Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 **WARD(S):** ALL

TITLE: STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

FROM:
Jim Harnum, City Manager

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

Community engagement is fundamental to the city-building process and recognized as a priority in the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan. It is also a collective effort wherein citizens and stakeholders learn together and work together on behalf of their communities and in collaboration with their local government to create and realize sustainable and future-defining visions for the community. Introducing a Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy is not only a formal commitment to involving citizens, businesses and stakeholders in crucial conversations that will help shape the city they know and love, but it also offers a directional process based on internationally recognized standards, best practices and methodology. Community engagement is also an exercise in relationship-building which has the power to create a culture of trust and understanding between citizens and their local government, as well as build healthy communities.

Report Highlights

- The policy is founded on the standards, best practices and methodology as developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
- The policy considers the needs and aspirations of Vaughan staff and the public, which research shows are in alignment
- The policy anchors the City's Community Engagement Framework

Recommendations

1. That the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy (Attachment #4) and Procedures (Attachment #5), substantially in the form attached, be approved.

Background

Community Engagement Framework origins and key milestones: 2015 to 2017

Executive Summit with Senior Leaders

The need for a corporate-wide Community Engagement Framework was first identified through the 2014-2018 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map under the strategic initiative of Citizen Experience. It is still recognized as a priority through the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan. By September 2016, engagement consultant Delaney and Associates Inc. had been retained and had organized, facilitated and reported on an executive summit on community engagement for the City. This one-day event brought together all members of the corporate management team at the time to discuss their vision for engaging residents in meaningful conversations with City officials, staff and each other. In preparation for this session and the report that followed, Delaney and Associates undertook a series of interviews with all executives, conducted research into the engagement environment in Vaughan and created a series of recommendations, including a roadmap towards corporate leadership's vision.

Council Retreat

The year, prior in 2015, Delaney and Associates organized and facilitated a one-day retreat for Members of Council. The purpose of the retreat was similar to the executive summit except that it included an International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) decision-maker seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to create a clear and common understanding about what authentic engagement is and how IAP2 principles, concepts and planning and design protocols could strengthen a Vaughan approach to how the City engages with its residents and internally with each other (see page 12 for more information on the IAP2).

About Delaney and Associates

Delaney and Associates is a renowned and respected firm in the engagement industry. They are the world's largest provider of IAP2-licenced training and Canada's first engagement company, working exclusively in public engagement and full-service facilitation for well over two decades.

Appointment of Engagement Champion

As part of Delaney and Associates' final report (Attachment 1), the most immediate action identified was to appoint an engagement champion. As a service-based organization committed to engaging the community and stakeholders in an ongoing way, senior leadership recognized the need to create internal capacity to undertake and support engagement. This included creating a centralized business function to co-ordinate, report on, evaluate, foster, promote and guide the community engagement function, as well as to manage common engagement infrastructure. In September 2017, the City's first Community Engagement Co-ordinator was hired following an extensive recruitment process.

Internal Community Engagement Working Group

In late 2017, an internal Community Engagement Working Group was established to include staff representing departments from across the organization. The mandate of the working group was to:

- act as a sounding board for sharing and discussing ideas.
- provide a sense of staff needs and concerns as they relate to community engagement.
- assist in the development, execution and enforcing of corporate policies, procedures, processes, standards and/or guidelines relating to community engagement.
- provide guidance, feedback and recommendations on the overall framework.
- act as champions for community engagement.

Feedback collected from the internal Community Engagement Working Group together with the results of the workshop with senior leaders provided a comprehensive analysis of the organization's gaps, priorities and opportunities as well as a vision for moving forward with a community engagement framework. This included the need for:

- a consistent, corporate-wide approach to planning and executing engagement.
- a common understanding of engagement across all levels of staff.
- new channels for engagement and innovative platforms.
- building internal staff capacity for engagement.
- a reduction in ad hoc, spontaneous or "knee-jerk" engagements.
- more representative samples of community views to be included in engagement processes where appropriate.
- greater public trust, confidence and shared ownership in city-building initiatives.

Analysis and Options

Key milestones: 2018

Establishment of Two Vendors of Records
In 2018, work was initiated to achieve some short-term wins that would provide staff with some engagement resources. Procurement processes where undertaken to establish two vendors of records (VORs): one for independent facilitators and a second for engagement consultants. The pre-qualified vendors in these two categories are knowledgeable of and trained in the application of internationally recognized standards, best practices and methodologies for sound and effective community engagement planning and execution, and have skills and expertise in conflict management, diffusing contentious conversations and facilitating meetings with a diverse range of audiences and stakeholders. The City recognizes the need to pre-qualify vendors with these important skillsets in order to ensure qualified independent third-party resources are available to help deliver neutral engagement processes and facilitation services. The City also understands that these pre-qualified vendors have skillsets that can help improve the City's relationships with its various publics and contribute to managing reputational risk. Today these VORs remain an important resource for staff.

2018 Citizen Satisfaction Survey
Every two years, the City of Vaughan conducts a statistically significant telephone Citizen Satisfaction Survey to gather input from residents on quality of life, delivery of City services, use of tax dollars, and communications and digital services, among other topics. A supplemental online survey is also run in tandem with the telephone survey. Public input from this important questionnaire is a key driver for decision-making, and informs policy decisions, budgetary spending and continuous improvement. In the 2018 telephone questionnaire, a new question was added for the first time that speaks to community engagement. This was done to begin establishing a benchmark for public perception with regards to the City's engagement performance. Citizens were asked:
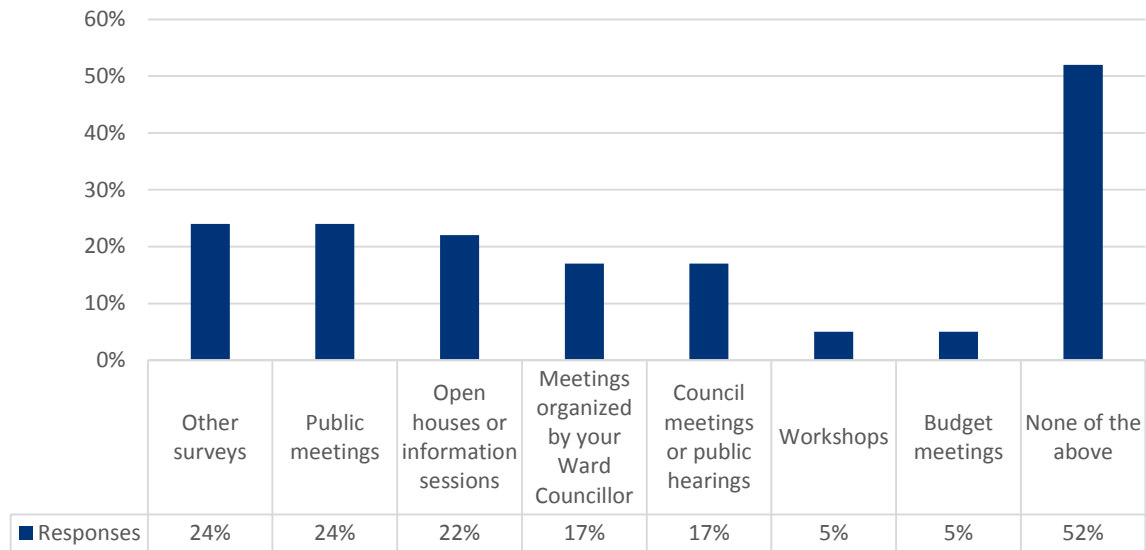
Q: Would you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree that you can influence municipal decisions affecting Vaughan by participating in public engagement events? Base: 2018 (n=806)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
■ Responses	17%	45%	18%	18%	2%
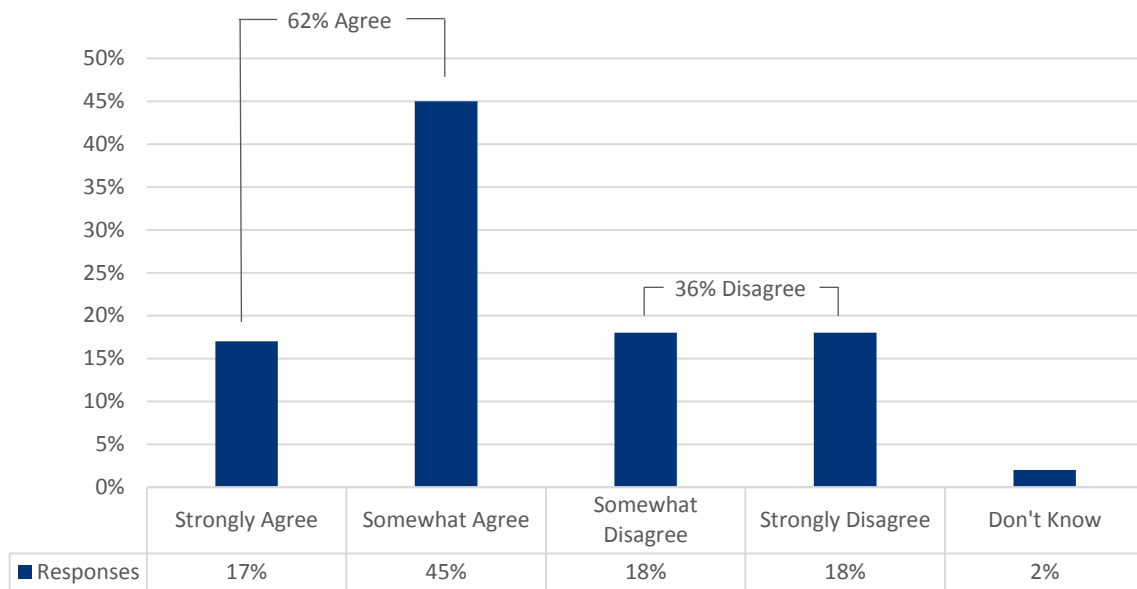
Six in 10 (62 per cent) citizens believe that they can influence municipal decisions affecting Vaughan by participating in public engagement events, while a sizeable proportion of about four in ten (36 per cent) disagree with this view. Younger residents between the ages of 18-34 are more likely than those 55 and older to agree that they can influence municipal decisions through their participation in public engagement events (68 per cent versus 57 per cent respectively). These results are optimistic and provide the City with an opportunity to improve its engagement processes in such a way to increase convenient participation, trust with citizens and stakeholders and confidence that city-building is truly a shared community responsibility.

In the supplemental online survey that was also run in 2018, additional engagement-related questions were also included for the first time. Citizens were asked:

Q: Have you participated in any of the following public engagement processes in the past 12 months that were organized by the City of Vaughan? Base: All respondents 2018 (n=270)

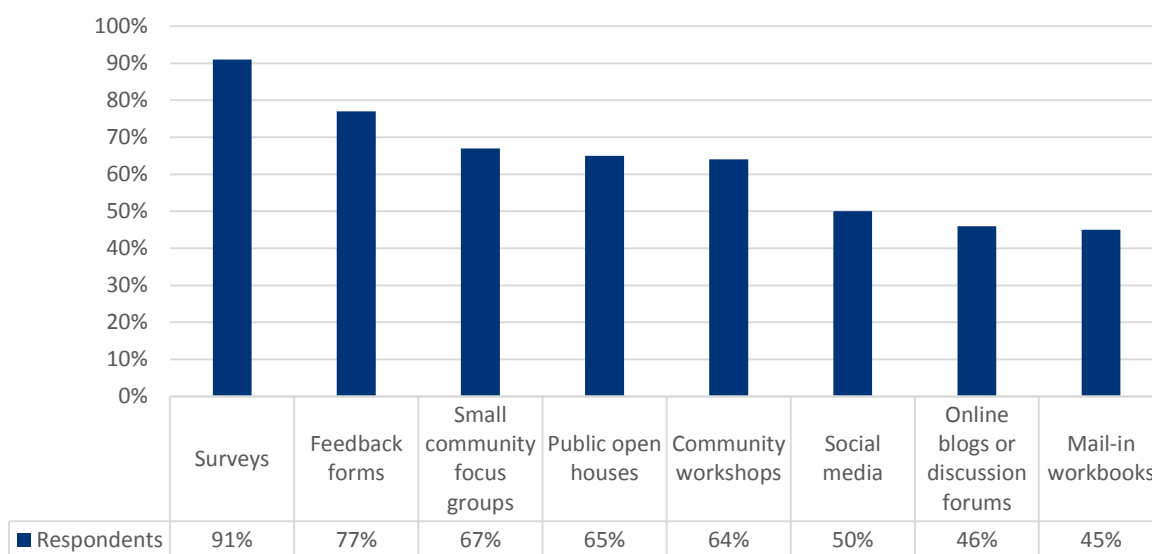|	Other surveys	Public meetings	Open houses or information sessions	Meetings organized by your Ward Councillor	Council meetings or public hearings	Workshops	Budget meetings	None of the above
Responses	24%	24%	22%	17%	17%	5%	5%	52%

In 2018, citizen participation in City-run public engagement was fairly low, with only about 20-25 per cent of respondents having participated in other surveys, public meetings, open houses, community meetings and Council meetings or public hearings. A majority of respondents (52 per cent) hadn't participated at all. This data indicates an opportunity for the City to "take the engagement to where the people are" — that is, to expand its engagement techniques and offer additional and more convenient options and channels through which citizens and stakeholders can engage. Citizens were also asked:

Q: Thinking about the most recent public engagement process that you participated in, were you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with it? Base: 2018 (n=130)

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Responses	17%	45%	17%	21%
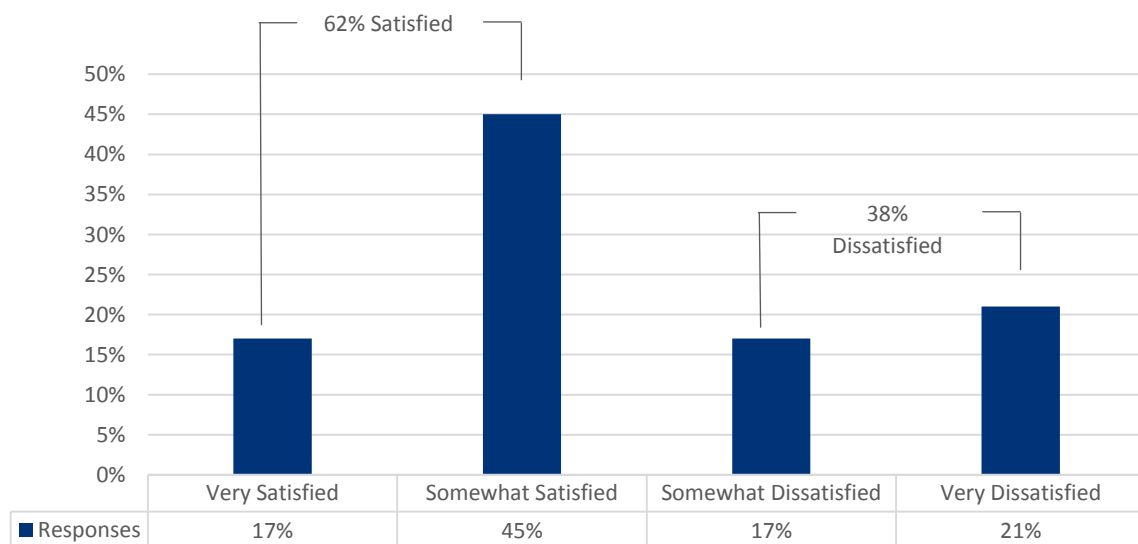
While only 38 per cent of respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with their most recent engagement experience, an opportunity still exists to specifically understand the underlying dissatisfaction and work to improve the overall public engagement experience. Citizens were also asked:

Q: How interested are you in participating in each of the following forms of public consultation on a topic that is of interest to you personally? Base: All respondents 2018 (n=270)

	Surveys	Feedback forms	Small community focus groups	Public open houses	Community workshops	Social media	Online blogs or discussion forums	Mail-in workbooks
■ Respondents	91%	77%	67%	65%	64%	50%	46%	45%

The data here indicates that there is interest among citizens in participating in a range of other engagement activities outside of the traditional methods already being used by the City. That is not to say that the traditional methods would cease to be used, but rather the opportunity, again, exists for the City to increase overall participation in engagement processes by expanding its techniques and offering additional and more convenient options and channels through which citizens and stakeholders can engage.

Jurisdictional Review
In 2018, the Corporate and Strategic Communications department conducted an extensive engagement benchmarking analysis (or jurisdictional review) of 16 similar-sized municipalities and regions and examined whether or not these municipalities and regions were employing a range of engagement practices, including whether:
- a policy was in place.
- a plan, strategy or framework had been developed.
- a clear process for planning engagement was being used.
- a dedicated engagement staff person had been hired to oversee the function.

- they had an online citizen engagement platform.
- the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement had been adopted or an adapted version adopted (see page 12 for more information on the IAP2).

The 16 municipalities and regions included in the review were:

Municipalities
- Brampton
- Burlington
- Cambridge
- Kitchener
- Markham
- Mississauga
- Oakville
- Oshawa
- Richmond Hill
- St. Catharines

Regions
- Durham
- Halton
- York
- Waterloo
- Niagara
- Peel

The following chart summarizes the outcomes of the review. The review was also updated in 2020 – boxes highlighted in yellow indicate changes that took place between 2018 to the present. Checkmarks indicate that the municipality or region has the particular engagement practice in place. The letter "P" indicates that the engagement practice is pending, and that the municipality is working toward and intends to implement said engagement practice.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES	VAUGHAN	MARKHAM	KITCHENER	BRAMPTON	MISSISSAUGA	RICHMOND HILL	OAKVILLE	BURLINGTON	OSHAWA	ST. CATHARINES	CAMBRIDGE	DURHAM	HALTON	YORK	PEEL	NIAGARA	WATERLOO
Engagement policy	P		✓				✓	✓	✓								
Engagement strategy/plan	P		✓	✓	✓	P	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
Vision	P		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓								
goals and objectives	P				✓			✓	✓								
roles and responsibilities	P				✓		✓	✓	✓								
Engagement principles	P		✓	✓	✓	P	✓	✓	✓				✓				✓
Engagement planning process	P		✓		✓	P	✓	✓		✓			✓				✓
Dedicated engagement webpage	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Dedicated engagement email				✓													
Dedicated engagement (e)newsletter	✓			✓							✓						✓
Dedicated engagement staff person	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓						✓		✓	✓
Online engagement platform	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	P		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
engagementHQ (Bang the Table)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Use of the IAP2 spectrum	P		✓		✓	P	✓	✓					✓				✓
adapted use of the spectrum	P		✓		✓												✓

The most significant change from 2018 to 2020 was the notable jump in the number of municipalities that have created new positions for a dedicated staff engagement person. The following chart indicates other notable areas that were up in 2020:

Engagement Practice	2018	2020
Policy	25%	25%
Plan, strategy or framework	56%	63% ↑
Clear process for planning engagement	44%	50% ↑
Dedicated engagement staff person	13%	50% ↑
Online citizen engagement platform	50%	69% ↑
Adoption of IAP2 Spectrum	36%	44% ↑

How does the City of Vaughan compare in this jurisdictional review? The chart on page nine highlights how a mere two years ago, Vaughan was quite behind in its corporate-wide approach to community engagement in comparison to other municipalities and regions. In fact, the only thing it had accomplished at that time was having appointed a champion to lead the development of a community engagement framework. Since then, the City is now pending in almost all areas and intends to implement established practices rooted in internationally recognized standards that will catapult the municipality into the spotlight as a city leading the charge amongst its contemporaries.

Key milestones: 2019

What the Data Tells Us
All of the data collected up to this point had painted a very clear picture of the path toward creating a sustainable Community Engagement Framework that will serve the needs of and fulfill the opportunities identified by staff and the public:

1. Obtain approval and buy-in on a corporate policy that will outline a formalized directional process of and commitment to involving citizens, businesses and stakeholders in conversations about municipal decisions that interest and impact them.
2. Adopt a modified version of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation that contains clear and understandable language and reflects the City of Vaughan's decision-making authority.
3. Develop a distinct process for planning community engagement processes that is rooted in the internationally recognized standards, best practices and methodology developed by the IAP2 (see page 11 for more information on the IAP2).

4. Continue to build the City's capacity to plan and execute community engagement processes that align with guiding principles and with staff's and the public's desired engagement experience by introducing tools, supports and resources.
5. Continue to expand the City's engagement and feedback channels by introducing an online citizen engagement platform that will further the City's ability to facilitate and reach wider audiences through digital engagement — which is a lasting need in public consultation but also an immediate need during COVID-19.
6. Develop a corporate strategy that would capture the essence of the Community Engagement Framework, as well as identify key activities and objectives for measuring success and informing continuous improvement.

Vaughan's Community Engagement Framework

Throughout 2019, work was undertaken to complete a draft policy and procedures, a draft strategy and step-by-step guidelines for planning engagement (complete with resources and templates) as well as develop an adapted, made-for-Vaughan engagement spectrum — all of which are rooted in the internationally recognized standards, best practices and methodology established by the IAP2.

About the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
The IAP2 is the preeminent international organization working to advance the practice of public participation and promote and continuously improve the best practices associated with successful and meaningful public engagement in relation to individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (page 13) is one of the pillars upon which the global mission of the IAP2 is built and continues to grow. It was developed with broad international input, crosses national, cultural and religious boundaries, and forms the foundation of public participation processes that reflect the interests and concerns of all stakeholders. The spectrum was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. It is used internationally, and it is found in many engagement plans around the world.

Made-for-Vaughan Engagement Spectrum
Vaughan's adapted spectrum includes three main levels of engagement: share information, collect and compile information and bring people together. The latter two levels each have two sub-levels: listen and learn, consult, include and co-create. While there are certainly circumstances where a given project may exclusively operate at the share information stage only, the general expectation is that the sharing of information remains a constant as you progress down the spectrum. The selection of this language was made in an attempt to offer greater clarity around the differences between consulting, involving and collaborating, as presented in the IAP2 spectrum. Also, the goals and promises of the empower level as outlined in the IAP2 spectrum are generally reserved for Mayor and Members of Council, and so the exclusion of this level from Vaughan's spectrum reflects the City's decision-making authority. However, the City recognizes that opportunities exist to co-create and execute ideas and solutions with citizens and stakeholders, and this deepest level of engagement is incorporated into Vaughan's spectrum (see page 14).

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

**iap2** international association for public participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION →

|	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Community Engagement Spectrum

VAUGHAN
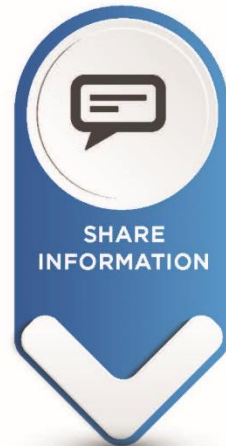
COLLECT AND COMPILE INFORMATION

BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER
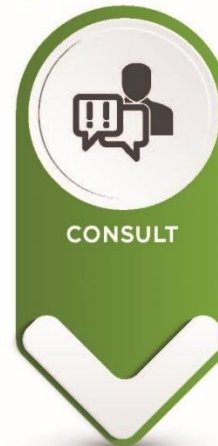
	SHARE INFORMATION	LISTEN AND LEARN	CONSULT	INCLUDE	CO-CREATE
GOAL	• Provide the necessary context and background information in a timely manner	• Listen to and learn about views, ideas, concerns and expectations	• Collect feedback on options and alternatives	• Work directly with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered	• Partner with the public in various aspects
ACTION	• Communicate in plain-language • Respond to questions for clarification • Provide additional information as needed • Report back on all outcomes	• Provide channels and opportunities for listening to take place	• Listen to and acknowledge views, ideas, concerns and expectations • Report back on all outcomes • Describe how input was considered/used	• Work with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are reflected in the options or alternatives developed • Describe how input was considered/used • Report back on all outcomes	• Look to the public for advice and innovation • Incorporate advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible
OUTCOMES	• Clear communication channels are established • Impacted/interested parties feel adequately informed • Transactional	• Participants feel heard • The City understands the community narrative	• Citizens are offered a high-level opportunity to contribute • Participants see their feedback in action • Participants feel heard	• Mitigate negative impacts • Element(s) of surprise are gone • Visible partnerships are created • Co-operation is increased	• Trust and partnerships are built • Citizens/stakeholders advocate on behalf of the City • Negative impacts are reduced or eliminated

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

<u>**Key milestones: 2020**</u>

While the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic caused some delays in the progress of activities in support of the development of the Community Engagement Framework, significant work was still completed.

Internal Online Self-Guided Workshop
In August 2020, Vaughan's people leaders (deputy city managers, directors, managers, supervisors and project managers) were invited to participate in a self-guided online workshop. The purpose of the online workshop was mainly to validate all the feedback collected from staff and senior leadership over the years with respect to needs, gaps, priorities and opportunities for and around engagement. It was also an opportunity to share some of the action intended to be taken on that feedback through the Community Engagement Framework.

Workshop participants were given an opportunity to review the purpose statement of the policy and provide comments. The feedback indicates general support for the purpose of the policy. Some of the verbatim comments received include:

> "Soliciting feedback from departments expected to execute/facilitate the community engagement and their comments on the draft policy will be valuable, to ensure that the draft policy is consistent with departmental processes."

> "I would echo the point that there needs to be a 'consistent, strategic and corporate-wide approach for planning and executing community engagement.' Too often engagement is planned as one-offs, confusing the public and not efficiently using staff resources."

> "The consistent, corporate-wide approach to community engagement is a good idea, with the understanding that department-specific strategies may be required as well."
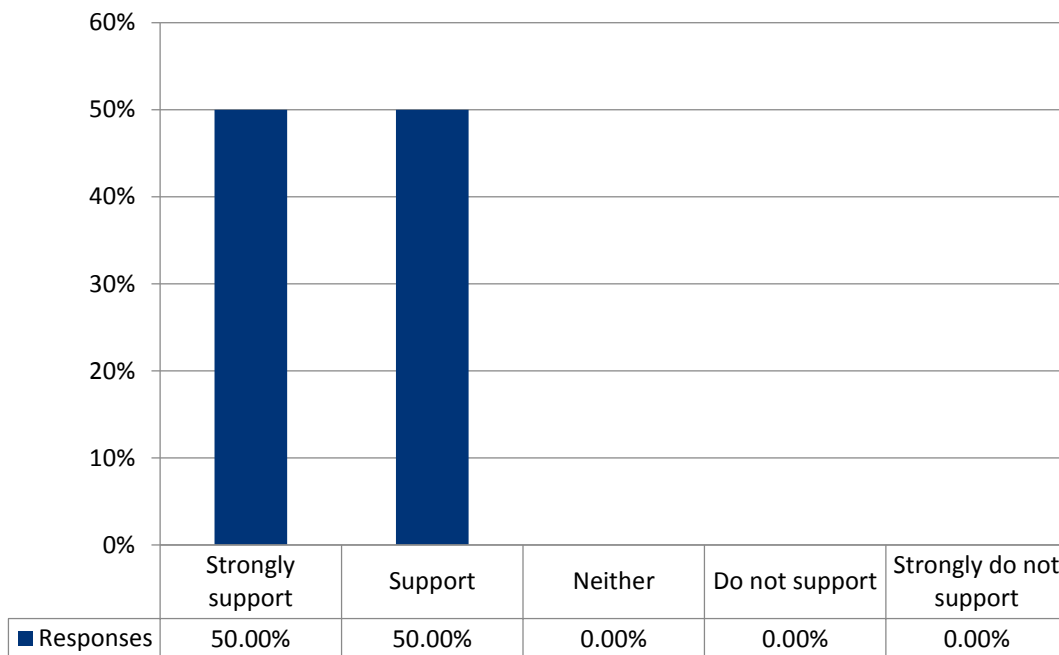
> "Solid definition. Comprehends the new reality created by the pandemic."

Workshop participants were asked, "In your opinion, and in one word, community engagement should be… (e.g. inclusive)?" This question was presented as open-ended and workshop participants were welcome to provide up to five words. The collected responses were organized into the following five key themes (in order of most responses):

- Meaningful
- Accessible and Inclusive
- Process
- Respectful and Honest
- Open and Transparent

These key themes appropriately align with the City of Vaughan's intent to adopt the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Code of Ethics (see page 18) through the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy. The Code of Ethics acts as a set of guiding principles that will govern the development and execution of engagement processes, help make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially impacted parties and serve to ensure the integrity of the City's community engagement.

Workshop participants were also asked, "To what degree do you support a "go to where the people are" or "take it to the people" approach?" This question speaks to the need for the City to offer additional and more convenient options and channels through which citizens and stakeholders can engage. One hundred per cent of respondents either support or strongly support this approach.

	Strongly support	Support	Neither	Do not support	Strongly do not support
■ Responses	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Some of the verbatim comments received include:

> "With COVID – 'going to where the ppl are' means social media/online too. In-person isn't always best in my opinion.

> "As long as residents are engaged at a point in the process where their input will be considered, I think this is a great approach."

> "This is a great approach and shows the City's commitment to its citizens."

The full results of the online workshop can be found in Attachment 2.

Public Online Survey
In September 2020, the City ran a public online survey on community engagement. The purpose of the survey was to understand:
- the current state of community engagement with the City of Vaughan.
- general viewpoints about the function and benefits of community engagement to support municipal decision-making.
- how the public typically engages with the City of Vaughan.
- ways respondents might consider engaging with the City of Vaughan in the future.

Workshop participants were also asked, "In your opinion, and in one word, community engagement should be… (e.g. inclusive)?" The collected responses were organized into the following themes (in order of most responses), which also appropriately align with the IAP2 Code of Ethics, which the City intends to adopt through the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy:
- Accessible and Inclusive
- Open and Transparent
- Meaningful and Valuable
- Collaborative and Engaging
- Fair/Equitable
- Process
- Diverse and Representative
- Informative
- Results Oriented

The following chart details each element of the IAP2's Code of Ethics and demonstrates alignment with the results of the public survey and the internal online staff workshop.
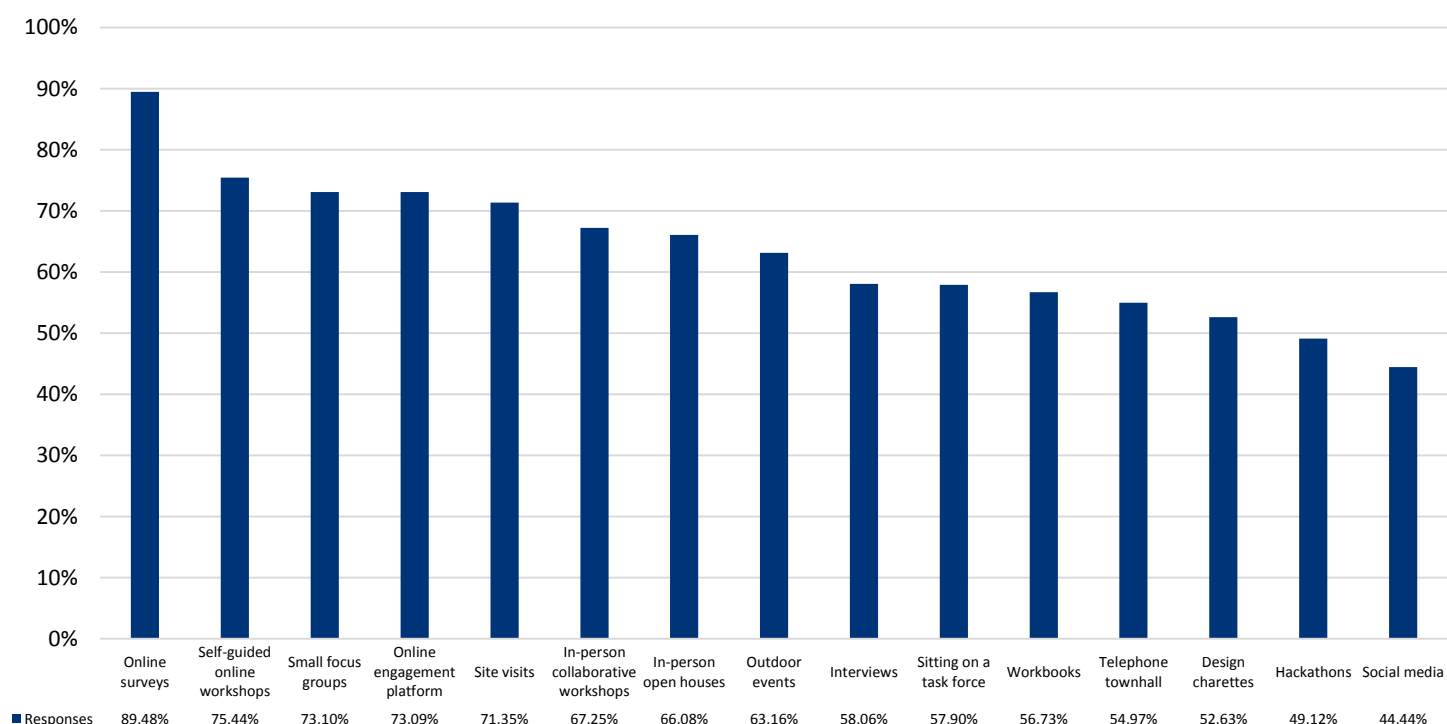
IAP2 CODE OF ETHICS (GUIDING PRINCIPLES)	RESULTS OF THE STAFF WORKSHOP	RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC SURVEY
Purpose: The City supports community engagement as a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.	**Process**: Many workshop participants highlighted the importance of process to ensure engagements are informative, timely and clearly defined. Comments also pointed to the need for engagement to be strategic, targeted and thoughtfully planned out.	**Process**: Many respondents highlighted the importance of process to ensure solid engagements that are ongoing, documented, focused, forward-thinking, well-timed, wisely managed and able to, in some cases, and where appropriate, achieve clear consensus. Respondents also indicated that good leadership and knowledgeable participants can make for a rewarding experience.
Role of Practitioner: The City will enhance the citizens' and stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.	**Meaningful**: Engagement processes should be interesting and collaborative, while offering an experience that is enjoyable and empowering. Workshop participants also noted that engagement processes should be focused on dialogue and building relationships.	**Meaningful and Valuable**: Engagement processes should be thoughtful, proactive and actionable, while providing an experience to participants that is genuine, deliberate and organic. Respondents also noted that engagement processes should be beneficial and remain topical to ensure a satisfying and fulfilling experience. **Collaborative and Engaging**: Engagement processes need to be interactive and constructive, while incorporating creative aspects to keep

		participants engaged. Respondents also noted the importance of building partnerships or having stakeholders work together as partners, and emphasized the need for two-way, deliberative methods.
Trust: The City will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the engagement process among all the participants.	**Open and Transparent**: This speaks to hosting engagement processes that are unbiased and non-judgmental. Workshop participants also noted the importance of taking ownership and being willing to accept the "bad" with the "good."	**Open and Transparent**: This speaks to hosting engagement processes that are honest and clear with defined intentions and expectations. Respondents also noted the importance of all parties being accountable to their words and actions and the significance of non-partisan/ unbiased processes.
Openness: The City will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.		**Diverse and Representative**: A good portion of respondents felt diverse participation and representation of appropriate stakeholders was key for good engagement. They highlighted that engagements should be far-reaching and all-encompassing to involve the right people at the table.
Defining the Public's Role: The City will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.	N/A	**Informative**: Respondents indicate a desire for engagement processes to be informative. The use of storytelling was also mentioned.

Access to the Process: The City will ensure stakeholders have fair and equal access to the community engagement process and the opportunity to influence decisions.	**Accessible and Inclusive**: Workshop participants note that engagements should be simple, clear and concise to welcome involvement.	**Accessible and Inclusive**: This includes ensuring opportunities to engage are far and wide, and considerate of participant's resources, needs and desires. Respondents also noted the importance of the process and materials being presented in a way that is easy to understand and broadly publicized to ensure the right people are notified about the opportunities to engage.
Respect for Communities: The City will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."	**Respectful and Honest**: Engagement should be a process that is positive, empathetic and altruistic, where people are working together, not against each other. Workshop participants also note the importance of co-operation and use of appropriate moderation when necessary.	**Fair/Equitable**: This speaks to the need to ensure all voices feel heard and listened to, as well as welcomed into the process in a receptive manner. Respondents also highlighted the importance of respect and supportiveness during an engagement process.
Advocacy: The City will advocate for the community engagement process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.	N/A	N/A
Commitments: The City will ensure all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.	N/A	**Results Oriented**: Some respondents stressed the need for engagement processes to be results oriented or performance measured. Capturing meaningful metrics is a standard way

		of demonstrating whether a given engagement process was a success or not.
Support of the Practice: The City will stay informed of new developments and standards in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of community engagement.	N/A	N/A

Public survey participants were also asked, "COVID-19 restrictions aside, how interested would you be in participating in the following forms of online and in-person community engagement on a topic/conversation that would be of interest to you?" This list included a range of innovative and more collaborative methods of welcoming people into the deliberation process as well of methods that really allow people to participate on their own time and in ways that would be presumably more convenient for them. Responses to this question will help the City understand some of the public's preferred techniques for engaging. The full results of the survey can be found in Attachment 3.

	Online surveys	Self-guided online workshops	Small focus groups	Online engagement platform	Site visits	In-person collaborative workshops	In-person open houses	Outdoor events	Interviews	Sitting on a task force	Workbooks	Telephone townhall	Design charettes	Hackathons	Social media
Responses	89.48%	75.44%	73.10%	73.09%	71.35%	67.25%	66.08%	63.16%	58.06%	57.90%	56.73%	54.97%	52.63%	49.12%	44.44%

Online Engagement Platform

In December, the City procured Bang the Table – a popular and widely used online engagement tool among municipalities in North America and worldwide. Some of the current municipal clients include, but are not limited to, Mississauga, Brampton, Burlington, Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Newmarket, King, Oshawa, Kitchener, Cambridge, Waterloo, Waterloo Region and Aurora.

Bang the Table's range of eight engagement tools make it easy to marry online and face-to-face methodologies. Through its platform approach, tools can be mixed and matched as needed, and turned on or off, to best support the engagement process. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data at each stage of the project, reporting enables project teams to measure against their project's success criteria.

Eight Engagement Tools

EngagementHQ's range of eight engagement tools (shown below) make it easy to marry your online and face-to-face methodologies.

Through its platform approach, you can mix and match the tools you need, and turn them on or off, to best support the engagement process.

Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data at each stage of the project, reporting enables you to measure your project's success criteria.

Selecting the right tool for your engagement is essential if you are going to get the feedback you need.

When thinking about which tools you might want to utilize, you might consider the spectrum below and first decide on the type of engagement environment you are comfortable with.

What you can see in the diagram, are three operating environments: controlled, mixed, and open.

Each environment has a range of tools that are suitable for use on their own or in combination with others as part of a more robust methodology.

Understanding your objectives, negotiables, and the types of information you need will be a key determining factor for your tool selection.

Open environment
Participants can engage with each other. Comments, images and ideas are visible to the community

Mixed environment
Participants can see other participant contributions. However, there is little peer-to-peer interaction. Some data may be visible to the public, other data is just accessible by admin.

Commenting Disabled | Commenting Enabled

Pre Moderated | Post Moderated

Answered Privately | Answered Publicly

Controlled environment
Participants cannot engage with each other. Data is stored in the backend and only accessible by admin.

FORUM
The Forums tool creates a space for discussion, dialogue and debate. People share their experiences with others, ask questions and have conversations in a safe and interactive environment.

IDEAS
Ideas provides "virtual" post it notes for individuals to add their ideas to a collective board. People like the ideas that inspire them most, helping align your priorities with what matters most to the community.

PLACES
Places is a simple way to gather community feedback and ideas directly on a map. Participants drop a "pin" in the area of concern, add photos and then fill in a quick survey.

STORIES
When we tell or hear a story, neuroscience tells us that we experience things on a higher and more resonant level. Stories helps your community better understand, empathize and relate to others as well as your project goals.

GUESTBOOK
Guestbook keeps things simple; people are only able to upload comments, which are moderated to manage what appears publicly. No other interaction is enabled.

QUESTIONS
Questions is an issues management and communications risk mitigation tool. It is a managed space for your community to ask you questions and for you to respond either publicly or privately.

POLLS
Polls encourage people to give a quick answer on one question, selecting from multiple choice answers. They are able to instantly see the Poll results, piquing their interest and giving you real time insight.

SURVEYS
The Surveys tool gives people an opportunity to voice their opinion in a convenient and guided way, which has historically shown higher response rates than other formats.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, digital means of stakeholder and community engagement are more important than ever. Bang the Table enables advanced digital engagement options while physical distancing is in place and will continue to satisfy the need for digital engagement well into the future. It will also create a streamlined online engagement experience for all citizens.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy: anchoring the framework

The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy (Attachment 4) anchors the entire Community Engagement Framework. It outlines a formalized directional process of, and commitment to, involving citizens, businesses and stakeholders in conversations about municipal matters and decisions that interest and impact them. Central to the policy are these foundational beliefs:

- City-building is a collective effort.
- The City of Vaughan values the voice of its citizens and is dedicated to having constructive dialogue with the community that is open, transparent, accessible and inclusive.
- Community engagement is a process by which citizens and stakeholders learn together and work together on behalf of their communities and in collaboration with their local government to create and realize sustainable and future-defining visions for the community.
- Everyone has wisdom to contribute: the City of Vaughan recognizes that insight collected through the community engagement process provides Vaughan Council and City staff with meaningful information to support sustainable decision-making.

The policy has multiple purposes and aims to:
- ensure the City's community engagement efforts align with Council's priorities for maintaining good governance through accountable decision-making.
- ensure the City's community engagement efforts align with Council's priorities for providing an exceptional citizen-centred experience.
- encourage an active and engaged community.
- establish a common definition of "engagement" and what it means to engage.
- introduce a consistent, strategic and corporate-wide approach for planning and executing community engagement with internal and external audiences.
- identify City projects and initiatives where application of the policy would be appropriate and necessary.
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of City staff and the public within the engagement process.

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

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

Through the policy and its supporting elements, the City will endeavour to achieve the following outputs and outcomes:
- Develop a multi-faceted and overbuilt approach to planning and executing community engagement
- Seek out opportunities to engage:
  - with Vaughan's **diverse** community
  - with a **variety** of stakeholders
  - beyond the **usual suspects**
  - internally with **employees**
- Promote citizen and stakeholder participation through various channels, as well as through new digital options
- Leverage tools and technology to engage with citizens at convenient times and places to increase participation
- Continue to promote a go-to-where-the-public-is approach, where appropriate
- Provide strategic advice and support to staff as they plan their engagement initiatives

Previous Reports/Authority
None.

Financial Impact
There are currently no new funding requirements or budget asks.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations
None.

Conclusion
Community engagement is fundamental to the city-building process, which is a collective effort of Vaughan Council, City staff, Vaughan citizens, stakeholders and other parties that are impacted by or interested in municipal matters and decisions. It is also recognized as a priority in the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

Community and stakeholder engagement at the municipal government level is all about upholding democracy. Vaughan's elected officials have a mandate to protect the democratic process and City staff are committed to facilitating and enhancing that process. Democracy ensures citizens and stakeholders are invited to participate in decision-making, which is a process by which citizens and stakeholders learn together and work together on behalf of their communities and in collaboration with their local government to create and realize sustainable and future-defining visions for the community. Their involvement enhances the process by providing wisdom, information and feedback that helps staff develop appropriate reports and allows Council to make informed decisions.

Community engagement is also an exercise in relationship-building, which has the power to create a culture of trust and understanding between citizens and their local government. This is key to building healthy communities. By instating this policy, the City declares its commitment to evaluating and improving its current processes and working to involve citizens, businesses and stakeholders in crucial conversations that will shape the city they know and love — their home — the city of Vaughan.

For more information, please contact:
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Attachments

1. CMT Summit on Engagement Programming (report), Delaney and Associates, Sept. 9, 2016
2. Internal Workshop on Community Engagement (report), Corporate and Strategic Communications, Oct. 21, 2020

3. Public Survey on Community Engagement (report), Corporate and Strategic Communications, Oct. 14, 2020
4. Draft Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy, Corporate and Strategic Communications
5. Draft Stakeholder and Community Engagement Procedure, Corporate and Strategic Communications
6. Engagement Strategy, City of Vaughan

Prepared by

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Approved by	Reviewed by
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