

Select Department Report to
Infrastructure and Planning Committee
2023 May 10

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Report Back on Practices for Communications and Engagement on Planning and Land Use Matters

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommend that Council receive this report for the Corporate Record.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The City uses a variety of effective communication and engagement tools to increase Calgarians' awareness of planning initiatives and to enable them to participate in the planning of their communities. This report provides insight into these tools and emerging trends that focus on greater equity in our processes.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** Administration is committed to keeping Calgarians informed, and involved in, planning and land use matters that are important to their communities, in a way that is meaningful, respectful, and equitable.
- **Why does this matter?** All Calgarians feedback and input is valuable in helping shape how our communities grow.
- Administration evaluates and selects different methods for engagement that are best suited to each planning project. Not all planning projects are the same and may require different forms of engagement like open houses, online surveys or participating at community events. All City-led engagement aligns with The City's Engage Policy.
- Planning and land use matters range from individual planning applications to major city-wide policy initiatives. The degree of public participation varies depending on the legislative requirements and the Engage Policy. On 2022 October 05, Council directed Administration to prepare a report on Administration's practices for public engagement on planning and land use matters and to report back to Council no later than Q2 2023.
- Our practices are strategically aligned to Council's citizen priority: Building public trust and confidence, creating meaningful connections, listening and sharing information, and promoting meaningful opportunities for Calgarians to participate in planning and land use matters.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

On 2022 October 05, Council approved bylaw 56P2022, an amendment to the land use bylaw which included the Housing Grade Oriented (H-GO) district and amendments to the Residential Contextual Grade Oriented Infill (R-CG) district. It was identified at the Public Hearing that Calgarians did not feel engaged on the proposed district because Administration used targeted engagement, with technical partners to ensure the district could successfully result in development. As a result of feedback, at the Public Hearing, Council directed Administration to report back on The City's practices for public engagement on planning and land use matters (See Attachment 1 for the full motion arising).

Administration leads community outreach efforts in alignment with The City's Engage Policy which has five guiding principles: accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, commitment, and responsiveness.

Continually learning and improving our engagement strategies allows us to reach more Calgarians, enabling them to participate more equitably in the planning of their communities.

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These strategies and tools are consistent with the Council-approved Engage Policy (located here: [Customer Service & Communications \(CSC\) \(calgary.ca\)](#)).

The three primary types of planning and land use work where most engagement occurs, and the form that engagement takes are highlighted below. For information on these practices, please see Attachment 2.

Citywide Planning and Policy including the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and the Land Use Bylaw (LUB)

Policy planning at a citywide scale can vary broadly depending on the policies being addressed, and the scope and interest that these policies generate. For this reason, engagement programs related to new policy, or updates to existing policy are developed and customized for each project. To achieve this, engagement programs are developed following The City's Engage Framework (located here [Customer Service & Communications \(CSC\) \(calgary.ca\)](#)), which is based on a six-step approach:

- Step 1** – Engage Assessment (determine whether a project requires engagement)
- Step 2** – Develop a plan (develop an engagement strategy and plan)
- Step 3** – Tell the story (share the details of the project in plain language)
- Step 4** – Raise awareness (generate awareness about the engagement opportunities),
- Step 5** – Connect (connect and work with interested parties through the engagement opportunities), and
- Step 6** – Report back and evaluate (tell interested parties what was heard and how input may or may not have been used and why).

Part of ensuring citywide initiatives are successful means finding ways to reach those who do not typically get to be part of these initiatives. Some Calgarians can be difficult to reach which is why we use different tools to engage such as workshops, online events, online surveys, in-person meetings, etc., to ensure that our policies are robust, representative and truly work for Calgarians.

The City offers dedicated support to City-led planning policy projects and works with project teams to develop an engagement program that is understandable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of Calgarians.

Local Area Planning Program

Working together with a range of participants, local area plans are created to guide growth, change, redevelopment and community improvements in communities across Calgary. Engagement undertaken as part of the Local Area Planning Program is a key opportunity for Calgarians to get involved in discussions about the evolution of their communities and surrounding local areas.

A multi-phased approach to engagement enables discussion, consideration, creation and refinement of the local area plan with participants. Aligning the phases of engagement to the creation and refinement of each chapter of the Plan provides participants with iterative opportunities for feedback with clear outputs at the end of each phase.

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Development of a local area plan consists of five phases of work:

Phase 0 – Discover: pre-project research, awareness building, and knowledge transfer within the community;

Phase 1 – Envision: looking back at the past, as well as understanding the present and envisioning the future of the area;

Phase 2 – Explore: where and how growth and change could happen in the area;

Phase 3 – Refine: participants help to refine the plan and confirming investment priorities; and

Phase 4 – Realize: Committee and Council review and decision.

Development of local area plans include significant engagement. During each phase, the team meets with Community Association Boards, Industry, a Working Group and the general public through a variety of virtual and in-person interactive sessions. The Working Group is crucial to the process providing deeper and more detailed feedback to the project team. The Working Group is made up of residents, Community Association representatives and industry representatives and acts as a sounding board before content is shared with the general public.

Land Use Amendment and Development Permit Applications

In 2019, The City launched an online toolkit: [Community Outreach on Planning and Development \(calgary.ca\)](#), to create a more predictable, best-practice approach to community outreach on planning applications and policy plans, with clear indication of who is responsible for engagement and decision-making. The online toolkit includes an Applicant Toolkit, a Community Involvement Toolkit, for Community Associations who wish to reach out to their members for input, and finally, roles and responsibilities to help guide who does what. The aim of this toolkit is to help builders, developers and landowners, community members, business owners, community associations, City planners and Councillors understand and be successful in their role in the planning process.

Conducting engagement to improve and refine land use amendments and development permit applications is the responsibility of the applicant. Providing guidance on engagement practices for applicants helps The City remain impartial and balanced on their decision-making related to an application. Rather than appearing to advocate for the proposed change on behalf of the applicant, The City can assess how the applicant has included and responded to community feedback on their application. The applicant may request that Administration attend an engagement session but only to respond to questions about City policies and decision-making process.

Communication Plan for amendments to the Land Use Bylaw

On 2022 October 5, Council also directed Administration to develop and implement a communication plan clearly outlining the changes resulting from bylaw 56P2022: Amendments to the land use bylaw included the Housing Grade Oriented (H-GO) district and amendments to the Residential Grade Oriented Infill (R-CG) district. The communication plan was to provide Calgarians with more information on these districts, and clearly outline the planning process for new land use and development permit applications. A summary of the communication plan, with posters and diagrams explaining the planning process, can be found in Attachment 3. This communication plan was developed and implemented prior to the Land Use Bylaw amendment in-force date of 2022 January 2.

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Equity in Engagement

Greater equity in our engagement processes is a priority area for improvement at The City and plays a large part in allowing Calgarians to actively engage and provide meaningful feedback on planning and land use matters. Barriers that might prevent Calgarians from attending an engagement session could include a job or family commitments, language, culture, mobility, or technology barriers. To manage some of these inequities, tactics are developed based on the groups with whom The City is seeking to engage, with special attention placed on creating accessible and equitable opportunities to provide feedback. For more detail on emerging trends and equity in engagement, please see Attachment 4.

- Public engagement was undertaken
- Public/interested parties were informed
- Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken
- Public communication or engagement was not required

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Clear communication and accessible opportunities to participate support The City's commitment to equity and anti-racism. We continuously strive to increase awareness on planning and land use matters for citizens of all backgrounds and encourage contribution from equity deserving groups by providing multiple platforms and forums for participation and feedback.

Environmental

Online communication and engagement formats would provide information for a board range of Calgarians and reduce the necessity to print numerous documents. Additionally, an on-line format for engagement could reduce the number of vehicular trips that Calgarians would make to attend an in-person session.

Economic

Providing consistent engagement approaches, that reach more Calgarians, allows The City to focus spending on initiatives that help to inform the best outcomes.

Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact

RISK

There is always a risk that successful engagement is perceived as consensus. Engagement is not about consensus building, but rather about understanding, discussing and examining feedback. Many people indicate a lack of engagement, despite The City's efforts because there is disagreement with the result. Administration's engagement approach will provide council and Calgarians with clear expectations for planning projects and how engagement forms one piece of the planning process.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction
2. Practices for Public Engagement on Planning and Land Use Matters
3. Communication Summary of Efforts to Inform Calgarians on Bylaw 56P2022
4. Emerging Trends: Equity in Engagement
5. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Stuart Dalgleish	Planning and Development Services	Approve
Chris Arthurs	People Innovation and Collaboration Services	Consult
Trudy Wobeser	Law	Consult
Debra Hamilton	Community Planning	Consult
Jennifer McMurtry	Customer Service & Communication - Communications	Consult