

## **ACTION PLAN 2015-2018 CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement strategy, approved by Council in 2013 November, enabled Calgarians the opportunity to provide their input on how The City should prioritize spending to continue to move The City towards achievement of long-term goals. The strategy included a large outreach initiative through a multi-channel conversation platform, creating opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to participate digitally and in their communities around Calgary.

### **ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That Council receive this report and verbal presentation for information.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

On 2013 November 18, Council approved C2013-0709 Engage Strategy for Business Planning & Budgeting for 2015-2018 with the decisions that Council:

1. *Receive this report for information;*
2. *Approve the adoption of Option C (Comprehensive, Outcome-based Engagement Strategy) to direct the Engagement Process for BPBC4; and*
3. *Forward the one-time operating budget request of \$550,000 to be considered in the 2014 Budget Adjustment Package to be funded through the Fiscal Stability Reserve.*

On 2013 November 25, Council approved the adjustments to the 2014 Business Plans and Budgets, including amendment as follows:

*That Council approve an increase of \$550,000 in one-time operating budget expenditure for the Chief Financial Officer's Department, Program 781 in 2014, to be funded by the Fiscal Stability Reserve via General Revenue, Program 860.*

MOTION ARISING, Moved by Councillor Demong, Seconded by Councillor Colley-Urquhart, that with respect to Report C2013-0709, Council directed:

*Administration to return to a 2014 January Strategic Planning Meeting of Council, with a work plan for an engagement strategy with the goal of enabling citizens and stakeholders to participate in identifying priorities for spending and service delivery for 2015-2018.*

On 2013 December 10, Council approved the recommendations of PFC2013-0737, including:  
*Approve the Process for Business Planning and Budget Coordination (2015-2018), including the framework and timelines described in the Attachment.*

On 2014 January 14, Council heard the verbal presentation and adopted:  
*Receive for information the "Engagement Strategy for Action Plan 2015 – 2018" verbal presentation.*

On 2014 April 7, Council heard the verbal presentation C2014-0305 and adopted:  
*Received for information the "Action Plan Engagement – Preliminary Results" (Verbal).*

### **BACKGROUND**

The *engage!* Policy CS009 states, in part: *"The City of Calgary (Council and Administration) recognizes that decisions are improved by engaging citizens and other stakeholder groups, and*

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*commits to conduct transparent and inclusive engagement processes that are responsive and accountable.*” *Action Plan 2015-2018* embraced these engage beliefs and commitments, and developed a comprehensive, inclusive, and multiple-opportunity approach to engaging citizens and stakeholders, focused on City outcomes and strategies. Lessons learned from previous engagement processes also informed the development of this program, including:

- Allow more time for Council and Administration to review and reflect on final input;
- Provide background context information to enable meaningful and informed input;
- Leverage existing City research and engagement results, as well as industry, community, and trend information; and
- Conduct more in-depth analysis, grouping, and review of input (especially open-ended responses) to enhance usability of results.

Council approved the engagement option that capitalized on existing data, information, and expertise, utilized multiple channels to the largest extent, and would result in comprehensive, focused input to support Council’s decision-making process.

Citizens and stakeholders require background and awareness information to be able to provide knowledgeable and informed input. A comprehensive “Budget Kit” was developed to inform citizens about City services on a department-by-department basis. High-level budget information for each business unit was included, as well as translation of this budget information into the average household’s annual tax bill information. This information has been made available electronically on the [calgary.ca/actionplan](http://calgary.ca/actionplan) website, and in print form distributed through libraries, recreation facilities, Councillors’ offices, and at in-person engagement events.

The key objectives of *Action Plan 2015-2018* comprehensive and inclusive engagement program were to:

- Ensure broad awareness of the opportunities to participate;
- Enable input through multiple channels and tactics;
- Go ‘to where the people are’ through existing community events and locations where citizens and stakeholders gather;
- Communicate ‘what we heard’ back to participants, and identify what will be done with their input; and
- Identify how the input made a difference to decisions being made.

The *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement program focused on these engagement objectives through an extensive marketing and communication campaign to inform citizens and stakeholders about the various engagement opportunities. The release of ‘what we heard’ is being presented to Council through a report and verbal presentation, and to citizens and stakeholders through a press release, media stories, and other communication activities. In addition, the complete engagement results will be posted on the [calgary.ca/actionplan](http://calgary.ca/actionplan) website.

On 2014 May 5, Council Priorities will be finalized, with reflection and consideration of citizen and stakeholder input. Departments will then develop their business plans and budgets, identifying how they will support the achievement of Council Priorities, as well as illustrating how citizen input was considered in the development of strategies and actions for 2015-2018.

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The *Action Plan 2015-2018 Engagement Results* report and appendices in the Attachment provide extensive analysis and details of what we heard from citizens and stakeholders in the engagement program.

### **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

The *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement program provided opportunities for all Calgarians to participate if they chose. The broad marketing and communication campaign extended the reach of the opportunities, through initial 'teaser' advertisements, promotion through multiple print media, television, ethnic radio, social media, and interior posters and exterior advertising panels on Transit buses and LRT cars and platforms. In addition, ads were placed in over 120 community newsletters, on digital display units in public facilities, posters distributed to public libraries and recreation facilities, and information disseminated through stakeholder networks of City partners and agencies (e.g. Federation of Calgary Communities and Calgary Economic Development Authority). The City's internal communications channels were used to engage staff as well.

In the marketing and communication world, reach and frequency are the two most important measured variables used to determine the effectiveness of a marketing campaign. 'Reach' refers to the total number of different people exposed to a message, and 'frequency' is how many times they saw the message. The more times a viewer sees the ad, the chance of their response increases. It is estimated that roughly 21 million impressions of the *Action Plan* marketing collateral were circulated to (or 'reached') Calgarians for information about the opportunities to participate and learn more about The City of Calgary.

The actual awareness (or 'consumption') of these messages about the *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement opportunities is estimated at approximately 600,000. Actual clicks onto promoted ads, and re-tweeting of messages about Action Plan, are estimated at approximately 35,000 participants, followed by direct involvement through online and face-to-face engagement activities totalling over 7,000 participants.

The Attachment details the response 'triangle' of the marketing and engagement tactics, demonstrating that as the conversation became more in-depth and took more of a participant's time, the numbers of participants narrowed to those citizens who were interested in the deeper level of discussion and participation. The City of Calgary is very appreciative for the thousands of Calgarians who took the time and interest to provide their input to The City's future direction.

There were four 'streams' of the *Action Plan 2015-2018 Engagement Program*, providing multiple unique opportunities to gather citizen and stakeholder perspectives regarding where The City should focus its efforts in the next four years to best achieve the long-term goals. No single engagement activity provided enough information on its own; it is the combined results from numerous perspectives through all of the tactics that produce the complete picture of 'what we heard' from citizens and stakeholders.

#### **1. Reflection & Synthesis:**

The first engagement stream involved qualitative analysis of previous engagement and research activities conducted from 2010 to 2013. This review, conducted by ten City staff over a two-

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week period during December, reaffirmed that citizens and stakeholders view the majority of City services as important. These previous reports also identified themes regarding the continued desire for value for tax dollars, including the need for further communications about the services provided by The City. Affordability and the need for Calgarians of all incomes to have access to City services was also acknowledged.

### **2. Representative Engagement:**

There are often challenges garnering input from diverse and hard-to-reach stakeholders, so the *Action Plan 2015-2018* developed a ‘representative’ stream, to ensure these perspectives were reflected in the overall inclusive engagement program. Ipsos Reid was contracted to conduct a “Citizen Ideation” session, which is a technology-enhanced stakeholder workshop for a large number of participants. This session, along with Focus Groups of business associations and community social groups, ensured feedback was received from a broad spectrum of the population, in addition to ensuring a good mix from key socio-demographic variables. Appendices B1, B2, and B3 of the Attachment provides further details of the methodology and results from each representative engagement initiative.

### **3. Inclusive Engagement:**

There were multiple opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to provide input to *Action Plan 2015-2018*. This stream of engagement was designed to be interactive, to maximize learning about The City and the services it provides, and to gather input on budget and spending priorities for The City. The three online tools, along with the 21 in-person sessions at community events and locations, provided opportunities that were open and available to all citizens in Calgary, and were organized into three primary engagement groups: Budgets, Priorities, and Discussions.

The details of the Inclusive Engagement activities can be found in Appendices C1, C2, and C3 of the Attachment. In addition, each of the above tools provided for submission of open-ended comments. All verbatim comments were reviewed, coded, and analyzed by an external vendor (see Appendix C4 of the Attachment), enabling grouping and themed input to the final engagement results.

### **4. Internal Engagement:**

The City collaborates with several Civic Partners to provide Calgarians with a wide range of opportunities and services. Thus it was critical that these organizations were provided an opportunity to contribute to The City’s business planning and budget discussions. Representatives from Civic Partner organizations participated in an Ideation Session to contribute their ideas and opinions, detailed results can be found in Appendix D1 in the Attachment.

City employees provided key input to many aspects of the business planning and budget discussion, mainly through their respective business units in the development of their Departmental business plans. *Action Plan 2015-2018* invited employees to provide input on The City’s business plan through an internal survey, available both online and in paper versions, as well as encouraged employees to engage as a citizen online or at the in-person events.

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Detailed results of the Internal Employee engagement activities can be found in Appendix D2 of the Attachment.

### Next Steps:

The input received through the *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement program will be provided to City Departments and Business Units for consideration in developing their four-year business plans and budgets. Departments will be presenting preliminary business plans to their respective Standing Policy Committee of Council in 2014 September, including reference to how citizen and stakeholder input was considered in their plan development.

These business plans and budgets will be coordinated and formatted into The City's *Action Plan 2015-2018*, to be publicly released in early 2014 November, followed by Council debate and approval in early 2014 December.

There will be opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to provide comments and thoughts on the consolidated draft *Action Plan 2015-2018* in mid-November. There is also a final opportunity for citizens and stakeholders to appear and present at Council's Public Hearing at the beginning of business plan and budget debates, beginning on 2014 November 24.

In the middle of each business plan and budget cycle, Council provides an opportunity to review the socio-economic outlook and other external trends, to revisit Council Priorities and citizen engagement that informed the development of the original four-year business plans and budgets, and to update the remaining two years of those plans and budgets as required to reflect changing circumstances.

The *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement program provided opportunities for citizen and stakeholder inputs that adhered to the principles of the *engage!* Policy: transparent, inclusive, accountable, responsive, and commitment. The comprehensive and inclusive engagement approach provided multiple opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to provide input to The City's service and spending priorities. The results provide rich input from Calgarians that, along with other information sources, provide the necessary information to determine Council's Strategic Plan for the 2015-2018 four-year cycle, as well as set priorities and directions for Departmental business plans and budgets.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

The *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement program was designed around citizen and stakeholder needs. Lessons learned from past engagement activities, as well as best practices for broad-reaching and inclusive engagements, formed the inclusive and comprehensive engagement plan. A post-engagement research survey will further identify the success of this engagement program.

### **Strategic Alignment**

The engagement of stakeholders is a key component of building a great City for everyone, forever, and is also in line with the recently Council approved *engage!* Policy. The input received through this process will inform Council's Strategic Planning process, validating the direction towards achievement of long-term goals.

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The proposed strategy is also in line with achieving the Engagement and Empowerment objectives under the 2020 Goal of “*Community Well Being*”

- By 2020, The City demonstrates that a broad representation of our citizen’s voice has been considered in setting priorities and delivering services,
- By 2020, The City communication and engagement opportunities are available in multiple formats, channels, and languages.

### **Social, Environmental, Economic (External)**

#### **Social**

The *Action Plan* 2015-2018 engagement program focused on creating opportunities for interested citizens and stakeholders to provide input into City priorities and outcomes for the 2015-2018 business plan and budget process. The comprehensive and inclusive approach to ‘continue the conversation’ will have positive impacts on the level of ‘trust’ citizens have with local government.

#### **Environmental**

n/a

#### **Economic (External)**

Committing money for engagement up front is more cost-effective than trying to ‘recover’ from engagement done badly (or not at all) and having to overcome citizen and stakeholder anger before getting meaningful input. In addition to extensively marketing and promoting the opportunities to citizens in Calgary, the *Action Plan* 2015-2018 engagement program also undertook initiatives to engage corporate Calgary and community agencies, including business leaders and civic partners, to participate in the process.

### **Financial Capacity**

#### **Current and Future Operating Budget:**

The *Action Plan* 2015-2018 engagement program received Council approval for one-time funding of \$550 thousand through C2013-0709 at the 2014 Budget Adjustments deliberations on 2013 November 25.

While the majority of the engagement has concluded, there is a post-engagement survey (to determine reach, understanding, and satisfaction with the process) to take place in the second quarter of 2014, as well as the *Action Plan* 2015-2018 engagement following the public release of the business plans and budgets in early 2014 November.

#### **Current and Future Capital Budget:**

n/a

### **Risk Assessment**

Consistent and meaningful engagement practices applied from the beginning of a project reduce the likelihood of ‘do again’ engagement, which impacts costs, timelines, and resourcing of engagement activities and the overall project. Once a project has been challenged on its engagement process / activities / outcomes, the ensuing erosion of trust is difficult to overcome and turn into positive acceptance of recommendations.

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**REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

The *Action Plan 2015-2018* engagement program provided multiple opportunities for all citizens and stakeholders to participate in the development of 2015-2018 business plans and budgets, and to solidify The City's direction towards achievement of long-term goals.

**ATTACHMENT**

*Action Plan 2015-2018 Engagement Results (with nine Appendices)*