



Progress Update

Strengthening Transparency: Improving Engagement with Calgarians

City of Calgary
June, 2025



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Purpose

Overall Purpose: Provide Council with an update on the process to strengthen public engagement at The City.

Objectives:

- Shared understanding of the review process and its scope
- Update on input and research used to inform the review
- Outline review and benchmarking process, including opportunities for public engagement

Review of Public Engagement

Background

- October 2024 Notice of Motion: unanimous Council support to strengthen approach for public engagement.
- Key aims:
 - conduct an analysis of The City's policy and approach to public participation and engagement
 - identify lessons learned and develop opportunities to improve

The Review Project

Independent and objective review by KPMG

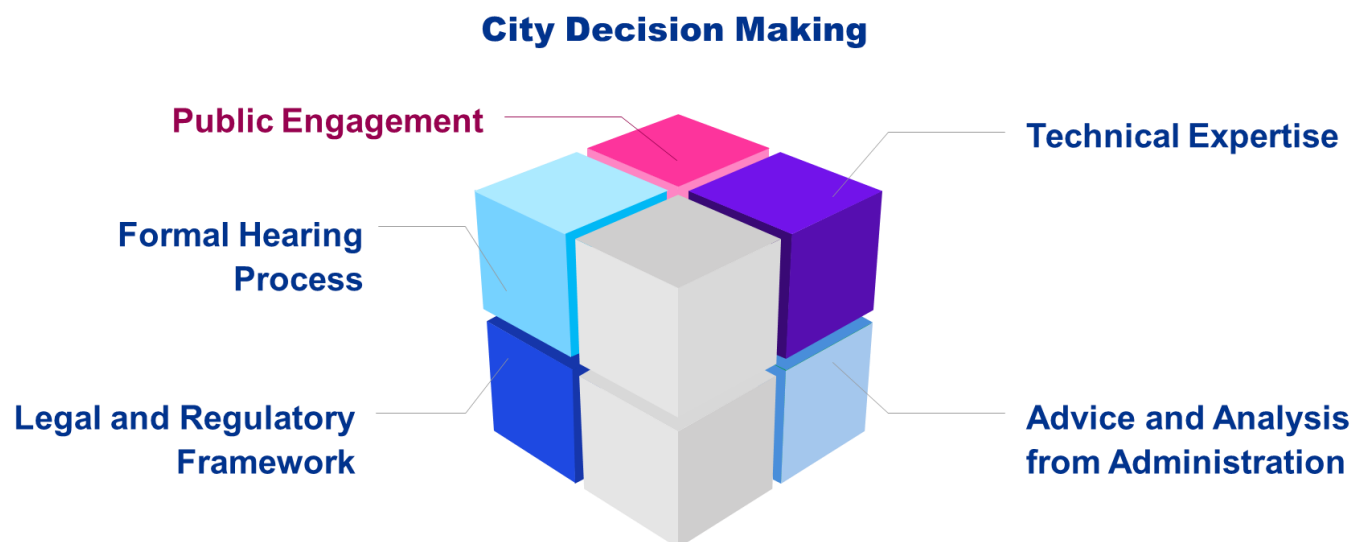
- Assess City approach and compare with leading practices
- Enlist perspectives from Calgarians and interested parties
- Recommend improvements

Scope

“Engagement” at The City of Calgary is defined as:

Purposeful dialogue between The City, impacted or interested Calgarians and other communities or groups to gather information to influence decision-making.

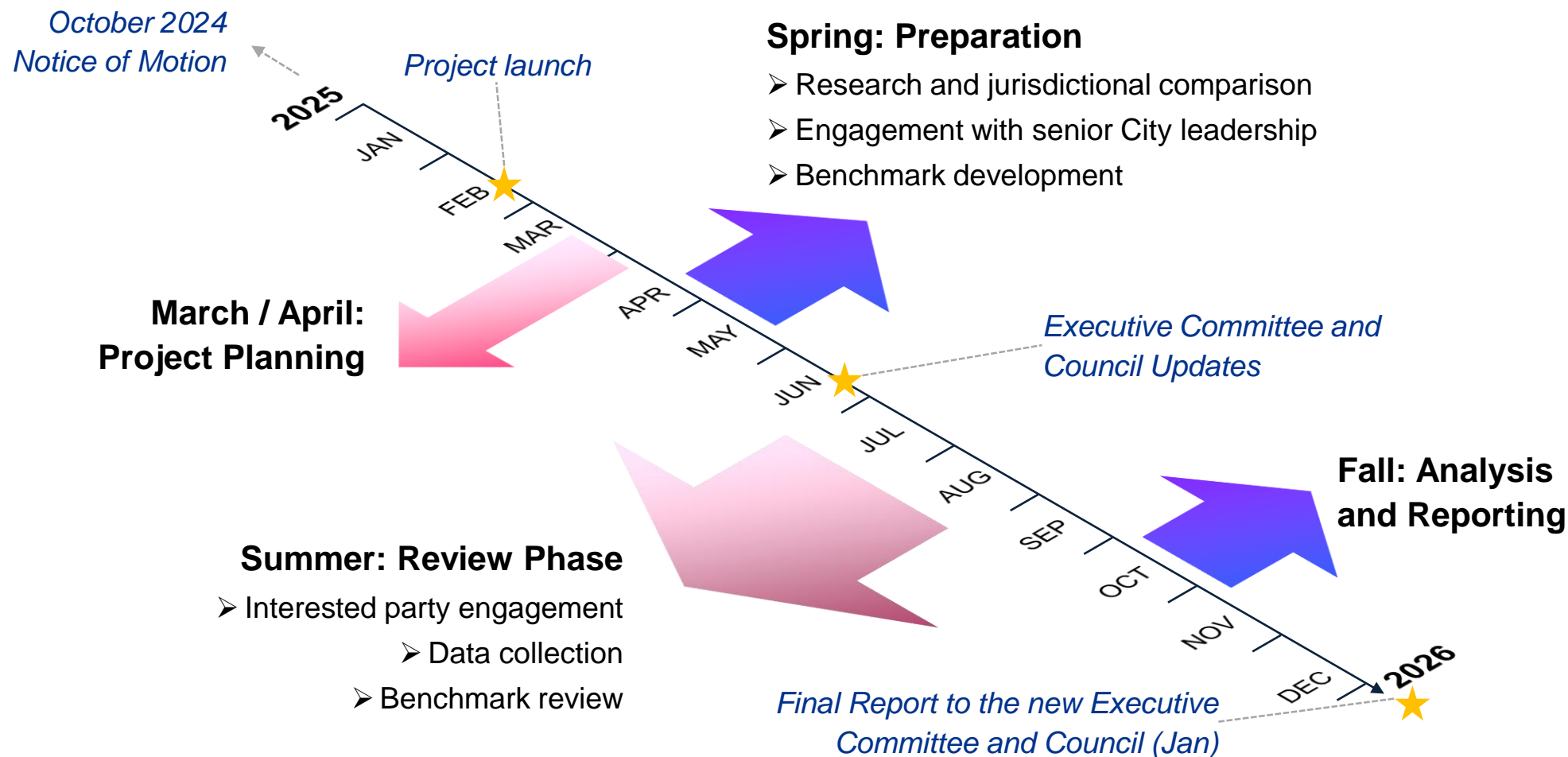
- In scope: engagement around an **issue or decision**
- Public engagement is only one of several inputs to decision making



Out of Scope

- Public hearings
- Ongoing engagement
- Advisory committees
- Annual surveys

The Review At a Glance



Approach to Benchmarking and Review

Jurisdictions Reviewed:

Canada

- Edmonton
- Vancouver
- Toronto
- Guelph

USA

- Denver
- New York City
- Portland
- Seattle
- San Francisco

International

- London (United Kingdom)
- Melbourne (Australia)
- Onkaparinga (Australia)
- Mosman (Australia)

- A benchmark is a standard that can be used to measure effectiveness based on what is considered normal, acceptable, or leading practice within a sector.
- Well-regarded public engagement frameworks and practices in 13 other jurisdictions were reviewed.
- Input from City leadership (Mayor, Council, Executive Leadership Team) and KPMG Engagement subject matter experts and helped inform benchmarks and validate findings.
- KPMG defined **20 benchmarks for public engagement** in a municipal context.
- A Review Framework was developed specifying how KPMG will assess The City's practices relative to each benchmark, including how documents and Interested Party engagement will be used.

Principles and Benchmarks

The 20 benchmarks provide research-based indicators that align with the:

- **Desired outcomes / impacts** of good public engagement; and
- **Principles** of excellent public engagement:
 - **Inclusion and Accessibility (I&A)** Democracy depends on all members of society having equitable means of influencing decisions.
 - **Transparency and Communication (T&C)** Processes that are clear and easy to navigate.
 - **Accountability and Responsiveness (A&R)** Clearly defined expectations regarding how engagement will inform decision-making.
 - **Capacity (C)** Refers to the ability to effectively conduct engagement processes (resources, skills, and systems).

Sample Benchmark	Principles			
	I&A	T&C	A&R	C
1. An intentional and systematic approach is used to understand the needs and concerns of those affected by decisions.	✓			✓

What We Heard from Senior Leaders

Eleven (11) Members of Council and nine (9) executive leaders within Administration provided input. Themes related to each principle of engagement are summarized as follows:

Inclusion and Accessibility

- Engagement should meet people where they are at
- How much and how long we engage is important
- How best to engage those impacted by an issue

Transparency and Communication

- Setting expectations for an engagement is critical
- Define purpose – are we just gathering feedback?
- Utility and value of “what we heard” reports
- Recent engagements have contributed to trust issues

Accountability and Responsiveness

- We should only engage on issues where Calgarians can have real input
- Just listening and taking notes is not sufficient
- It is hard to measure what “great” engagement looks like – are we being effective?
- Weighing input in decision making

Capacity

- No major issues with the Engage Policy as written – are we applying the right methods?
- Calgarians expect to be heard – how should we capture feedback as one input to a process
- Role of elected officials
- Role of Administration in applicant-led engagement

What's Next: The Review Phase

The next phase of the review will proceed as follows:

1. Review of evidence and documentation
2. Interested party engagement

Interested Parties

- General public
- City staff
- City partners and advisory groups
- External interested parties and advocacy groups

Methods

- Interviews and focus sessions
- Public survey
- Community engagement sessions in each Ward
- Public engagement working group

3. Assessment against benchmarks, analyze maturity of Calgary's approach
4. Identify and recommend opportunities for improvement

Looking Ahead

Here's what Council can expect in the months ahead:

- Interested party engagement over the summer, including public survey and community sessions in each Ward
- Council staff invited to participate in focus group
- Support from Members of Council to raise awareness of upcoming engagement opportunities
- Assessment of practices relative to benchmarks based on the results of engagement and document review
- Final report in January 2026

Questions and Discussion





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