuhaus made about the organic nature of people actually sitting in a room and chatting with each other. I appreciate everything you had to say.

Leslie Evans (1:15:07)

- Pre-COVID, certainly our communities and other stakeholder groups that we engage with (social rec, senior groups and cultural groups) were trying to engage with some challenges through various engagements. Time, short feedback windows, uncertainty

around engagement processes for different levels of work. There was a recommendation at PUD to formalize a full engagement plan for statutory documents. Accessibility to information, also not necessarily knowing what was on the engagement portal or how to access different information. Before COVID, we've had online and in-person opportunities.

- What was really important to our members is that opportunity for that two-way conversation and having their boards heard and being able to talk through things – really important.

- That in-person piece is important. In the chat, I can see that Councillors are asking to see the faces of people talking. As a participant, it is very disconcerting not to be able to see who I am talking to and be able to see reactions.

- In terms of current state, well Calgarians are in a state of emergency and people are struggling (with working at home, having kids at home unemployment, the stresses of that) our groups are still trying to make sure that they put tools in place to meet virtually, to continue to review the day-to-day planning circulations that have come. They understand that it is critical for economic purposes – that building permits and other simple circulations must continue. We need to help industry and The City move forward. To that end, they have continued to utilize their planning committees – learning new technology, as all of us have – to engage their committees and finding new ways of reaching out to the affected party. Some still use traditional flyer drops, other figured out other electronic ways to communicate with those folks.

- Overwhelmingly we hear that changes to policy and some of the work to the Guidebook and the MDP and such should not be the priority right now, but rather, we all need to focus on supporting the economy and helping our citizens just get through it.

- At the Federation, we've been trying to engage more cultural groups and community-based not-for-profits that serve marginalized populations. What we've heard from there members is that they're requesting customized urban planning training to get a baseline of understanding for them to be able to feel comfortable to participate.

- Some of the requests: plain language resources; in-person and online training; childcare, payment for participation (we have 20,000 volunteers in our network that don't get paid, but yet for equity purposes marginalized or disenfranchised folks might be needing to be compensated for their participation); reimbursement of transportation costs have been requested.

- Our urban planners really want to try and support that further and deeper engagement of marginalized people, but to engage these folks we all need to understand and resource around the stated need to ensure that equitable participation is possible.

- Engagement going forward I feel has a new tool and a higher standard for all of us and that is called online and it is not the only tool though. A robust engagement process must have both in-person and online and especially for the purposes of that meaningful two-way dialogue. That is what people need to be part of city building.

- To be effective, I think moving forward we have to find tools that allow for a broad-base of people to be able to participate both in-person and online. We can never go back and I think we have to invest in better systems.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I greatly appreciate all of your comments. Pointing out that there's marginalized populations that have compounding effects. Your comments about plain language have been expressed numerous times.

Dave White (1:21:22)

- We need to get into a conversation about the engage spectrum and the difference between that on the end of inform versus consult. I think you can have two-way conversations digitally without in-person, but it's not to say that we're replacing – I think it's augmenting and adapting as discussed and it's is important.
- There is a difference between inform (to share and collect information) versus consult (which is really about more collaborative, involved, complex conversations). I think we need to have a conversation about that.
- My lens tends to be planning and development change application approvals focused, mostly in the established areas where this is relatively complex from a stakeholder and political perspective.
- I can tell you that my team, clients and projects have been quite resilient. We weren't entirely sure what the COVID-era would hold for distanced and digital engagement, but to our surprise and with more concentrated efforts – notices and making sure people know that change is being proposed, there are multiple distanced and digital ways of getting engaged – those things have been very important. It has been amazing to watch Administration adapt so well, as well as member-based organizations – Whether that's CAs or BIAs.
- We've had all type so web-based interactions through pre-apps (preliminary applications), CPAG (Corporate Planning Applications Group), UDRP (Urban Design Review Panel), CPC (Calgary Planning Commission), Public Hearing – you're able to engage and have good conversations through digital tools right now which is great. From an industry perspective, here is that we need, within reason, to move forward for applications for review on relatively normal time scales.
- From an industry perspective, voluntary and baseline best practice engagement, there are a series of more of less robust options when it relates to digital and distanced and I think some of our clients are adapting quite well. I think there are inexpensive and easy ways of doing this. I think there are also quite expensive and enhanced ways of doing this – and other clients, depending on the scale of change, invest in that.
- Overall, we've adapted quite well from a client-project perspective and I'm excited to hear what other folks have to say today.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I appreciate that you've reminded us that options are important. There's no one solution that's going to work and making sure that we've got a robust process and system is going to be very important.

Cal Schuler (1:25:19)

- The Advisory Committee on Accessibility is a sub-committee City Council. We are an ad-hoc group of people with lived experience or who are City departments (Roads, Engineering, etc.) that come together to review and make recommendations on issues that relate to accessibility and people with disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to

the review of major public and private projects, building, pathways, walkways, etc. We ensure the greatest level of accessibility for persons with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities are addressed. The committee also provides input and advice on how to improve our transportation services (conducting audits on LRT stations, buses, shelters) to ensure persons with appropriate access to public transit.

- Some of the things that we are dealing with now that COVID-19 is here, is a lot of the things that we did (especially with people with lived experiences) has to do with face-to-face interactions. Whether you have someone with vision loss or blind, people that need to have an interpreter beside them – how do you do that with social distancing? People who are deaf and hard of hearing and the accessibility options that go along with that.
- We can't show a PowerPoint presentation to someone who has vision loss, so that's what we do the tours and hands on so they can actually get the experience and feel the environment.
- As well, computers, depending on the type of disability you have, having access to different formats – some of the technology doesn't support drag and dictate for someone who has vision loss, so you have barriers that are added on.
- Some of the individuals that we are dealing with, work with and support (echoing some of the earlier comments) don't have access to computers or technology at home so they were going to the library to access the free computers. Now that that is taken away, a lot of these individuals self-isolated even before COVID-19, now they're feeling even more isolated because they don't have access to those things.
- There were comments earlier about opening libraries to enable access to stations in the community (as mentioned previously) that would be super.
- Some of the comments related to sharing information, plain language is a real big one because the organization that I work for deals with a lot of people with developmental disabilities or cognitive disabilities so accessing certain document, forms, and those types of things really has to be done in plain language.
- One of the benefits we've seen through COVID-19 with these Zoom meetings has decreased the amount of time that we are running around the city trying to meet with individuals independently. We're able to do that through Zoom meetings which cuts down our transportation costs, cuts down on people who might not want to be out of the community.
- Seeing faces really has an impact when you are doing that through Zoom or whether you are doing it in-person. Having access to that technology where you can actually see somebody's face on a meeting, rather than just doing a call in where you can't see their face has a real impact on somebody's isolation.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I think you've pointed out some things that many of us completely forget and overlook. I appreciate your comments about making sure that we have considered accessibility to technology and that we've considered the need for some people to have an interpreter beside them or whatever type of assistance they need that right now is prohibited by our social distancing measures. Thank you for that reminder.

Ali McMillan (1:30:47)

- I'll start off with the Hill & Knowlton survey that Administration referenced. I also read that study and found it really interesting. A key point that resonated with me is that only 2 per cent of the population suggested that their life had no change whatsoever. Obviously, this is a massive change to the way that we all function and that is important to acknowledge.
- There has been a ton of discussion online within the public participation professional community about this – I've watched a ton of webinars about digital engagement in the time of COVID and there's so much to learn as we navigate this together.
- Good engagement principles really need to be the thread throughout whether it is online or offline.
- There are limits to every type of engagement that we could possibly do, so I think it's a great time to add more tools for engagement to our toolbox.
- I appreciate that Dave referenced the Engage Spectrum and the variety of different tools that we are going to use at different levels of the Engage Spectrum.
- There's a ton of different, creative things out there that I don't think we've used within The City of Calgary yet that are digital and I am one that definitely encourages meeting people where they're at more than ever during this time.
- I would also say that engagement was the number one issue for community associations and those that I work with on the Inner-city Working Group prior to COVID. There was a lot of challenges for communities before and I would say there are definitely the same if not more now. I'd like to flag for folks that lots of our CA buildings are shut down, we've had to let go employees, we have no budget realities, so there have been some emergent issues that have sort of floated to the top for those of us on CA boards that we're now dealing with on a relatively urgent basis that we weren't dealing with before.
- People's time has done a 180 in terms of where planning ranks on the hierarchy.
- We have a very ambitious work plan for The City, before this happened. CAs acknowledge that there is a lot of uncertainty around the economy and the building industry is one of the things that is still functioning and I think people definitely have an understanding that we want to keep those things that are going, going and find a way to do that.
- Some of the other large, transformative projects that were happening before, I think people were fairly exhausted then and I think now they're definitely feeling worried about where the future is going to be with engagement on those topics.
- We are all the elite who are sitting here designing this or talking about this. We still have jobs or time or a pecuniary interest to participate in this panel so I think that we do need to consider where some people that are more marginalized at this time are at. I personally don't have a sick relative or an elderly person to care for at this time, but there are a lot of those considerations that we need to think about.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair)

I appreciate the reminder of the fact that this is a very difficult situation for people who are caring for others and where does planning land on their priority list. Thank you for that reminder. I think the thing that we're trying to accomplish today is be respectful of anyone's situation at any time, I think COVID has just been a big reminder for all of us that engagement should be flexible, it should have a lot of options and it should allow people to engage in a way that gives them the ability to still live their life. Thank you for that reminder.

Councillor G.C. Carra (1:35:18)

Question for the panel:

- I'm gonna just throw a bomb right into the middle of the panel I think, because I think there's a very good discussion, we've got some great perspectives coming and we've started to touch upon some things. But I'm touch on, as background, we've talked about – Why are we engaging? I'm going to be provocative about the baseline of why we engage from different perspectives and challenge the panel regarding how good we are at getting to the next level in non-COVID times and ask the question: How do we get to the better level in COVID times?
- When the development industry talks about engagement, what they're trying to do is remove barriers to their approvals. They need to get through it and they've learned that a certain amount of engagement removed those barriers. I would suggest that their first concern is removing barriers from the perspective of the regulator and their second objective is to remove objections within the community, but they'll always take one over two. From the perspective of the regulator, our job as The City – as engagement is something that we say is important – is to really risk-manage the fact that we've engaged or not and to check that box. From the position of the community is a very diverse thing and I think it approaches the proposition of engagement regarding development propositions and neighbourhood change along a spectrum. On one end, you have people who are interested in their neighbourhood and are interested in improving the outcomes in their neighbourhood, you have people who are interested in what's happening and they want to learn. At the other end of the spectrum, you have people who are there to resist neighbourhood change or to participate in an active resistance. I would say that engagement is a forum where those different groups, and potentially more, come together in a state of conflict.
- The ideal for engagement is that you actually get through those initial situations and you move to an environment where you're actually improving projects, where you're educating people across the spectrum and you're creating better outcomes. Better outcomes are absolutely always a result of iterative feedback loops. Ideally all members are aware of how their input has been employed to shape the outcome. They understand how they've been involved in shaping the outcome and they become supporters of the direction things are going as a result of everyone coming together. I would suggest that we very seldom get to that level of engagement. How are we going to do it in COVID? I'm throwing that bomb into the panel. Anyone want to respond?

How do we get to the next level anytime, but specifically now in COIVD? I think everyone is willing to default to what they need to get done, not what they should get done.

Fabian Neuhaus (1:39:15)

- That's a little bit what I meant what I said before that we have to respond to the question – What is the city we want to be in the future? – right now. I very much agree with the observation that Councillor Carra has just put forward.
- I think to defuse the bomb, maybe it is about moving away from directional engagement where a certain party is engaging with other parties to solve a specific problem (whether that is a developer who engages with the community to get approval for something or

whether that's the regulator to engage to achieve another development). A much better approach would be if we have a circular collaboration process between the different parties. Every party has their own motivation and their own agenda, which is fair enough, but to have an ongoing discourse that is circular would probably resolve or dissolve the bomb to some extent. Part of that is probably a high-level of education and knowledge transfer which should be a part of the participation process so that we have a shared platform that allows a higher level of accessibility for this.

- The key is to, as a city, foster civic discourse going forward – especially now.

Ali McMillian (1:42:57)

- Happy to have Chris and Dave speak as well, I saw that they wanted to speak, and I thought the previous speaker had a great point about collaboration. I think that's just what we need to do. If we're applying new tools, we need to try and collaborate and make sure those individual stakeholders are reached because stakeholders are all going to have different needs and when we go to do engagement in the community, we're going to say: Who needs to be engaged on this? How is it best to reach them? Sometimes we're going to have different tools for different groups of people and I think CAs can be a real connector at this time in terms of their knowledge of the community and those voices that maybe we're not getting. Can we use the condo boards, can we use the Business Improvement Association, maybe there's places where we have to meet people physically in locations where they're going to be – which is more public spaces these days. I think we're going to have to be collaborative in what our approach is moving forward in order to address that.
- I think there is a bunch on the agenda before this, and this is a later item, so I just want to make sure that that we're going to cover the full scope of the conversation.

Chris Ollenberger (1:43:18)

- I think Councillor Carra has some really interesting thoughts and probably is intentionally goal stretching in a lot of ways and we do need to get there to have that future focus as well.
- I would say that perhaps some of his statements might not be universally applicable between all developers. For example, we're in it to remove the barriers and the objections of communities. I think probably Dave will share the same perspective that I have in that I actually do reverse that order and restate them. Generally, and this does also depend on the size of the application, we're looking to learn from the community about concerns they have, valued critiques, all that good stuff because consensus and idea building can usually lead to a better project. There will need to be a point in time in which we may not be making as much process as we'd all like to see and say it's time to move forward one way or another – that's what Council, CPC and Admin help shepherd that conversation along.
- I rarely find a developer any more, unless they are exceptionally old school, that is just in it to remove barriers and get through it. It can be a very valuable learning exercise that improves the project in many ways. Most developers, we're talking about a lot of money in a lot of ways, so they want to make the best project that they can. It's not about making the most profit they can, because realistically the profit levels don't vary a whole lot in many cases, but they do want to make a reasonable return and make the best

project they can because leaving a good project behind will lead to better opportunities down the road.

- I think we need to make sure that we're not approaching things through an older paradigm that may not reflect the shift in development approach that The City has been championing through things like the Guidebook for Great Communities, the Development Map initiatives, the Engage portal. I think they are trying to lead everybody: developers, communities, City Admin to be more inclusive and participatory and I think nothing but positive will come out of that for sure.

- We all need to let go of some of those paradigms if we're going to work collaboratively together, especially if we're including virtual tools. There needs to be an assumption of a level of trust and in a lot of ways, maybe we will never get there on the first few or first hundred few – I'm not sure what the right number is – but we can't lose sight of making sure that most people generally want to improve their city, they want to make their communities better, they want to make their homes better, they want to make their lives better. If we all focus on that I think a lot of suggestions, inclusions and critiques could be highly valuable.

Dave White (1:46:38)

- Thank you for the opportunity to address Councillor Carra's bomb. I think it's provocative and I think it's a good place to start this discourse. I agree with a lot of what Chris just said, so I'm not going to repeat that, I think it's really important, especially around planning and development change applications. Yes, there is an element of de-risking, but we have to really be clear about the spectrum and I think a lot of us understand what we're talking about – that difference between informing on one end and consulting on the other. They are all forms of engagement, they are important, but informing (that sharing and collecting) it can be a two-way conversation, but it's not co-design. Applications with change proposition are not blank slates, they are balancing many factors from policy and context to the financial feasibility and there are stakeholder considerations that need to be part of that as well of course. There are a lot of folks with local knowledge and insights and that's why you're in that inform space. For consulting, when we're talking about more complex and collaborative conversations, there's a distinct difference and there's some important things that require different tactics and tools – we can get into that. The other thing I wanted to add here, especially to address Councillor Carra's bomb so to speak, reflecting on this time demonstrates that everyone needs to up their game and that's industry, as well as community actors. I think a lot about that threshold of responsibility conversation that really considered thought leaders bring up when you talk about engagement. There's some key responsibilities of industry and engagement organizers, but there's also some really important responsibilities of community actors and other stakeholders. That's a big conversation, but I wanted to emphasize the spectrum and the importance of our shared responsibilities in these processes.

Jessica Revington (1:49:17)

- When it comes to the perspective that youth have on engagement and planning and development, direct outreach and engagement with youth is key. Youth self-select out of

the type of consultation and engagement because they don't see why they should be involved or see how a project directly impacts them.

- Do I think these projects apply to youth, absolutely! I think that youth should be more engaged in the consultation and development of the structure of the projects that will be built in this city in their lifetime and that they will hopefully use at some point.
- That being said, I hold this perspective coming from a position where I've had the privilege of understanding how civic engagement works and I've felt welcome in the process of consultation engagement. I know that's not true for youth across our city.
- When I'm looking to engage with youth on campus, in my role as president, my work with peers on projects that are important to them has helped me discover that youth need to see themselves and their needs reflected in a consultation process. Youth want to be included and part of getting to that next level, that Councillor Carra mentioned, is directly reaching out to the spheres they're in, to the spaces that they feel comfortable in and brining that consultation to them so that they can engage.
- Youth self-selecting out of processes, they see a lot of engagement processes that their parents, other community members are involved in – they don't see spaces for them. It's my perspective that there absolutely are spaces for youth to engage, they just need to be able to be supported in finding out what those spaces are and how their voices can be heard.

Cal Schuler (1:51:15)

- From a person with disabilities perspective and maybe of an older population, one of the things that we have to take a look at, maybe with The City moving forward, is to take a look at that whole concept of inclusion versus accessibility. When we're talking about inclusive design it also refers back to universal design which means that were designing things, that consider from the very beginning, how something might be universally useful or enjoyable for as many individuals and possible, rather than an after though of accessibility – which traditionally means making stuff with special considerations for people with disabilities.
- I think if we can go forward – whether that be programs, services, the build environment, transportation services, communication services – we can take that concept of going right from the very beginning of making it inclusive for as many people as possible (rather than hanging that tag line of being accessible) – I think that would go a lot further.

Leslie Evans (1:52:45)

- I just wanted to say a couple of things. First, thank you Chris I think the intent of all participants all stakeholders is really to try and build a great city for everyone.
- I posted the IAP2 levels of public participation (the inform, consult, involve, etc.) so we all know what Dave might have been referring to.
- I wanted to focus a little bit on something Councillor Carra mentioned, which was that pre-COVID, we may not have done a very good or we had flaws in our engagement process (all of us – whether we are talking about The City's engagement, industry or community engagement) we all weren't at our best game necessarily on everything.
- Going forward I really think there really is an opportunity to be more collaborative and to really work on that engagement plan and being able to use these different tools and to be thoughtful and intentional about how to include and how to make this more

accessible. And yes, there'll be failures, but we need to invest in this together. I don't think we can just go forward knowing that we were flawed and 'hey this is better than anything, let's just push forward'. I think we do have to take time and say – How can we make this better?

- COVID is upping all of our games in so many different facets of our lives and I think we have to do that.
- I'd also like to just make a comment about how our communities are volunteers. They are doing this, whether they are coming from Community Associations or other stakeholder groups, they're doing this on a volunteer basis so they have an added responsibility of understanding and learning about the topics and investing that time before they can actually feel comfortable to participate.
- Trust, transparency and ease of ability to engage in those collaborative conversations and then thus the process is really important.
- I want to remind us that we are dealing with a stakeholder group of volunteers, their time, they are not paid to do this and we have to consider that in our approach going forward, but they want to be engaged and they need to be involved in a two-way conversation.

Councillor D. Farrell (1:56:02)

I actually have quite a few questions. Maybe not all of them are for panel members, some maybe for Administration, but I'll just pose them and I don't expect answers to all of them, but I think they are important to talk about.

I see this remote engagement that we've been doing as an excellent opportunity to build on the foundation of in-person engagement when we start easing restrictions and get to some semblance of normal. I don't see us ever going back, this will always be part of our engagement and an option. What I'm wondering and perhaps we can have our youth member, Ms. Revington and the representative for the Committee for Accessibility.

We want to improve diversity, we have a very difficult time engaging with a diverse population and we often see people from a certain demographic – their usually white, their usually older, their usually better off. How do we improve the diversity of participation with gender, age, culture? What do we need to do now in order to let those populations know we want to hear from them?

Jessica Revington (1:57:47)

- Thank you Councillor Farrell for your question. That's a question that we, when we're talking about students, face quite frequently. How do we engage a better diversity of people on the issues that are important to youth, are important to our stakeholders?
- I think when it comes to youth, and specifically students, I think a lot of students are interested in engaging, are interested in being part of a conversation about what their spaces look like, about what their communities look like. It comes back to that idea of students and youth self-elect out of the process. They see these consultation processes as being dominated by the groups that you mentioned – people that come from stronger socio-economic backgrounds, people that comes from backgrounds of privilege where

being part of these consultations on a volunteer basis is something that they just are accustomed to naturally. Students normally do not fall within that group.
- When I've seen over the past year, during my time at the student's union, is that reaching out to the community leaders and the student leaders that are across our city – whether they're at Mount Royal University, whether they're at SAIT, whether they're at the University of Calgary – is really the key to engaging with students on projects that effect our city in a variety of ways.
- Students come from all over our city, they live in all the different communities across our city. They have investment and interest in the projects that are being developed, but until they are reached out to specifically, until they feel they are able to have a voice in the process and they can see themselves in that process, it is unlikely that youth will engage on their own. Unless they come from backgrounds where that is something that they're already accustomed to.
- I think if you're reaching out to groups in post-secondary institutions across Calgary, from high schools across Calgary, you're much better able to directly engage with youth, especially with youth that are already accustomed to an online consultation system to online discussions. There's a lot of potential in the youth in our city and directly reaching out to them is one of the best ways to bridge that gap between that gap that we find between the people that we want to consult with and the people that actually come to the consultations.

Cal Schuler (2:01:32)

- I think regarding people with disabilities, the older population, some of the way that you can probably best engage to get feedback or communicate with these individuals is to, first of all there are a number of our organizations out there that represent certain target populations, certain cultural groups. I also encourage you to contact those individuals. There's some umbrella groups out there like the Calgary Ability Network which houses a number of different organizations – you can do consultations and things like that. I do agree that computer networking (whether it be Zoom, Microsoft Team, or any of the other ones) are going to be quite the norm nowadays. We are actually having to adjust our systems right now, the way we provide our services, because normally we would do it face-to-face whereas now we are actually encouraging more people or asking people that we provide services to that are actually really keen and really excited about these types of events.
- Again, it comes back to people having the technology, the equipment to actually be able to participate in these types of activities that reduce that sense of isolation. Having equipment, getting that in people's hands, getting them the training they need, and just the experience they need to participate is one of the ways that we're going to best engage people with disabilities.
- When you take a look at people with disabilities, we don't have to be a certain age, we don't have to be a certain culture, it one of those groups or target populations that any one of us and any time in our life could become a part of - is that disability group.

Leslie Evans (2:03:42)

- I would like to say to Councillor Druh Farrell that I know you are very frustrated by the white, middle-aged or older people coming before you to present at Council.

Councillor D. Farrell
- I'm not frustrated that they're coming I'm frustrated that those are the only ones that we see so I think that needs to be reworded. I'm not frustrated that people show up, I'm frustrated that only certain people show up.

Leslie Evans
- If I could reflect on that, and thank you for that clarification, I think (and I'm going to call out a systems problem), your meetings are during the day, during the workday. For a lot of people, and it doesn't matter what group you come from (and it is more complicated for marginalized populations because they're work days can be evenings, during the nighttime, they do overnight shifts, they do shiftwork) so it's a problem in the sense of the time of Council meetings. Of course, that's a structure, a system, but I'm wondering, I'm going to pose a solution and I've seen it happen already in this new online system – where people can sign up to talk. I'm wondering going forward if we could put a system in where perhaps a public hearing or an opportunity to speak at Committee or Council and then the Clerk's Office assigns a time frame for them to either attend in person or to call in, their choice, because each person can engage in a different way. Also, what kind of supports they need – translation, assistance of any kind. The Clerk's Office can organize for that and give people that window. Then they don't have to give up their entire day of work or childminding or whatever their work is. Rather they have that window where they choose the way they wish to participate in-person or online. I think we need to think different about how we take our system and make it adaptable for all kinds of people to be able to participate to meet them where they're at.
- We need to have more customized trainings for different groups to get them a base level of understanding.
- We've been requested to speak to Action Dignity on just how to interact with Council – what is the process, how do we talk – that kind of thing. I think they need a base of confidence or a base understanding of how our system works so they can participate more actively.
- The reason why we have a lot of privileged people is because they can afford to take the time off or they're retired so we need to adapt the system to meet people where they're at.

Gary Sarohia (2:06:52)

- If we want to reach a more diverse background, and if those are our stakeholders, we should really identify places where we can reach them – and that's not necessarily the places we're targeting now. We need to be more flexible with our engagement areas – whether that is going to cultural centers, whether that going to disability outreach programs, whether that's reaching out to community leaders – to get more engagement.
- In line with that we probably need simpler language because a lot of the things we talk about is complicated. Having simpler language or educators to convey that.
- Also, multiple areas for them to reach back, a loop back system, a system they know if they provide feedback, it's just not going anywhere no one's listening to them. That they are being listened to and it's either being considered or not being considered for some certain reason. They have that assurance that if they spend that time, that it's actually going somewhere.

- I think this is a great place where technology may fall into place, where we have that online component where they can use that to provide feedback.

Derek Heric (2:08:46)

- I appreciate all the feedback we're getting on how we can include more people. We're willing to work with people on that going forward for sure because I know it's a difficult question.
- Just so people are aware, at the Engage Resource Unit at The City, we have created something called the Inclusive Engagement Guide that we did over a several-year period that takes a lot of this into account. We've done a lot of thinking on how we can include more people, youth, disenfranchised, all sorts of folks.
- We took that and we used some of the in the North Hill planning concepts so that we could test out what would achieve and how we could move forward.
- Really appreciate all the comments and taking lots of note and we are obsessed really with how to hit those hard to reach folks and how we could expand that in this difficult time.

Fabian Neuhaus (2:20:02)

- I very much appreciate the question and the concerns that participation is still not accessible to some of the groups. I think in light of the current circumstances, maybe the question has to be rephrased, I don't know how, but I think if we just continue with the concerns that we had pre-COVID with what participation is and how we operate I don't think we can really address the problems that we're seeing now.
- The implications of the physical distancing and the isolation of the population in their homes is not very well at this point, but there could be a dramatic impact on how people care about their communities, how they are committed to the city as a whole. So, the kinds of questions that they may want to discuss might be totally different. The changes to the everyday for the population might also impact the way we do participation. Maybe the office hours for these sessions don't play such a dramatic role anymore because a lot of people are now unemployed. So, they might be able to engage in a very different setting. There might be opportunities emerging was well as additional problems popping up.

Councillor D. Farrell (2:12:08)

I think I'll limit my questions and maybe I'll just pose some areas for further thought and maybe Ms. Hamilton could comment on where we go from here, and you Chair. It's obvious that we have a new opportunity to engage in a new way. We've got attention from groups that we don't normally here from. Online engagement can be very two-dimensional and what we're missing is that conversation. What we're missing, I think, through online engagement is about how to get excited about the potential for your city. What is the opportunity here for Calgary? I don't know how you can inject that kind of conversation and that 'how do we make Calgary better?' inspiration into online engagement. So, that's a challenge, but we need to figure that one out. People who are unable to attend, and there are many many people, personally engagement session, are missing out on that conversation so how do you manufacture it online? Any thoughts on that? If you don't have an answer right now, I think that's an important question for the future. That's for Administration to consider.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair) (2:13:58)

- I'm going to step in here and highlight a couple of things. There were a couple of questions in the chat that I will highlight.
  - Panel question: Asking for clarification about what is being done with this information.
  - Answer: This is intended to guide which items in the planning process are currently moving forward and whether this is actually going to dictate the type of engagement that we do on items that we have in the hopper right now.
- What I'm going to tell you is this, we didn't know what the result of today's conversation would be. We didn't know what kinds of thoughts people were going to come with. This was an introductory way to find out what's on people minds, where do we have some common thinking and where are the gaps.
- There's been a lot of things brought up by members of the panel that people had not considered. I think the most important thing that we are going to take away from today, for Administration, is trying to put together the thoughts that panelists had as well as the questions that Committee posed.
- Councillor Farrell, you asked if this panel will convene again. I think it's going to be important to convene stakeholder again into the future. I don't know what that's going to look like. We're going to have to step away from this and reflect on what was successful and what could have been done differently.
- If the panelists and Committee will allow Administration to go back and think about how this went and what we need to do moving forward, that would be great. I would suggest that Administration will probably come back with some sort of a summary indicating what we took away from today and what we need to do moving into the future. I believe that's how we'll handle it. Is that fair Councillor Farrell?

Councillor Farrell (2:15:45)

- That makes sense to me. My thinking is that we don't know how long we'll be operating remotely and some of the upcoming policies are absolutely necessary for the economy. If we're focusing on the economy, I hope we're focusing on more than that. Some of these policies are necessary both to advance our existing policy, but also for the economy.
- I do think this Committee needs to figure out a way to move forward with a lot of our big policies in a way that fulfills our engagement obligations and gets the best ideas forward.
- We already have the starting point, we have the MDP (Municipal Development Plan). How do we advance the MDP through some of the work that we're doing right now?
- I don't want to delay 18 months if it takes that long to get a vaccine or longer before we move forward with some of these important policies.

Ali McMillan (2:17:33)

- I just wanted to emphasize the economy again. I feel like we're getting into a lot of minutia which is fine amongst this group, as I said who are rather privileged group to be having this conversation. I would just like to emphasize that within my own planning committee that we had an online meeting last night. There were lots of positives – we

had developers logging in, we had neighbours logging in, but I also did have several committee members who were not in attendance due to issues at their workplace.

- I think we're going to have a firm conversation at some point about, as Councillor Farrell brought up, is this the time for large policy items that are impacting the next 40 years of Calgary when this is a one on 100 pandemic situation.
- I do think it's a great opportunity to do some work and get some policy firmed up. I'm not suggesting any stoppages, I'm suggesting time should be spend collaborating and making the Guidebook, the local area plans, more robust and getting some of the clarification of uncertainty that community members have expressed in the past.
- The reality is, for most people, the policy stuff is not on their priority list right now.

Councillor J. Gondek (chair) (2:19:10)

- That is a fair comment. I believe that people's priorities are everything is going on in their home right in front of them and all of this stuff in ancillary and they're trying to sort out where it lands on the list of things they can manage right now. So, thank you for that reminder.
- One more request to speak and just before I go to Mr. Ollenberger, I'm going to make a recommendation that we try to wrap this up in the next five minutes or so because I want to respect the fact that we told panelists that we wouldn't be longer than 90 minutes. I appreciate all of you hanging on. We'll try to bring this to a quick close.
- We'll get Mr. Ollenberger to weigh in and then I'm summarize what we're going to do from here.

Chris Ollenberger (2:20:02)

- I just wanted to follow up on a couple of comments that have been said about the bigger policy initiatives. There's a lot of really good validity to that – there is a lot on people's minds, some of those policy initiatives are broad reaching. I would also say that some of those policy initiatives are broadly misunderstood in some corners as well.
- How do we correct that? How do we better inform? How do we educate? It depends on the circumstances of course that we use these virtual tools and other initiatives for.
- One of the things that I wanted to highlight is, and I'm sure the member of Administration are thinking this too, is how do we not prolong an era of: Where are we? Where are we going? What is the uncertainty?
- There's bene a lot of work to bolster and better define and support some of the initiatives that were outlined in the MDP so many years ago that a prolonged period of uncertainty probably also wouldn't be helpful.
- There's a heck of a tension and balance to be found there and I think it's important that we have a good discussion about: What pieces could move forward? What pieces could wait? What pieces simply can't wait or simply can be shelved? There's a lot of different things going on there. I think the importance of being able to make sure that some of the policy initiatives are well understood before a decision is made on them might be some of our first objectives about how do we shift engagement patterns during this period of crisis.

Councillor J. Gondek (2:21:51)

- Ms. Hamilton or Mr. McManus, do you have anything that you wish to add at this point? No, okay.
- What we'll do is allow Administration to go back and summarize all of the things that we've heard from Committee and the panel members today and then come back to us with that summary so we can determine what we might do into the future.
- What's happening right now is that every chair of a standing policy committee is evaluating whether to move forward with that committee and which items need to move forward and which ones can be put on hold until a later date.
- I think one of the most important things that we will need to do as Planning & Urban Development is to keep this type of conversation going so that there's a comfort level with what we're doing to move certain things forward and what things can wait, based on feedback from all of the stakeholder groups.
- Ms. McMillian, you mentioned the economy a couple of times and I wholeheartedly agree that we have to have a focus on that. At the same time, we need to make sure that we're appreciating the social supports that people may or may not have at this time and people's mental wellness. Where they're at, to use a term that one of you mentioned, where is this on their priority list? I think we're trying to be compassionate in the way that we're trying to move forward. I really think the biggest things we're trying to do is take the disruption that's been forced on us by COVID-19 and really reconsider: how we evolve, the way that we engage with stakeholders, as well as the processes and practices that we currently have in place, so that we can get better at being a more inclusive and innovative city.
- Just to give you a snapshot of some of the things you've said that I know Administration will take away.
  - You've talked about a spectrum of engagement, not just one single process.
  - There was a lot of conversation about inviting new stakeholders who have previously been marginalized and people need to see themselves in the processes.
  - There's a social element of human engagement. It's important to see faces and gauge the reactions of people that you're speaking with.
  - Appreciating that change is difficult. Any time we do engagement, it must be a patient process.
  - Options, that's what we're talking about today. No one is proposing to replace the way we've done engagement, we're looking at how we evolve it.
  - This conversation around a two-way street is so important. The fact that it's give and take that will really transform any ideas that we have – getting into the best option.
  - We talked about being an inclusive city that considers universal design.
  - There was a point about knowledge transfer which I want to highlight. It's not just a matter of educating people that may not know processes, you have to transfer your knowledge as well. That's a completely different process than handing out something that informs someone.
  - City building – being the intersection of people and places. I think that's been a message that's been delivered loud and clear today. How do we create a better city that engages people in the places that we're trying to build for them?

- I think there's a lot of work to do moving forward and this was an excellent start. So thank you to all of the panelists: Dr. Neuhaus, Mr. Heric, Mr. Ollenberger, Ms. Revington, Mr. Sarohia, Ms. Evans, Mr. White, Mr. Schuler, Ms. McMillan – thank you so much for giving us your time today in this very weird way. We appreciate everything that you had to say today and we will come back with something meaningful from this.
- With that I believe Councillor Farrell, you wanted to move the recommendations?

Councillor Farrell (2:25:50)

- I do. Thank you chair for putting this together. It's been a helpful discussion that's just the start of something.
- As far as these big policy, like the multi-community plans for the northwest, we're pretty much finished the engagement and ready to go to Council so I hope that we don't delay all the big projects, because this might be delayed for some time and The City needs to keep moving. It's a matter of balancing.
- I also want to urge the members of Administration to look at – should we be expanding the panel membership? Are we missing some people? I think we may be missing certain populations that we want to see engaged more frequently.
- With that, thank you, and I'll move to receive for information.

Councillor J. Gondek (2:26:52)

Committee, the recommendations are before you. Is there anyone opposed to the recommendations? Hearing no opposition, this item has been moved and with that we are at the end of our meeting.