



COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

City of Fort Saskatchewan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

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The Praxis Group™

For:

The City of Fort Saskatchewan

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Fort Saskatchewan (the City) recognizes the importance of its citizenry and seeks to engage them in actively sharing their values and perspectives on issues facing the City. Further, the City wants its policies, projects and services to be considered relevant and successful by the people they are intended to serve. To ensure this, the opinions and experiences of citizens must be at the heart of the municipal government decisions that affect them.

Public engagement plays an important role in the democratic process. It can help provide information to support decision-making, give a voice to a wide range of citizens, increase public confidence in government activity, and ensure that resources are targeted effectively. However, ineffective engagement can do more harm than good by creating unrealistic expectations, damaging trust, or polarizing points of view. As the City advances public engagement, councillors and staff must be confident about when and how to engage with the public and other interested parties. A public engagement framework is a critical tool to help guide the engagement process.

With the assistance of a grant from Alberta Municipal Affairs' Collaborative Governance Initiative, the City commissioned The Praxis Group™ to assist in the development of a public engagement framework. This framework is intended to provide City of Fort Saskatchewan elected officials and public servants with a common basis for understanding and approaching public engagement.

The framework presents the City of Fort Saskatchewan's *Guiding Principles for Public Engagement* that will direct all of the City's engagement efforts. This is followed by a *Public Engagement Primer*, which defines public engagement, explains why it is important and how to make it meaningful, and describes the levels of engagement and their relationship to decision-making. Finally, the last section, *Public Engagement Tools and Techniques*, will help practitioners design, develop and implement engagement processes for a variety of situations.

The framework is not a prescriptive "how-to" manual for planning and implementing public engagement processes. Instead it is intended to provide an overview of public engagement and help generate thoughtful discussion about public engagement in each City project or initiative, including clarification of the need and goals, possible approaches, and desired outcomes.

Many excellent resources with step-by-step instructions for developing and executing public engagement programs are readily available. In particular, this framework drew from:

- Alberta Municipal Affairs - Public Input Tool for Municipalities
- The International Association of Public Participation Practitioners' Tools
- The City of Calgary - engage! Framework and Toolkit
- The City of Waterloo - Public Involvement: Guidelines, Tools and Worksheets for Successful Community Engagement
- City of Saskatoon - Community Engagement Process, A Guide to Public Process
- Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Public Participation Guide
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) Guide to Effective Public Involvement

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City of Fort Saskatchewan is committed to public engagement processes that encourage two-way dialogue, build trust, and support effective decision-making. Our efforts will be guided by principles that support effective and authentic public engagement and reflect the City's corporate values. We commit to:

Inclusiveness

- Reaching out to and encouraging citizens to be involved in dialogue about issues that affect their lives.
- Seeking out and accommodating diverse voices and perspectives.
- Respecting the collective wisdom of the community.

Transparency

- Communicating clearly and openly about our engagement processes, including the purpose, timing, roles and responsibilities, constraints and outcomes.
- Providing timely feedback to participants about the range of views expressed and how public input was considered by the decision makers.

Accountability

- Ensuring that Council receives all relevant information for its consideration, while recognizing that Council has the final decision-making authority.
- Committing to continuous evaluation and improvement of the engagement process.
- Respecting the public's time and resources and using these effectively.

Communication

- Valuing and providing opportunities for two-way dialogue.
- Providing timely and accessible information to all who are interested in a project or issue.
- Using a variety of communication approaches to most effectively reach the community.
- Using plain language in our communication materials.
- Striving to improve the quality of relationships throughout our processes.

Commitment

- Allocating resources for effective engagement.
- Remaining current with best practices in community engagement.
- Ensuring that our staff are trained and capable of supporting effective engagement.

Responsiveness

- Recognizing that public engagement is a dynamic ongoing process that requires flexibility.
- Evaluating and modifying the process on an ongoing basis.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PRIMER

What is Public Engagement?

Public engagement is an ongoing process involving communication and interaction between the City of Fort Saskatchewan and its residents. Public engagement facilitates information exchange, discussion, debate, and decision-making. Through the process, all parties become better informed about the range of views on issues and proposals, and more involved in the City's decision-making processes. Effective public engagement results in decisions that are more sensitive and responsive to public concerns and values. While many benefits of community engagement are long-term, the process is not a quick fix but an investment with a wide range of risks and costs as well as benefits.

Public engagement includes a range of methods reflecting the degree to which those involved are able to influence, share or control the decision-making. This continuum ranges from the City simply providing information to exchanging information and ideas to working together collaboratively. Effective public engagement requires that the process fit the purpose, the unique characteristics of the project or issue, and the members of the public who are interested in the project or issue.

There is no single "public" but rather a number of publics who may emerge at any time during the life of a project or issue depending on their particular concerns and interests. The public changes for each issue, and tends to increase in numbers at key decision points.

Why is Public Engagement Important?

Because public engagement involves two-way communication, it can offer benefits to both the City and the public. Well-planned and well-executed public engagement processes can result in short- and long-term benefits, and improve project outcomes. However, to be successful, there must be both a genuine commitment to providing open and transparent public engagement, and a demonstrated link between engagement and decision-making.

Effective public engagement can:

Facilitate Sharing of Information, Perspectives and Ideas

- Provide the City with accurate and timely knowledge and insight on conditions, concerns, values and priorities
- Provide the public with accurate information about the City's activities

Build Cooperative Working Relationships

- Increase awareness of the range of perspectives on a topic
- Develop a positive foundation for resolving future problems

Help Reach Balanced Decisions and Resolve Issues

- Gather a wide range of options for solving problems and improving service
- Clarify points of agreement and disagreement
- Identify or confirm priorities
- Generate better quality decisions through creative collaboration
- Align project design with public concerns, priorities and expectations
- Achieve results that respect the knowledge, values and rights of citizens
- Provide the opportunity to address and mitigate public concerns before they escalate
- Give early indications about important issues before they escalate

Build Understanding and Support for City Initiatives

- Increase understanding of the constraints faced by the City
- Lead to more efficient and timely project approval processes
- Attain a community commitment and buy-in to decisions

How Do We Make Engagement Meaningful?

Effective public engagement needs to be meaningful to its participants. They need to believe that the exercise is being undertaken in good faith and not feel that the City is “just going through the motions.” When focus groups were conducted with citizens from Fort Saskatchewan in June 2011, they said that consultation needed to:

- Inspire enthusiasm and passion to get people involved
- Demonstrate to citizens that their feedback and opinions matter
- Indicate how the information collected will be used
- Share information from small group discussions with the wider audience
- Show participants that their input has been heard
- Indicate why and how decisions are reached
- Include a range of opinions and perspectives
- Change direction if the community points it that way
- Use multiple approaches
- Make people feel it is important and meaningful for them to be involved

The input from the focus groups reflects the key elements that help make engagement meaningful:

- **Clear Purpose:** Participants must be clear on the role they will have in the engagement process, particularly how their input will impact decisions.
- **Early Involvement:** The public needs to be engaged early on in the process.
- **Identification of Publics and Stakeholders:** All individuals, organizations and groups, who may be either directly or indirectly affected by a decision or action, need to be identified, informed and given the opportunity to be involved.
- **Accessible, Balanced, Credible Information:** The public must have timely access to the information necessary for meaningful involvement.

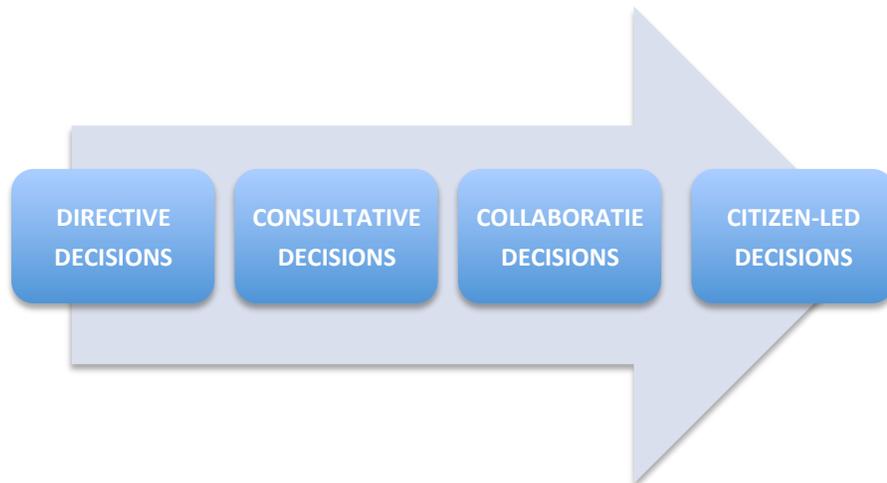
- **Information Sharing:** There must be opportunities for two-way dialogue that facilitates exchange of information, suggestions, concerns and values.
- **Consideration of Community and Cultural Values:** All participants and the process must consider and respect the community and/or cultural values and traditions of the public(s).
- **Adequate Response Time:** Participants must have sufficient time to consider and respond to information, proposals, alternatives or proposed decisions.
- **Responsive Program:** The public engagement program must respond to the level of public interest and also to changing circumstances and needs.
- **Documentation:** The public needs access to documentation about identification of stakeholders, the nature of information shared, the approaches to receiving and analyzing input, and how the input affected decisions.

Adapted from: Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, 2003; Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2003; Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, 2002

Types of Decisions¹

Public engagement is integrally linked with decision-making, and approaches to engagement must reflect the type of decision that is being made. According to the Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2006), most decisions can be classified as directive, consultative or collaborative. Decisions are classed as citizen-led in cases where decision-making authority and control is given to the public.

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONS



¹ Excerpts in this section were taken directly from Alberta Municipal Affairs - Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities, 2006.

Directive Decisions are those made by a person authorized to do so, and are issued to others simply to inform them the decision has been made. Examples of this type of decision include:

- There is an urgent need to respond immediately (e.g. flood response).
- A person in authority is acting within their authority (e.g. police carrying out their duties).
- The decisions are routine and are accepted as part of the municipality's operations (e.g. snow removal after a heavy snowfall).
- The decisions are dictated by law (e.g. improvements to water treatment plant).
- The decisions have substantial effect only on those who have already agreed to be affected through some form of contract (e.g. employment, volunteerism, accepting elected office).

In these cases, the City is acting within its authority and is expected to implement the decision efficiently.

Consultative Decisions are made by the City but involve input from the community and have one or more of the following characteristics:

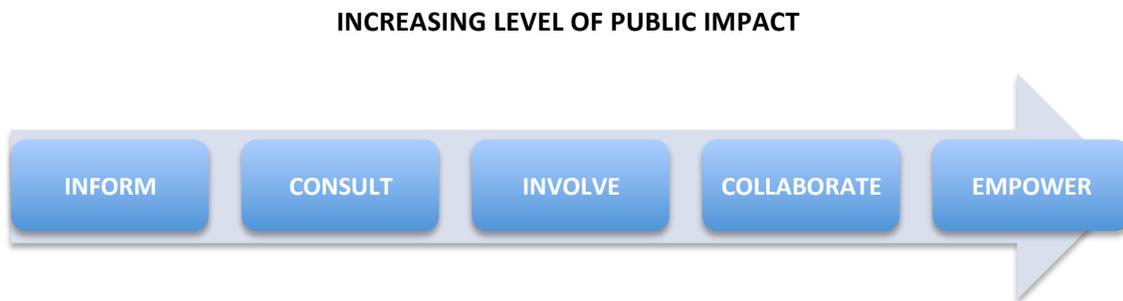
- Public notification and input are required by law.
- The decision is a known concern of other parties, or is likely to have a significant impact on other parties (e.g. a proposed casino).
- The decision affects society's moral or emotional expectations (e.g. expansion of a recreation centre).
- The decision affects the "comfort envelope" (lifestyle or habits) of citizens (e.g. road closure affecting how people access the highway).
- People perceive there are risks associated with the decision (e.g. approving a "half-way" house to support convict rehabilitation).
- Council or administration requests public input prior to making the decision (e.g. public buildings or open space management).

Collaborative Decisions are those made by the City in partnership with members of the community, other municipalities, communities, organizations or individuals to deliver services or to respond to long-term challenges. In these collaborative situations, the City agrees to share the decision process with those at the table. Usually, those at the table must consult with their constituencies as part of the process. Collaborative processes are becoming more common because they can create greater "buy-in" and even "co-investment" (i.e. partners) from those at the table. Collaborative processes have been used in subdivision planning, business revitalization zones, recreational facility development and intermunicipal agreements.

Citizen-led decisions are made when the City empowers citizens, communities or subsets of the public to assume full responsibility for decision-making. In these cases, the City may act as a technical resource but does not actively participate in the decision-making process, and agrees to respect and execute the resulting decision. A plebiscite about water fluoridation is an example of citizen empowerment and citizen-led decision-making.

Continuum of Public Engagement²

As mentioned on page 5, the type of decision to be made has implications for the engagement approach. The degree to which the public is involved in decision-making processes reflects a continuum that includes the five levels of engagement.



Inform

The public is provided with balanced and objective information about a project or activity in order to help them understand the problems, alternatives and/or solutions. This level is characterized by one-way communication and usually involves distributing information aimed at raising awareness and understanding. Here, the public is least likely to influence decision-making.

Consult

Public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions is sought. There is two-way communication with information being shared with the public and opportunities for feedback provided. The intent is to raise awareness and understanding about a project or activity and to receive and consider public comments. At this stage, the City and the public have the opportunity to listen to and learn about each other's plans, views, issues and expectations.

Involve

The City works directly with the public to ensure that issues and concerns are understood and considered. Two-way communication increases and the public has more influence on decision-making. At this level, feedback from the public is analyzed and incorporated into alternatives and outcomes.

Collaborate

The City partners with the public and there is joint planning and shared decision-making. Here, the public participates in the analysis of issues, contributes to the development of alternatives, and directly influences recommendations, decisions and outcomes.

Empower

The City empowers citizens to initiate and make final decisions. Citizens take ownership of the process and are accountable for the outcomes of the decisions, and the City accepts and implements decisions. Citizens act independently and the City may provide technical and/or financial support.

² Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation Public Participation Spectrum (2000)

Levels of Public Engagement and Involvement in Decision Making

Before designing a public engagement program it is important to determine the desired level of public engagement. This is impacted by the purpose of engagement and the type of decision to be made.

→ INCREASING LEVELS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT →						
LEVEL	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER	
	Sharing information	Learning about others' views	Obtaining feedback	Sharing decision-making	Delegating decision-making	
PURPOSE	To present information about issues that may affect people's lives	To provide information and receive feedback or comments	To involve the public in developing solutions	To involve the public in developing solutions	To give final decision-making to the public	
→ INCREASING INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING →						
TYPES OF DECISIONS	DIRECTIVE DECISIONS	CONSULTATIVE DECISIONS	COLLABORATIVE DECISIONS	CITIZEN-LED DECISIONS		

Modified from the International Association of Public Participation

What Level is Most Appropriate?

Public engagement will not be the same for every initiative – decisions about involving the public are based on a number of factors such as the initiative (e.g. scope, complexity, profile, concern, impact), the decision (e.g. nature and timing) and the citizens (number, degree of interest).

Less involvement is appropriate when:

- Interest in the issue is vested in one or a few interest groups.
- Perspectives are generally well understood and can be taken into consideration.
- The issue requires consistency with established professional or technical standards.
- Legislative or regulatory guidelines define and/or limit the level of public involvement.

More involvement is appropriate when:

- Several groups have an interest in the outcome of the issue.
- Consensus among these groups is uncertain.
- The issue is value-based and carries a high need for social acceptance.

Before making a decision about the level of engagement it is important to be clear about the main purpose of the public engagement program. Is it to inform; gather information and views; discuss through a two-way dialogue; collaborate in making a decision about a complex issue; or delegate decision-making to interest groups or members of the public? As well, the level of engagement may vary depending on the nature of the public, particularly if there are many different stakeholders. For instance, it may be appropriate to simply inform geographically distant stakeholders that a project will be undertaken, while those living nearby might be involved in a more collaborative process.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND RESOURCES

1. TOOLS

This section includes key tools to help City councillors and staff:

- Determine the level of readiness for engagement
- Determine the appropriate level of engagement
- Plan and implement engagement programs and processes
- Evaluate engagement programs and processes

LEVEL OF READINESS CHECKLIST

The following checklist is designed to help the engagement planning and implementation team determine their level of readiness to engage the public. Review and respond to the statements as a group. The more “yes” answers equate to a greater likelihood that the engagement process will be meaningful, effective and successful. The checklist can also help the group identify areas where more work is needed before beginning an engagement process (i.e. statements marked “no” or “somewhat”).

ENGAGEMENT READINESS CHECKLIST	No	Somewhat	Yes
The issue and/or question triggering the engagement process has been clearly defined.			
The questions to be asked or the decision sought from the public has been identified.			
The decision has not been made already.			
The public is identifiable, accessible and willing to participate.			
There is an internal commitment to meaningful public engagement.			
There is a willingness to respond to public input.			
There is sufficient time to conduct a meaningful engagement process.			
There are sufficient internal resources (e.g. human, financial) to conduct a meaningful engagement process.			
A project lead has been identified.			
The engagement process has been coordinated with other City processes.			
The potential benefits of conducting a public engagement process have been identified.			
The risks of conducting a public engagement process have been analyzed.			
An engagement process plan has been developed.			
The engagement process aligns with the City’s guiding principles for public engagement and communications.			

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Is Empower An Appropriate Level?

The Level of Engagement Checklist, presented on the following page, provides direction about the appropriate level of involvement for a project or issue. The checklist does not include *Empower* as this decision requires unique consideration. In cases where the decision has been made to delegate responsibility for a project to a public group or body, the public group will be deciding on the extent to which they inform, consult, involve or collaborate, using a similar checklist to help them decide. Considering the following questions will help City councillors and staff decide on whether or not an empowerment level is appropriate. In order to proceed with this level, the team should be able to answer “yes” to all questions relevant to the situation.

EMPOWERMENT QUESTIONS	Yes	No
We want to empower citizens and groups to manage the process or make the decision.		
Legislation permits this delegation of authority.		
If delegating a process to citizens or groups, they must have accepted the challenge.		
We will implement decisions and/or solutions generated by citizens and groups.		

If empowerment is not the appropriate level of engagement, proceed to the Level of Engagement Checklist.

Level of Engagement Checklist

The results of this checklist will provide a general sense of the level of public engagement appropriate for the project or issue. Complete the checklist with all members of the project team and then discuss the results to help develop a common understanding of the engagement program. Rank the level of agreement of each statement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, and put a checkmark in the appropriate column for each statement. Complete the calculations at the bottom of the checklist.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST	1	2	3	4	5
SCOPE					
The size and/or scope of the project or issue are significant.					
The number of people affected by the issue or project is significant.					
The people affected by the project are located in a variety of areas.					
The project or issue affects a range of publics and/or stakeholder groups.					
COMPLEXITY					
The project or issue is unique and challenging.					
The project involves a variety of stages and/or components.					
A significant number of people or groups have strong and/or opposing opinions about the issue or project.					
PROFILE					
The project or issue has high visibility.					
CONCERN					
There are aspects of the project or issue that have previously generated concern in the community.					
There are concerns about cost, aesthetics and nuisance factors.					
There are concerns about effects on health, safety and the environment.					
There are concerns about taxpayer expenditures or taxes in general.					
The nature or focus of the project or issue is controversial.					
IMPACT					
The project or issue will have a direct impact on lifestyles or habits.					
The issue significantly affects the rights and entitlements of community members.					
There will be an impact on property values.					
The project or issue is likely to affect quality of life for some citizens.					
Step 1 - Count the number of checkmarks in each column					
Step 2 - Multiply number of checkmarks (Step 1) by weight for each column (X1...X5)	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5
Step 3 - Record results from Step 2 in blue boxes					
Step 4 - Add the total weighting for each column (blue boxes)					
Step 5 - Divide total weighting sum by 18					
AVERAGE SCORE					
Cross-reference the average score from the checklist with the Continuum of Public Engagement (page 13) to identify the appropriate level of public engagement for the project. Because each level has a different obligation and outcome, the final public engagement strategy may involve more than one level of engagement.					

CONTINUUM OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT			
Inform Score: 1 to 1.9	Consult Score: 2 to 2.9	Involve Score: 2 to 3.9	Collaborate Score: 4 to 5
One-way communication to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Two-way communication where information is shared and opportunities for public feedback are provided. Requires a response from the public, but limited opportunity for public dialogue.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that issues, aspirations and concerns are consistently understood. The public has more influence on decision-making and public feedback is analyzed and incorporated into alternatives and outcomes.	Partner with the public in a process that involves joint planning and shared decision-making. The public participates in the analysis of issues, contributes to the development of alternatives, and directly influences recommendations, decisions and outcomes.
Promise to the Public			
We will keep stakeholders informed.	We will keep stakeholders informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with stakeholders and the public to ensure that their concerns, aspirations and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced decisions.	We will look to stakeholders and the public for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate their recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.

Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (Public Participation Spectrum, 2000)

Once the level of engagement has been determined, review the Engagement Tools and Techniques matrix (page 15) to identify appropriate engagement tools and techniques.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The following tables provide examples of tools and techniques³ that may be used in public engagement processes. The information has been organized by the level of public engagement that the tool or technique will provide. Tips for effective execution, and an overview of the potential benefits and risks have been included for each tool or technique.

Inform

At the basic level, the public is informed about a project or activity. This level is characterized by one-way communication and typically involves the distribution of information aimed at raising awareness and understanding. Here, the public is least likely to influence decision-making.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- INFORM -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
PRINT MATERIAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochures • Newsletters • Fact sheets • Backgrounders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content should be in plain language and easily understood • Content must be unbiased and objective • Must be visually appealing • Should be concise – typically between 8 and 12 pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to reach a large target audience • Opportunity to provide a lot of information at a relatively low cost • Reduces time required to verbally repeat the same information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of materials can be time consuming and costly • Limited ability to communicate complex information • Reach depends on mailing or email list and distribution network • Material may not be read by target group

³ Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation Public Participation Toolbox (2000) and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Public Participation Guide (2010)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- INFORM -			
<i>Tools & Techniques</i>	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Risks</i>
PAID PRINT ADVERTISING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements • Newspaper inserts • Mail box drops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the type of print media and timing of advertising effectively reaches target audience • Design needs to be striking and stand out from other advertisements or inserts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows message to be specifically customized and ensures accuracy • Opportunity to reach a wide range of the population • Ability to segment certain sections of the population • Provides opportunity to include comment form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be cost prohibitive
ELECTRONIC MEDIA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio • Television 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that messages are carried on a range of stations to capture different segments of the population • Consider lower cost or free advertising on community radio or cable channel or internet video options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to reach a wide and varied audience • Ability to manage the message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be cost prohibitive • Difficult to track audience reach
NEWS RELEASES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional background information or press kits with news release • Offer to speak with media to provide additional information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective means of informing media of project and public engagement process • May encourage media to cover project in more depth • Language from news release may be used directly in articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News organizations determine the amount of coverage • No direct control over final content of article
NEWS CONFERENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that presenters are well informed and trained in media relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates additional interest in a project or issue • Can increase the amount of coverage given to a project or issue • Allows the story to be told directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to newsworthy events • Potential to increase negativism if the project or issue is controversial

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- INFORM -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
STATIC EXHIBITS/ DISPLAYS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping centres • Schools • City Hall • Library • Fairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be visually interesting to attract attention • Content should be straightforward and in plain language • A staffed display generally attracts more notice • Ensure that staff are well informed about the project or issue • Provide additional support material (e.g. print material, background documents) • Offer opportunities for comment (e.g. flip charts, response forms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective means of providing general information • Opportunity to identify people and groups interested in participating in the process • May reach publics not ordinarily interested in participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffed displays require significant staff time commitment
PUBLICITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public service announcements • Feature stories • Media coverage • Community calendars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To generate free publicity, project or issue must be presented in a newsworthy manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper, radio and television reach the broad public • Free publicity offers opportunities for coverage in expensive medias • Information presented in media may have higher credibility among public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage may be limited if media do not consider the project or issue to be newsworthy • No direct control over media coverage

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- INFORM -			
<i>Tools & Techniques</i>	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Risks</i>
WEBSITE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated website • Web page on host site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the site is user-friendly and easy to navigate and that the information is presented in a simple and straightforward manner • Update the site on a regular basis • Offer opportunity to provide feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches very large audience and is accessible at the public's convenience • Capable of providing in depth information • Ability to provide visual and auditory information • Opportunity to provide links to other relevant websites • Effectively collects and organizes feedback from public • Low cost method of distributing general information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor design can limit the effectiveness • Not all individuals have access to the internet • Challenge keeping information on the website current.

Consult

At the next level, communication becomes two-way and information is shared with the public and opportunities for feedback are provided. The intent is to raise awareness and understanding about a project or activity and to receive and consider public comments. At this stage, the City and the public have the opportunity to listen to and learn about each other’s plans, views, issues and expectations.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- CONSULT -			
<i>Tools & Techniques</i>	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Risks</i>
OPEN HOUSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibits and displays Informal discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host on days and times that encourage attendance Advertise event in advance Ensure that displays and exhibits are visually appealing and provide information in plain language Provide public feedback forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases awareness and educates public in an informal setting Provides opportunity for direct interaction and relationship building Ability to correct misinformation and to explore public opinion People may feel more comfortable expressing views in a relaxed setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal public comment is difficult to record
TOWN HALL / PUBLIC MEETINGS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information presentations Question and answer session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise event in advance Keep information presentation short Use visuals Provide significant time for questions and answers Provide response forms for individuals reluctant to speak in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides understanding of public opinion and concerns Facilitates open communication with the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to determine level of participation in advance A limited number of participants have the opportunity to speak Question and answer session may be difficult to manage, particularly if the project or issue is controversial Potential for tension between opposing stakeholder groups

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- CONSULT -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
TELEPHONE SURVEYS / POLLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be administered by a third party external organization to avoid perception of bias 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to randomly sample within a target population Opportunity for statistically valid results Provides input from public not actively involved in a project or issue Provides balance to self-selected survey results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be cost prohibitive depending on the size of the population and the length and complexity of the survey
HARD-COPY SURVEYS / QUESTIONNAIRES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail or fax-back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop distribution strategy to target sample population Provide a variety of options for submission to increase response rate Provide drop boxes in key locations (City Hall, library) to increase response rates Give information about confidentiality Pre-paid postage increases response rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for both qualitative and quantitative feedback Solicits feedback from a cross-section of the public and stakeholders Statically valid results may increase credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response rate is unpredictable Printing and distribution can be expensive Analysis can be time consuming Risk of campaigns from activist or organized groups Budgeting may be difficult due to variable response rate
ON-LINE SURVEYS / QUESTIONNAIRES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that design and language of web survey is straightforward and user friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accesses broad range of residents Individuals can complete and submit survey at their leisure Low cost to produce and administer Response rate higher than mail-back surveys No additional data entry is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise is required to design and post on-line surveys Risk of campaigns from activist or organized groups

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- CONSULT -			
<i>Tools & Techniques</i>	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Risks</i>
INFORMATION HOTLINE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-recorded project information • Staffed line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-recorded message should include access to appropriate contact information and voicemail option • Hotline number should be well publicized • Dedicated staff person should be knowledgeable and a skilled communicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps public locate individuals who have the information they require • Provides a means for receiving public comment • Can readily update information about project or specific activities • Gives appearance of accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff must be prepared to reply to public information requests promptly and accurately • Inappropriate responses from phone line staff can produce a negative reaction from the public
BRIEFING PRESENTATIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic organizations • Local clubs • Staff • Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups and organizations may be looking for keynote speakers • Ensure that presentation is easy to understand and captures the interest of the audience • Use visuals • Include question and answer session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information can be controlled • Opportunity to receive comment and feedback from participants • Same presentation can be used for different groups • Cost effective • May reach public that are indifferent otherwise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic may not be relevant to audience
EMAIL / INPUT LINK ON WEBSITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a system for organizing and responding to email and website submissions • Develop methodology for analyzing responses to make data useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used to contact and notify stakeholders • Allows public to provide comment at their leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant amount of time required to read and respond to responses • Response is unpredictable

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- CONSULT -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
INTERVIEWS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one meetings • Telephone interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an interview guide with standardized questions for consistency and comparability • Provide respondent with information about the purpose of the interview and how the input will be used • Provide information about confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an understanding of each respondent's issues, concerns and preferred outcomes • May provide guidance for future public engagement activities • Provides standardized framework for collecting and analyzing input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling and conducting individual interviews can be time consuming
FOCUS GROUPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderated small group discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a moderator's and recorder's guide for consistency and comparability • Use open-ended questions to inspire interactive discussions • Recruit participants with a cross-section of interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective for soliciting public and stakeholder insights, perspectives, opinions and preferences • Can be used to test public's reaction to key messages and decision options • Relatively cost effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of the focus group is dependent on the moderator's skill
SMALL GROUP MEETINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis should be on informality • Statements or presentations should be extremely brief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal environment encourages relaxed and positive discussions • Builds relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant time commitment required to reach a large audience
COMMUNITY FAIRS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibits and displays • Interactive activities • Informal discussion • Celebratory atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan events and activities that are attractive to target audience • Logistics must be comprehensive and detailed • Make certain that the event is adequately staffed • Be prepared for crowds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds awareness • Attracts media coverage • Tone of the event is positive • Encourages informal information sharing and relationship building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to organize and execute • Public must be motivated to attend • Requires significant time commitment from staff • Can be costly

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- CONSULT -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters • Written statements • Position papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can request formal response in addition to independent submissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides qualitative input from organized groups and general public • Typically more in depth than survey and questionnaire responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis can be difficult and time consuming
EXPERT PANELS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts from different perspectives • Moderated panel discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the moderator is skilled and non-biased • Provide the public with the opportunity to ask questions following the panel discussion • Establish and communicate rules for participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raises new issues, clarifies points of view, identifies various interests • Stimulates further discussion with the public • Opportunity for balanced dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May heighten public concerns by highlighting issues and problems • Panel presentations can be academic and difficult to understand • Requires substantial planning and financial resources

Involvement

Moving through the continuum, two-way communication increases and centers on established and mutually accepted objectives. At this level, the public has more influence on decision-making and feedback from the public is analyzed and incorporated into alternatives and outcomes.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- INVOLVE -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
WORKSHOPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive working sessions focused on specific topic or issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide background materials and technical information Include a cross-section of interests Clearly define tasks and the desired outcomes Design activities to motivate participants and achieve desired outcomes Provide facilitators and recorders for each working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can build credibility and buy-in Useful for dealing with complex issues and topics Participants collectively become involved in definition of issues and problem solving Fosters a team environment among stakeholders Opportunity to receive detailed input from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive planning and organization is required Several small group facilitators and recorders may be required Challenging participants may negatively influence process and outcome
ROUNDTABLES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small group discussions from large group meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that a skilled facilitator manages each of the roundtable discussions Provide a recorder for each discussion group Present discussion summaries when large group reconvenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator can probe and solicit more in depth feedback about issues, concerns, preferences Level of comfort among the public may increase in smaller setting Facilitator helps to ensure more equitable participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of hiring professional facilitators and recorders can be cost prohibitive

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- INVOLVE -			
<i>Tools & Techniques</i>	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Risks</i>
SMALL GROUP PROCESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the facilitator is skilled Clearly identify objectives and desired outcomes Develop approach for recording and analyzing input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages groups to generate creative ideas and solutions Promotes understanding and consensus building Builds relationships Diminishes potential conflict by providing a structured format and safe environment for sharing feelings, opinions and perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating input can be difficult
CHARETTES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged, facilitated meeting to achieve mutual agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that a range of public/stakeholders participate Ask participants for a commitment to the process until consensus has been reached Plan exercises and activities that generate creative ideas Outline objectives and indicate how input will be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective mechanism for achieving a consensus among conflicting groups or interests Encourages joint problem solving Fosters understanding of positions held by other groups Builds cooperative relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective only when participants have sense of urgency or priority Requires significant time commitment from participants Beneficial only if there is a willingness to implement outcomes

Collaborate

This stage is characterized by joint planning and shared decision-making. Here, the public participates in the analysis of issues, contributes to the development of alternatives, and directly influences recommendations, decisions and outcomes.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- COLLABORATE -			
Tools & Techniques	Tips	Benefits	Risks
<p>CONSENSUS BUILDING TECHNIQUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominal group Delphi panels Deliberative dialogue Public value assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use techniques that are simple and straightforward Allow sufficient time to reach consensus Determine degree of consensus necessary to move forward Ensure that the decision-making authority is committed to the consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivates compromise among diverse interests Generates structured decision-making Emphasis is on problem solving to reach mutually satisfactory outcome May help avoid later conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consensus may not be achievable Group must be open to compromise
<p>ADVISORY COMMITTEES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group of stakeholders providing direct input on an on-going basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the committee roles and responsibilities are defined and agreed in a mandate Provide equitable access to resources and information Recruit and interview potential participants Ensure that stakeholders represent a cross-section of affected publics, points of view or fields of expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an indication of public views and concerns Participants serve as a connection to interest groups Participants become informed before decisions are reached Facilitates cooperation and understanding among various interests Builds relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and human resources requirement can be substantial Committee members required to dedicate substantial volunteer time

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES			
- COLLABORATE -			
<i>Tools & Techniques</i>	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Risks</i>
TASK FORCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group of stakeholders formed to accomplish specific assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants should represent range of interests and perspectives Stakeholders should have credibility with public Specific task, desired outcomes and anticipated timeframe should be clearly established Provide access to information and experts Strong leadership is necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for differing interests to reach compromise Resulting products or recommendations typically have credibility with the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial time is needed for preparation Requirements for staff support may be considerable Substantial commitment of volunteer time required by participants
STUDY CIRCLES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small group meeting to find solutions to a specific problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide necessary background information before the meeting Ensure that participants represent a broad range of perspectives May require multiple meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for enhanced understanding and communication Generates problem solving through collaborative study All participants have an equal opportunity to contribute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled facilitator is required Preparing background information can be costly and time consuming
THIRD PARTY FACILITATED CONFLICT RESOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation Negotiation Arbitration Conciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The third party facilitator must be acceptable to all parties Clearly define the role of the facilitator Ensure that the facilitator is thoroughly informed Determine in advance how recommendations will be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective when interdependent parties cannot reach agreement Can result in agreements that are supported by all parties Communication and understanding among conflicting parties may be improved Focuses conflicting parties on substantive issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be time and labor intensive To be successful, all parties must be committed to the process and have a willingness to compromise Mutually agreeable resolutions may not be reached

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

There are a number of considerations and tasks involved in developing and implementing a public engagement program. The following steps will help guide the planning team's discussion and make sure they have considered the critical aspects of a program. After discussion, the planning team can document the discussion on the attached worksheet.

1. Clarify the Purpose and Objectives

- Review the background for the project or issue.
- Clarify the purpose, objectives and desired outcomes for the engagement process.
- Identify key issues.
- Confirm legal or regulatory requirements.

2. Decide Who Should be Involved

- Identify the publics and stakeholders that should be involved.
- Determine each group's interest in and impact on the project or issue.

3. Determine the Level of Readiness

- Determine the likely 'level of readiness' using the checklist on page 10.

4. Determine Level of Engagement

- Determine the desired level of public engagement, e.g. whether the public is going to be kept informed or actively involved in decision-making. Use the Checklist on page 12.

5. Decide on the Tools and Techniques

- Based on the level of public engagement, review the appropriate Tools and Techniques starting on page 14.
- Considering the benefits and constraints for each approach, determine the tools that will be used.

6. Confirm Timeframes and Resources

- Identify key engagement milestones.
- Develop a budget estimate for the engagement process.
- Determine what skills/resources are available and/or required.

7. Confirm Feedback and Reporting

- Identify how and when to provide feedback about the process to each stakeholder group and the public.
- Determine how the final outcomes will be documented and communicated.

8. Evaluate

- Complete the evaluation Worksheet on page 31.

Adapted from Warringa Council (2011). Community Engagement Matrix

Public Engagement Plan Worksheet

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHEET	
	Project Title:
Engagement Coordinator (Name, title, department, contact information.)	
Project Management (How is the overall project being managed? Include name of project manager, team members and departments. How is the engagement project being managed?)	
Purpose and Objectives (What is to be achieved through the engagement process?)	
Background (Include information such as history, previous engagement exercises.)	
Key Issues	

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHEET	
Stakeholders/Publics (List the different stakeholders and publics, level of concern and impact.)	
Level of Engagement Readiness	
Level of Engagement	
Tools/Techniques (e.g. newspaper articles, open house, focus groups)	
Timeframe (Include stages of public engagement if more than one.)	

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHEET	
Resources (Identify costs, key roles and responsibilities.)	
Feedback and Reporting (Confirm how and when participants will receive feedback about the process, the input received, how it was used and the final outcomes.)	
Evaluation (Refer to the evaluation checklist on page 31.)	

ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION

Public Engagement Evaluation Worksheet

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION WORKSHEET				
	Yes	Partially	No	Comments
Were the objectives of the public engagement process achieved?				
Did the engagement strategy reflect the City's Public Engagement Guiding Principles?				
Were all affected publics and stakeholders identified?				
Were the engagement tools and approaches effective?				
Did the engagement process provide the public and stakeholders with sufficient opportunity to participate?				
Was the public satisfied with the engagement process?				
Was the quality and quantity of public input adequate?				
Were the key issues addressed?				
Was the process for recording and analyzing public input satisfactory?				
Was the engagement process managed effectively?				
Was the timeline for the engagement process realistic?				
Was the staff time allocated sufficient?				
Did the public engagement process stay within budget?				
Did stakeholders receive feedback about how input influenced decisions?				

2. RESOURCES

There is a wealth of information and resources about public engagement. The following websites and manuals contain information about all aspects of public engagement from its philosophy to its practice and from training courses to tools.

Public Engagement Websites

- **Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement** <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/index.php>

Summary: This website is dedicated to the art and science of community engagement and collaborative leadership. The website includes: a resource library with community engagement articles, frameworks and tools; a variety of resources developed by Tamarack and Vibrant Community coaches; a bookstore; online audio seminars and podcasts; free tele-learning seminars; and a free monthly e-magazine.

- **International Association for Public Participation** <http://www.iap2.org/>

Summary: IAP2 is an Association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.

- **deliberative-democracy.net** <http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/>

Summary: deliberative-democracy.net is the online home of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium. The mission of the Consortium is to bring together practitioners and researchers to support and foster the budding, broad-based movement to promote and institutionalize deliberative democracy at all levels of governance in the United States and around the world. The site offers an extensive range of articles, news releases, guides and reports.

- **The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation** <http://ncdd.org/>

Summary: The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) promotes the use of dialogue, deliberation, and other innovative group processes to help people come together across differences to tackle challenging problems. The website serves as a gathering place, a resource clearinghouse, a news source, and a facilitative leader for the dialogue and deliberation community and beyond.

- **Canadian Policy Research Networks** <http://www.cprn.org/index.cfm?!=en>

Summary: Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) advises Canada's leaders on the issues and the policy options to move Canada forward. Since 1995, CPRN has played a leadership role in public involvement in Canada with a mandate to bring citizens' voices and values into public policy decisions and to foster greater civic literacy and engagement. The website provides a wide range of public engagement resources.

Canadian Community for Dialogue and Deliberation <http://www.c2d2.ca/>

Summary: The Canadian Community for Dialogue and Deliberation is a community of individuals and organizations dedicated to the creation and sustainability of vibrant communities, businesses, governments, not for profits and learning institutions through the good practice of dialogue, deliberation, collaborative action and decision-making processes. A variety of public engagement learning resources are available on the website.

Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement <http://www.engagementcentre.ca/>

Summary: The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) brings together the expertise of youth, youth service providers, academic researchers and policy makers to identify, build and implement models of effective practice for meaningfully engaging youth and to document the results. The website includes resources produced by the centre as well as information from other organizations interested in youth engagement.

Public Engagement Manuals and Frameworks

“Involving Edmonton Handbook; Public Involvement Framework”

The City of Edmonton, Alberta (2008) <http://www.edmonton.ca/search/results.aspx>

Summary: The City of Edmonton developed the Public Involvement Framework to ensure a consistent approach by all City staff for all public involvement processes. Section 1 contains key considerations about planning and conducting public involvement processes. Section 2 reviews process tools and methods and offers information for selecting public involvement methods. Section 3, the public involvement plan workbook, is a step-by-step guide for creating a public involvement plan. Section 4 provides guidance for translating the information from the previous section into a public involvement plan.

“Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities”

Municipal Dispute Resolution Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs (2006)

http://www.auma.ca/live/AUMA/Toolkits+%26+Initiatives/Citizen_Engagement_Toolkit

Summary: The Toolkit aims to assist municipalities to create an effective engagement plan by providing a usable set of tools to involve citizens in many different ways. The toolkit is divided into two main sections. Section 1 describes how public input opportunities should be designed and planned in small and mid-sized municipalities. Section 2 describes approaches and techniques for carrying out public consultation activities on behalf of a municipality. The document also includes a guide to Community Consultation for Developers, and the Citizen’s Guide to Participating in Municipal Decision-making.

“Local Government Participatory Practices Manual”

Federation of Canadian Municipalities, International Centre for Municipal Development (2007)

<http://www.fcm.ca/English/googlesearch.asp?x=1&cx=001363921072910328308%3Aopw0nimds5c&cof=FORID%3A10&ie=iso-8859-1&oe=iso-8859-1&q=local+government+participatory&sa=Search&siteurl=www.fcm.ca%2Fenglish%2Fview.asp%3F%3D1353>

Summary: The Manual was designed to enhance the ability of municipal officials and staff to initiate or strengthen participatory processes in their own communities. The first section of the Manual is a participatory toolkit, containing detailed descriptions of 15 tools used to support public participation in local government. The next section offers a series of worksheets designed to facilitate the application of participatory tools. The Manual’s last section identifies a range of resources on public participation in local government.

“Handbook on Citizen Engagement: Beyond Consultation”

Canadian Policy Research Networks (2008) <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?l=en&doc=1857>

Summary: The Handbook builds on years of work at the Canadian Policy Research Networks bringing together cutting edge thinkers and practitioners in the field of citizen engagement. It provides an overview of public engagement concepts and methods of public engagement as well as a significant number of resources pertaining to public engagement.

“Public Involvement: Guidelines, Tools and Worksheets for Successful Community Engagement”

The City of Waterloo, Ontario (2010) <http://www.waterloo.ca/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=2606>

Summary: Recognizing that public involvement often requires more than just informing the community, an ad hoc committee consisting of Council, staff and citizens developed public engagement guidelines, which involve five complimentary stages: inform, listen and learn, consult, collaborate, and empower. Based on the best practices from other municipalities, the document provides a series of staff guidelines, tools and worksheets.

“Guide for Effective Public Involvement”

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (2003) <http://www.capp.ca/getdoc.aspx?DocID=73244>

Summary: The purpose of the Guide is to introduce the fundamentals of public involvement, to provide guidance for designing an effective public involvement program, and to serve as an on-going reference for public involvement activities. While geared toward the oil and gas industry, the information provided is applicable to other sectors.

“The City of Saskatoon Community Engagement Process – A Guide to Public Process”

The City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (2004)

http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/Communitydevelopment/Documents/ce_fullmanual.pdf

Summary: The Community Engagement Process was developed to provide The City of Saskatoon with a consistent approach to engage the public in civic matters. The first section of the document identifies the guiding principles and overall objectives for public engagement, and sets out the roles of key stakeholders, including Council, administrators, community organizations and the public. The second section defines community engagement and discusses the benefits of community engagement. The third section provides a step-by-step approach for planning and implementing community engagement processes. A series of practical worksheets and checklists are included in the document.

“Community Engagement in the New South Wales (NSW) Planning System”

Sydney, Australia (2003)

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/community_engagement_handbook_part_1.pdf

Summary: This document provides guidance on how to conduct effective community engagement. It is geared towards local and State environmental planning practitioners and anyone interested in improving community engagement in the New South Wales planning and development system. The document describes community engagement as a tool to consult the public to develop better decisions and policies. It is a valuable document for governments seeking to find ways of engaging the public in their work.

REFERENCES

- “Guide to Effective Public Involvement” Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Calgary, Alberta (2003)
- “Community Engagement in the New South Wales Planning System” Prepared for Planning NSW by Elton Consulting, Sydney, Australia (2003).
- “engage! Framework and Toolkit” The City of Calgary, Alberta (2003)
- “Involving Edmonton – A Public Involvement Initiative” The City of Edmonton, Alberta (2008)
- “Public Participation Guide” Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (2010)
- “Public Participation in Protected Area Management – Best Practices” Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, Australia (2002)
- “Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities” Prepared by Equus Consulting Group Inc. for Alberta Municipal Affairs, Edmonton, Alberta (2005)
- “Public Involvement: Guidelines, tools and worksheets for successful community engagement” City of Waterloo, Ontario (2008)
- “The City of Saskatoon Community Engagement Process – A Guide to Public Process” City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (2007)
- The International Association of Public Participation Practitioners’ Tools (2000)
- “Warringa Council Community Engagement Matrix” Sydney, Australia (2011)



COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE
City of Fort Saskatchewan

ADVICE ON AN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM

Prepared by:
The Praxis Group™
And Philip Dack
For:
The City of Fort Saskatchewan

March 2012

INTRODUCTION

The City of Fort Saskatchewan continues to experience significant growth in population, development and infrastructure. This growth, coupled with the challenges faced by all municipal governments, creates an environment in which multiple, often times conflicting expectations arise. The disputes that arise in such situations are well-known, almost expected by the participants; however it is still often a struggle for all involved to resolve them and stress is a very common byproduct. The resolution of such conflicts needs to be both efficient and effective, and often needs to be seen publically to be so.

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has requested advice on the creation of a clearly defined ‘alternative dispute resolution mechanism to assist in achieving excellence in customer service while managing difficult situations.’

Conflict management is not simply a single area toward which Fort Saskatchewan needs to direct energy but is at the basis of a broader management and human resources approach to doing business. Its effects are much broader than just dealing with individual disputes that may arise. Actions to improve the resolution of individual disputes will improve all areas of communication, team strength and productivity within the administration.

This assessment of the City’s current capacity to deal effectively with conflict and the subsequent recommendations is based on the input from the municipal team, survey results and discussions with senior management.

Taking into account the current pace of activity being experienced by the staff of the City, our recommendations include:

- Training
- Developing a Policy Framework for addressing conflict
- Developing protocols for addressing conflict
- Upgrading systems to address the most frequent causes of conflict

CONFLICT BACKGROUND

Conflict (differences of opinion, attitudes) and disputes (when the conflict escalates to a recognizable level) occur in a number of contexts in Fort Saskatchewan as in all municipalities:

- Interpersonal - staff level
- Administration - union
- Public - staff
- Inter-agency (including conflict with senior governments)
- Intermunicipal
- Formal - formal bodies/processes created by provincial legislation or bylaw to adjudicate specific disputes (e.g. Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Public Hearings of Council, Assessment Appeal Boards)

The principles presented in this report are relevant for all types of conflict however they are presented specifically in relation to the **public – staff conflict context**.

Developing a large organization such as the administration of the City of Fort Saskatchewan into a 'conflict wise' organization is a challenge. The challenge arises from two sources - the difficulties that **organizations** have in dealing with disputes – and the difficulty that **individuals** have in dealing with disputes.

Organizations (and especially municipal organizations) are sensitive to conflict because the complainant is often a taxpayer who always has access to a City Councillor if they wish to take a dispute that far. There is a fear that upset citizens will go to senior staff or politicians who do not want to have to handle problems and, in the case of politicians, may actually blame the staff for not 'resolving the problem'. Municipal organizations have developed a very large number of regulations and policies to cover a very wide range of possible situations and most residents do not know about the regulations until they are stopped by one.

Individuals often experience great stress in dealing with conflict as they have been trained since youth that if people are upset with you, you have probably done something wrong. This anxiety will likely have absolutely no basis in fact for a civil servant but can still create significant anxiety in the staff member. This dynamic can be exacerbated because many people (the public complainant) in dealing with authority have learned from their youth that they have to be aggressive if they want to get their way. Their aggression stimulates the municipal staff members' anxiety. Normally staff who receive complaints regularly have developed personal psychological mechanisms (as well as organizational policies) to avoid emotional responses to verbal pressure but are still affected by it.

The City of Fort Saskatchewan can certainly not deal with the personal psychology of its staff or the public but senior managers must recognize that these underlying dynamics exist and guarantee that there is no way to fully avoid conflict escalation.

The primary principle that an organization that handles conflict effectively understands **is that conflict is natural, occurs in all social, political and even biological systems and must be addressed rather than avoided**. In fact a 'conflict wise' organization recognizes that one of the most common ways for an organization to identify issues for improvement is through learning from conflict just as an ecosystem adjusts to handle a new 'negative' external stimulus.

Rarely do organizations address conflicts effectively – they often act too late, deny too long, over react when there is no downside, take inappropriate actions, fail to learn from the situation. There are a number of reasons that a municipality may be more prone to these reactions that have been suggested above.

The downside of not handling conflict proactively (including learning from recent past disputes) is that we are likely to face the same situation, somewhat altered, again, with commensurate losses of time and resources. The more troubling cost may be loss of respect for the municipal government on the part of the public and loss of employee commitment to their jobs and to the organization.

An organization that effectively deals with conflict must have two attributes: 1) Trust – between staff and supervisors; and 2) Training .

When an organization has clear transparent procedures in place that address the 'conflict areas', e.g. appeal procedures, clear explanations as to the elements being considered in deciding on a matter (such as a development permit) many disputes can be avoided. However even in the absence of clear systems (and there will never be systems for all disputes) trust and training can 'carry the day.'

The importance of trust is clear as it allows the staff member to use their best judgement secure in the knowledge that they will always have the benefit of the doubt with their supervisor in case a conflict is escalated. Training is very important as most people continue to practice a default conflict resolution approach developed in their youth. Training in **interest-based** approaches to addressing conflict teaches staff a spectrum of new approaches to dispute management. Such approaches are very useful in employee's personal as well as occupational lives. Interest-based approaches are the basis of the Municipal Affairs model and can be summarized as the 'win-win' model. In spite of training many times staff will be called on to 'just say no' to public requests. Training will empower them to be able to take this position with clarity, patience and self-confidence.

There are four main ways that individuals (and organizations) deal with conflict: **avoidance, domination, compromise, and integration** (other authors cite competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and compromising however the principle is the same). Without training the individuals faced with a conflict will revert to their preferred personal mode of dealing with conflict. Through training and creating an accepted consistent corporate approach individuals will be able to apply more effective conflict management methodologies.

In extremely bureaucratic environments, with ever-increasing pressures to do more with less, subject to layers of laws and regulations, and under constant public scrutiny, public agencies face a barrage of factors that catalyze internal and external conflicts. Being able to recognize, tackle, and resolve conflicts is thus a critical skill for public administrators.

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN CONTEXT

From the interviews and the facilitated meetings conducted with the senior staff of the City and the survey of members of the public our impressions are that:

- The degree of conflict experienced by the municipality is significant (although no greater than that to be expected in a municipality of a similar size and geographic context).
- The manner in which conflict is addressed is, in the main, appropriate, well handled, and consistent with the current level of generalized expertise.
- There are indications from the interviews that the organization is getting better at addressing internal issues and the related conflicts in a more cooperative manner.
- The capacity to address future and possibly more acute conflict is limited, without proper and focused resourcing.
- The demands of citizen groups for special treatment (access to resources or reduced fees) is increasing.
- The addition of a Land Development Coordinator within the Administration should address interface issues between departments and provide a single point of information for developers and builders – often a significant source of pressure on Administration and Council.

Although the surveys didn't focus directly on conflict situations there were a number of responses that do bear on how the City does business that are relevant to the handling of conflict, including:

- More information is always better
- Be accountable
- When things don't work as expected say so – don't always spin information
- Council and PSI have done very good job when 56% of the those queried believe that their input has affected Council decisions
- Follow-up concerns in a timely fashion

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a ‘Statement of Principles for Conflict Management’ within the Organization.

An explicit statement of the Administration’s position vis-à-vis conflict within the organization will generate an understanding within the staff that conflict is an expected part of any job and particularly when one is working with the public. An example MUNICIPAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY and a Policy Statement for one department Planning and Strategic Initiatives is attached as an example.

2. Identify a staff person who is interested in being trained in dispute resolution processes and support their training.

There is a body of knowledge around ‘conflict management’ or ‘dispute resolution’ that a municipality should have available. Municipal Affairs will provide training and tools however the administration should identify at least one individual who is interested in gaining these skills. This can be done through an internal ‘offering’ or by consulting possible candidates individually.

3. Undertake a ‘Conflict Audit’ asking all staff to identify generic areas of job-related conflict. Both staff, public and internal conflict should be identified.

This is a very important exercise as it will identify stress points for individual staff members as well as for the organization. It can be provided on-line using a ‘survey-monkey’ tool or in written form. The purpose of the audit is to identify conflict areas that are not being addressed often because they are experienced by individuals who think their situation is unique so they don’t raise the situation with management. An open ended questionnaire allows staff to propose approaches to addressing the conflict areas. Examples of such instruments can be provided.

4. Offer Public (or stakeholder) workshops addressing areas of common concern to the public. e.g. turn-around time for permits, exercise of planning discretion, market based assessment.

By waiting until criticism reaches the politicians or media has clear costs. It is very valuable for administration to offer public sessions that relate to the areas of most friction between the public and the City – assessment, planning and building approvals, bylaw enforcement, snow removal and other engineering policies. These evening or weekend sessions may not be well attended but their proactive availability can ‘cut the head off’ areas of conflict and create understanding between the municipality and the public on challenging matters. These sessions can be organized for specific audiences (e.g. developers) or as part of a ‘Getting to know your City’ series of open forums.

- 5. Support staff in taking Alberta Municipal Affairs courses related to conflict communications. Consider providing issue-based courses to front line and supervisory staff on specific areas that generate conflict.**

In conjunction with #2 above administration should continue to encourage staff to take Municipal Affairs Interest Based Dispute Resolution (negotiation, mediation, conflict communications) courses.

- 6. Include dispute resolution clauses in all contracts**

- 7. Undertake a ‘Conflict Review’ with senior staff and Council on a semi-annual basis to identify areas that are breeding conflicts and disputes.**

- 8. Implement a clear public engagement policy for planning related matters**

This report contains recommendations on this matter. Planning decisions as they involve the provincially mandated power of the local government are at the root of many disputes with the public. A clear and transparent citizen engagement process will increase the acceptability of the municipality’s decisions on these matters.

APPENDIX

Example: MUNICIPAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Definition of Conflict

A Conflict is a value-free situation:

1. Conflict is not positive or negative, it is just a difference of position on a specific matter
2. Conflict gains its impact **only** from the emotions that are generated by the people involved in it
3. Conflict will never be eradicated, as it is basic to organizations and individuals, but it can be ameliorated and reduced through proper management

There is a range of causes of conflict,

- differing expectations of organizational roles and responsibilities
- changing and competing priorities
- physical and situational work environments
- people differences, including values and interests
- ineffective communications
- allocation of resources,
- workloads,
- personality styles (learned responses)
- challenges of being a public service and regulator

Policy Statement

We recognize that conflict is natural and its effective management will lead to community and organizational improvement.

The City of Fort Saskatchewan will constantly strive to be proficient in our ability to manage our conflict situations through:

- increased internal capacity (training)
- a conflict-comfortable culture
- efficiently and fairly addressing public complaints
- effectively using appropriate dispute resolution procedures
- learning from our experience in dispute management
- being responsive, while using discretion where appropriate
- always act with integrity – not changing our position for expedience

We are committed to seek mutual gain wherever possible, but we will not compromise or abdicate our corporate, professional, legislative, judicial, personal, and statutory responsibility to the greater public good.

Example : PLANNING & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Preamble

The City of Fort Saskatchewan recognizes the need to address conflicts that arise in the course of the work of Planning & Strategic Initiatives (PSI). The PSI Department wishes to deal with conflicts in a way that provides leadership while encouraging co-operation with and responsibility in the public. This policy is based on a number of principles. Definitions of terms used in the policy are provided at the end of this policy statement:

Cooperation and Collaboration

PSI employees will utilize interest based approaches to assure cooperation with the public and emphasize collaboration as a means of doing business.

Accountability and Fairness

PSI employees will combine their technical and administrative functions with creativity to find resolutions that address the proponent's and the public's interests while protecting staff's accountability to the City. PSI employees will utilize dispute resolution processes, which resolve conflicts and enhance understanding between the parties to those conflicts.

Timely and Cost Effective Processes

PSI employees will utilize processes and skills to minimize the time and cost to resolve disputes. The City also recognizes the need for conflict resolution processes to be simple and accessible. Finally, the City recognizes that the cost of resolving conflict should be affordable to all parties.

Dispute Prevention and Handling

PSI employees will work in order to prevent disputes from arising. When disputes *do* arise, employees will encourage use of the dispute resolution process which best achieves the purposes of the principles in this policy. The priority of employees and PSI will be to resolve disputes consensually through negotiation or mediation before proceeding to adversarial or adjudicative approaches.

Policy and Program Initiatives

As a matter of policy, PSI employees will include in program initiatives various dispute resolution processes. These processes will suit the circumstances of the disputes they are meant to address. Dispute resolution processes will emphasize the value of collaboration instead of confrontation. Fort Saskatchewan Council and staff will encourage other bodies with which the municipality has a structural relationship to adopt dispute resolution policies.

Client Services and Relationship

The City of Fort Saskatchewan intends to work with the public and provide client services in a way that minimizes the negative effects of conflict by anticipating its occurrence. Dispute resolution processes in PSI will be used to promote cordial working relationships as well as resolution of issues in conflict.

The City will inform its citizens and customers of the availability and utility of a range of dispute resolution processes. The City will encourage activities and events that educate its citizens in dispute resolution options. Fort Saskatchewan employees will work in cooperation with non-governmental organizations in advancing knowledge and experience in dispute resolution.

Legal Initiatives

Fort Saskatchewan Council and staff will include dispute resolution clauses in contracts and agreements. These clauses will encourage the use of negotiation, mediation and other non-adjudicative forms of dispute resolution as a preference to litigation. The City will integrate into its bylaws, a range of methods of dispute resolution to assure that discussion is given priority and litigation is reserved for cases of last resort.

Example of a Dispute Resolution Policy that the City Could Adopt: PSI CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Development Permits/ Subdivision Process/ Proposed Bylaws/Statutory Amendment: Dispute Resolution

1. When questions or conflicts arise during the initial intake of applications, PSI staff will use interest-based approaches to assist proponents and maintain the standards of the City.
2. PSI staff will encourage and support interest based approaches to resolve issues or disputes that may arise out of public consultation between the proponent and the public prior to the Municipal Planning Commission and Council review of the application. These approaches may include but are not limited to; face-to-face discussions between the parties and facilitation of the issues by trained staff.
3. While maintaining their authority to decide on developments under review, the Municipal Planning Commission and/or Council will consider interest-based approaches to resolve disputes, which may arise from applications prior to making a decision. These approaches may include but are not limited to; further negotiation between staff and the proponent, facilitation/mediation between the proponent and any opposing public and facilitation/mediation between all parties including the City of Fort Saskatchewan.
4. Prior to first reading by Council, proponents may be encouraged to enter into public consultation, facilitated discussions or mediation to resolve issues and potential conflicts proactively.
5. When issues arise during the public consultation process, and in particular within the public hearing, Council may choose to table the public hearing and direct staff to attempt to resolve the conflicts through discussions, facilitation or mediation before proceeding to first reading.

Example: PSI USE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

1. Within the terms of Reference for the preparation of planning documents or processes such as area structure plans, PSI staff will include a description of dispute resolution provisions. This description will be a framework that gives direction to both the City and the public how to proceed should a dispute arise.
2. PSI staff will require developers who are preparing area structure plans and other planning documents to provide a description of dispute resolution provisions. PSI staff will work with proponents on dispute resolution process options.

Communications

- Review the application forms (permitting documentation) currently in use, and explore how they can be simplified and made more straight-forward (including standards for application refusal)
- Develop a set of internal standards for “call backs” (expectations about time, frequency, access etc.)



COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE
City of Fort Saskatchewan

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Prepared by:

The Praxis Group™

For:

The City of Fort Saskatchewan

March 2012

The following identifies areas of focus for the City to consider as it works to develop and implement formalized internal processes, policies and procedures to efficiently and consistently engage the public and manage conflict. Each area provides examples of actions to operationalize public engagement protocols and conflict management mechanisms across all City departments and levels of governance.

ADOPT THE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Framework will shape and direct the City's community engagement practices and it will help Councillors, management and staff make decisions about when and how to engage citizens. As well, the framework is intended to enhance understanding of community engagement goals, practices and approaches.

Actions:

- **Review and discuss the Engagement Framework** - Leadership Team and Directors
- **Adopt the Engagement Framework** as an internal working document - City Administration
- **Adopt the Guiding Principles for Engagement** - City Council

INCREASE CAPACITY TO CONDUCT MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Moving forward, the City is committed to undertaking activities that will increase its capacity to conduct meaningful engagement. This includes developing and sharing expertise in engagement, profiling engagement activities and sharing best practices.

Actions:

- **Develop engagement expertise in one or two individuals** through approaches such as membership in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and completion of Alberta Municipal Affairs and/or IAP2 courses in public engagement. Those with engagement expertise will be available to City department and Council for guidance and consultation about engagement activities.
- **Identify City engagement champion(s) and/or create an Engagement Steering Committee.** These individuals or committee will profile the City's commitment to engagement, support departments to enhance their engagement initiatives, and provide strategic direction for engagement.
- **Develop and undertake training/orientation in public engagement and dispute resolution** for Council and staff through workshops, presentations, and resource materials on the website.
- **Develop case studies for Fort Saskatchewan engagement** initiatives and use these as part of training and ongoing professional development. As engagement exercises are completed, the staff involved will be encouraged to prepare a case study highlighting the objectives, approaches and outcomes of the exercise.
- **Develop an engagement community of practice** for those involved in engagement in Fort Saskatchewan (internal and external to the City). The community of practice will support those involved with public engagement activities to share knowledge, experience and resources and also provide opportunities for mentorship.
- **Develop a program to recognize excellence in engagement** such as annual engagement awards or case study of the quarter. Well-executed community engagement exercises will be recognized, shared and celebrated on the website, at City awards, and in City reports. Once established, the program will be extended to include engagement initiatives undertaken by external groups or organizations.
- **Partner with other municipalities to share resources, knowledge and experience** about public engagement. This could include partnering to offer engagement training, short-term staff secondments, and sharing of engagement resources and equipment.

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION

Developing informed and active citizens requires an investment in ongoing communication about engagement opportunities, processes, decisions and outcomes. It involves both formal and informal communication approaches and a commitment throughout the engagement cycle from early notification to feedback about decisions arising from engagement exercises.

Actions:

- **Develop Public Engagement web spaces on both the public and internal City websites** including content such as indicated below.

Website Content	Public Website	Internal Website
Guiding Principles	√	√
Public Engagement Framework		√
Engagement Calendar including links to a project description and a contact person	√	√
Case studies		√
Community of practice		√
Professional development opportunities		√

- **Increase “on the ground”, informal interaction with citizens** through initiatives such as online forums hosted by the mayor or councillor, other forms of online deliberation and call-in programs on radio.
- **Develop and maintain a database of community contacts** and incorporate into consultation software. The database will capture contact information, areas of interest or concern, area of residence, past participation and outcomes of communication with the City.
- **Enhance system of notification for engagement processes** by using the consultation database and other approaches such as the website, email, and community networks.
- **Ensure that all engagement initiatives include a report back to participants** about the nature of comments received and how these impacted decisions.

MAXIMIZE HUMAN RESOURCES

City staff will require skills, tools and support to bring expertise to public engagement programs. Expanded opportunities for staff training will support the implementation of the Engagement Framework. In moving forward it will be important to define and communicate engagement roles and responsibilities for City Council, City staff, public committees, community groups and associations.

Actions:

- **Create a new position for a public engagement coordinator.** To address resourcing, the City could explore the approaches used in other communities or reassignment of the roles of existing staff.
- **Include responsibilities for engagement in job descriptions.**
- **Include engagement as a category in performance management** including competencies, accountabilities and measurement indicators.
- **Include information about the City’s public engagement program in new employee orientation sessions and materials.**

ENSURE ENGAGEMENT IS INCORPORATED INTO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The City participates in diverse projects ranging from social programs to road construction. Some projects are managed by City staff and others by private contractors. The City must have protocols to ensure that public engagement is considered in all projects whether privately or publicly undertaken.

Actions:

- **Ensure that project charters or terms of reference address engagement** and that engagement tasks are identified in project management tracking and reporting systems.
- **Develop and consistently use a template** to ensure that Requests for Proposals and Contracts adequately address engagement.

DEVELOP INDICATORS TO MONITOR AND REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Framework includes a tool for use when evaluating individual engagement initiatives; however, it is also important to evaluate the overall engagement program, not just individual projects. Because the City is accountable to its citizens, open and transparent reporting about engagement practices is important.

Actions:

- **Develop a set of indicators to measure the success of the City's overall engagement program.** Indicators could include level of media coverage, citizen satisfaction surveys, number of individuals and stakeholder groups engaged, and participant diversity.
- **Include a section on public engagement in the City's annual report or report to community.** This could include the Guiding Principles, initiatives underway to enhance engagement, specific engagement projects, a case study, and performance in relation to indicators.

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES

Digital engagement is the use of interactive techniques to improve service delivery and information dissemination via digital technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. Social media are the channels and platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, podcasts, Youtube) that facilitate digital engagement. Implementing digital engagement processes will provide the City with a range of mechanisms for reaching and interacting with citizens.

Actions:

- **Develop objectives and usage guidelines.** Determine draft objectives for measurable outcomes for your digital engagement activities. Draft should contain short overview of how each tool will be used (email, Facebook, Twitter, and other tools). Set guidelines for response times and appropriate types of responses. Work with Council members to determine their involvement and relationship to the official social media presence.
- **Create a frequently asked questions document or simple database.** Use a web-based database tool (or a simple Word document) to create a simple FAQ list that can easily be updated by multiple stakeholders in the organization. Initially request that each department supply the most commonly asked questions, and associated answers, for the database. Start simple, with the intention of building as questions come in on an on-going basis. Assign responsibility for maintaining the list of questions to a staff member and ask all departments to provide information to this individual, as needed.

- **Engage a small citizen panel.** Engage a small group of interested citizens who are already active on social media. Seek out interested individuals using Klout.com's influence scores for people in your region. Ask them to attend a short session and provide feedback and ideas about what types of information and resources would be most useful to share via social media tools and email - using your draft objectives as a guide.
- **Finalize objectives and guidelines.** Create and circulate a final copy to the City's management team with the understanding that it will be a living document that is constantly being updated and enhanced.
- **Review and update website content.** Review the website content for obvious gaps in content. Address the most obvious gaps and introduce an internal policy requiring that all information released to the public is available on the website before (or at the same time as) release through other methods. Follow this policy for future content releases and updates.
- **Assign responsibility for managing digital engagement tools.** Provide a mandate to one staff member to manage digital engagement tools, and provide a structure for a back-up support role as soon as possible. At the outset, this role will require approximately 1.5 hours per day of employee time (ideally split into three segments - 0.5 first thing in the morning, 0.5 after lunch and 0.5 at the end of the work day). Prepare for expansion to a half time position by six months after implementing social media tools and outbound email communications tools. Ensure that adequate resources are in place to provide responses and updates every working day. Consider methods to have coverage over weekends in the future as well.
- **Establish an official City Facebook page and Twitter account.** Set up a Facebook page and Twitter account that will officially represent the City on these platforms.
- **Set-up a broadcast email system for a City email newsletter.** Create an email newsletter that citizens can sign up for on the city's website. Use this tool to push out important information to interested citizens. Consider expanding to specialized newsletters for some departments with many items to promote.
- **Use an aggregator to manage social media.** Use an aggregator (like Hootsuite) to allow for easy posting, and a simple method to track which items have been responded to, and which have not. Use the scheduling tools to ensure that significant time-sensitive updates are sent at the appropriate time, even outside working hours.
- **Create a digital engagement release schedule.** With Hootsuite in place, create a schedule for release of all types of news and announcements from all departments, and store it in a location that is accessible to all department managers and communications staff. This schedule can also be used to manage the contents of the City's email newsletter.
- **Use reporting tools to monitor success and identify trends.** Starting with the reporting tools found in Hootsuite, create a regular reporting of social media activity that can be distributed to all City department managers. Include information about trending topics around relevant keywords. Also include a count of different types of questions asked and identify questions that do not have an answer accessible on the City's website. Review this report briefly at Leadership Team meetings.
- **Use the FAQ database to track the number of times each question is asked** across all types of contact - email, social media, phone and in person. Report this information back to City departments to determine if resources can be improved.

ADOPT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Implementing consistent conflict management protocols and strategies ensures that the conflict inherent in municipal government is handled in a practical, impartial and efficient manner. Further, adopting a process for conflict management helps to reframe the understanding of conflict from a negative experience to an opportunity for improvement.

Actions:

- *Establish a 'Statement of Principles for Conflict Management' within the Corporation.*
- *Identify a staff person who is interested in being trained in dispute resolution processes* and support their training.
- *Undertake a 'Conflict Audit' asking all staff to identify generic areas of job-related conflict.* Both staff- public and internal conflict should be identified. There are areas of conflict that affect individual staff members regularly however are not recognized as a corporate issue because they are not documented.
- *Offer public and/or stakeholder workshops addressing areas of common concern to the public* such as turn-around time for permits, exercise of planning discretion, and market-based assessment.
- *Support staff in taking Alberta Municipal Affairs courses related to conflict communications.* Consider providing issue-based courses to front line and supervisory staff on specific areas that generate conflict.
- *Include dispute resolution clauses in all contracts*
- *Undertake a 'Conflict Review' with senior staff and Council* on a semi-annual basis to identify areas that are breeding conflicts and disputes.



COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE
City of Fort Saskatchewan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

Prepared by:
The Praxis Group™

For:
The City of Fort Saskatchewan

March 2012

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OVERVIEW

Background and Purpose

The City of Fort Saskatchewan recognizes the importance of its citizenry and seeks to engage them in actively sharing their values and perspectives on issues facing the City. Therefore, the City is using the opportunity afforded by a grant from Alberta Municipal Affairs' Collaborative Governance Initiative to develop a meaningful and innovative public engagement strategy.

To assist with the development and delivery of a public engagement assessment and system design exercise the City contracted The Praxis Group™. The specific components of the project include: a public engagement assessment; a draft public engagement framework; an approach to using social media to engage the public; dispute resolution guideline; and implementation plan recommendations to assist the City with the application of the new mechanisms. This report focuses on the public engagement assessment.

Approach

Praxis designed and implemented a multi-phase research process for the public engagement assessment:

- In late June 2011, a random sample telephone survey was conducted with citizens of Fort Saskatchewan to determine how the City of Fort Saskatchewan could best communicate information to its local community. A total of 400 surveys were completed.
- Running concurrent with the random sample survey, an online survey identical to the random sample survey was made available to individual who wished to participate but had not been picked up in the random survey. Thirty-one respondents completed the survey online.
- In mid-June 2011, four small group sessions were conducted with citizens from Fort Saskatchewan. Following a standardized moderators guide, session participants were asked to identify which communications and consultation approaches employed by the City are most effective, to indicated what the City is doing well with regard to communications and consultation, and to offer suggestions for improving communications and consultation practices.
- One-on-one interviews were conducted in June 2011 to discuss the City's communications and consultation practices with four individuals representing City of Fort Saskatchewan elected officials, staff and volunteers.
- Following the completion of the public engagement phases of the process, internal staff from the City of Fort Saskatchewan conducted a situational analysis (current approach, level of effectiveness, areas for improvement) of the communication and consultation methods identified as most effective by the public and stakeholders.

Content of the Report

This report provides an overview of the research findings for the public engagement assessment. The report is divided into five main parts, which correspond with the research methodologies that were employed for the project.

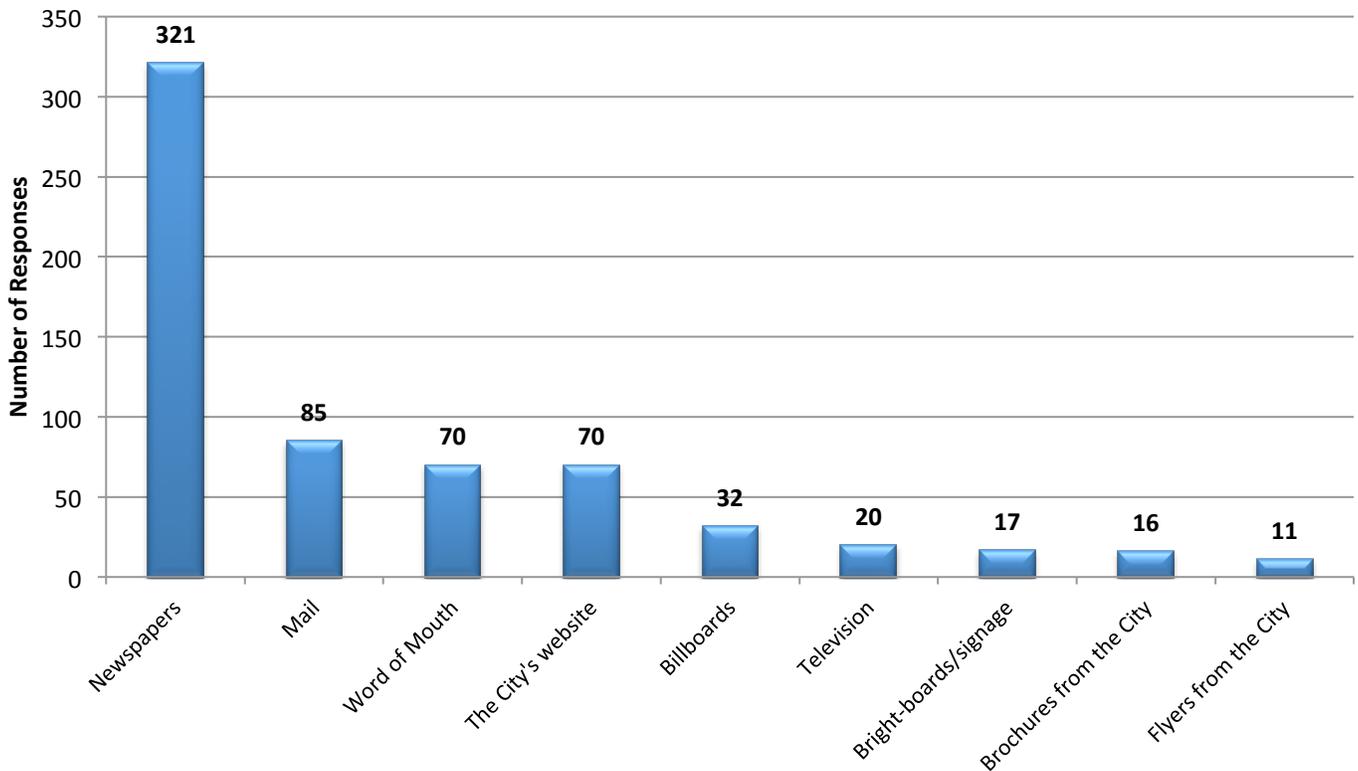
PART 1 – PUBLIC TELEPHONE SURVEY

Conducting a telephone survey of the Fort Saskatchewan area was the first step in the assessment of The City of Fort Saskatchewan’s communication and consultation system. The aim of the survey was to determine how the City of Fort Saskatchewan can best communicate information to its local community. This survey measured interest in various municipal issues, current use of a variety of communication mediums, and collected some open-ended feedback from the public. The response rate was 29.5% (N=400). Results are presented in the following section with more detailed analyses included in the appendices. An identical online survey was run simultaneously and the results of which are presented in a Part II of this report (N=31).

Current Situation

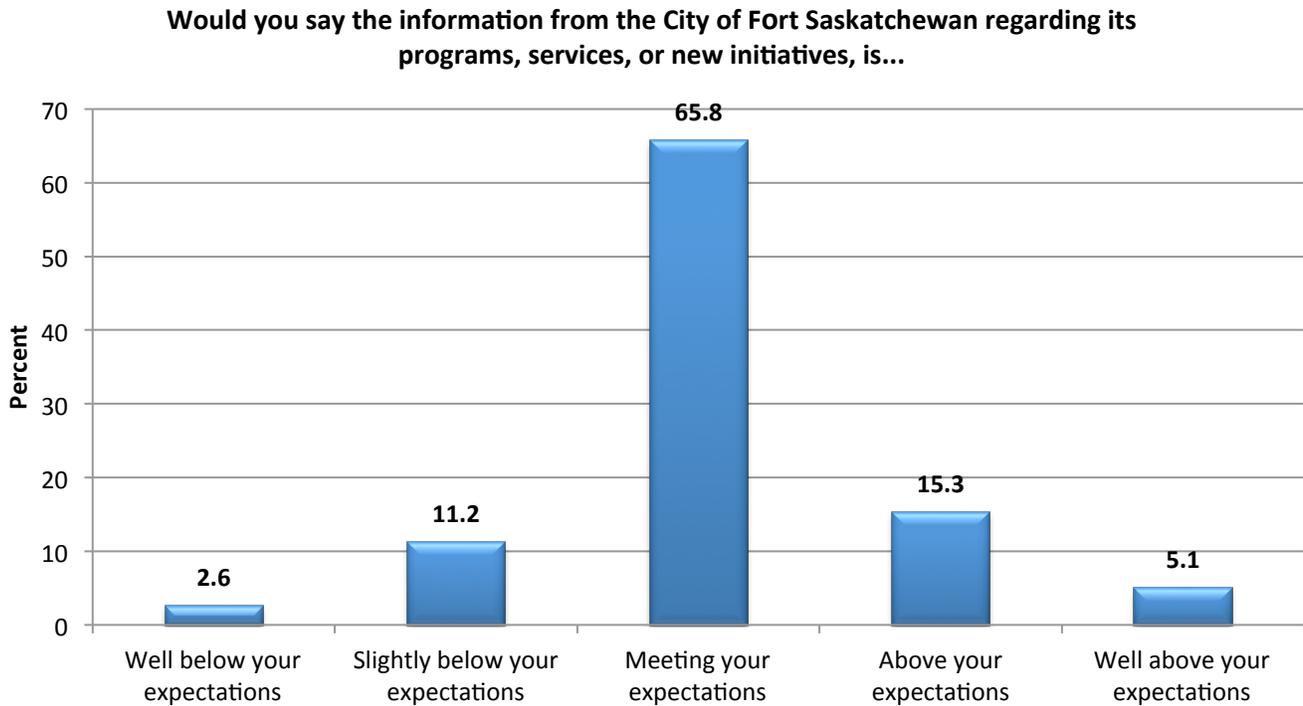
Respondents were asked how they currently receive information from the City of Fort Saskatchewan. This was an open-ended question in which individuals could name as many methods as they wished. The responses provided were then categorized. By far, the most frequent method of receiving information from the City of Fort Saskatchewan is via newspapers (80% or 321/400 respondents mentioned newspapers as a way they receive information from the City). This was followed by mentions of receiving information via mail (21% or 85/400), word of mouth (18% or 70/400), and the City’s website (18% or 70/400).

How do you currently receive information from the City of Fort Saskatchewan?
(Open-ended, can mention multiple ways)



*Note that numbers total over 400 because categories are NOT mutually exclusive.

When respondents were asked to rate the information the City of Fort Saskatchewan currently provides its citizens, two-thirds of respondents said their expectations were being met. Only 13.8% reported that information was either slightly or well below their expectations.



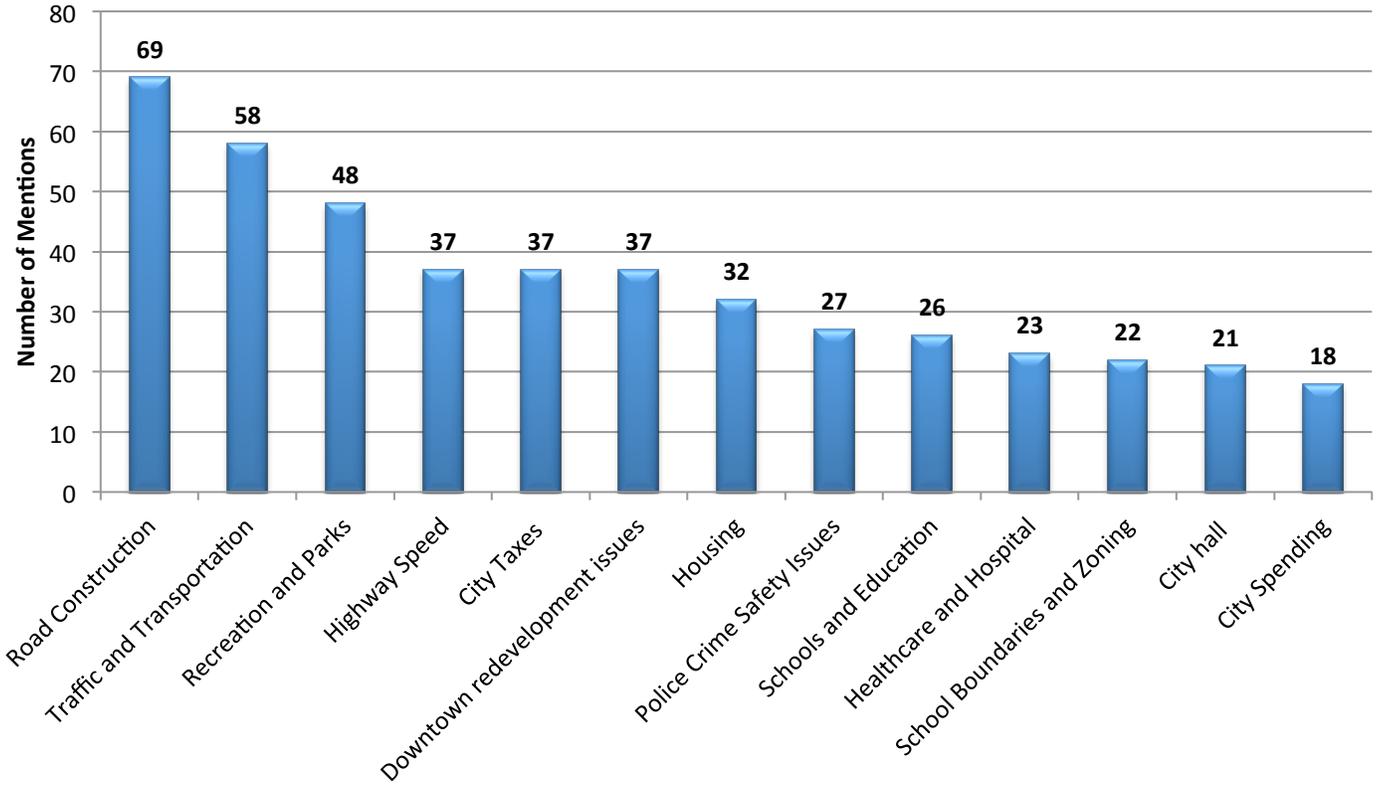
Municipal Issues of Interest

Respondents were asked to name what they felt were the 3 most important issues facing the municipality today. These comments were then categorized according to similar groupings and then counted to create a graphical representation of the most common issue areas mentioned by participants. (An excel sheet provided along with this report contains the categorized comments to be referred to for better understanding of specific issues raised.)

The most often mentioned issue was road construction (17% or 69 people of 400 commented on this). This was followed by a related issue: traffic and transportation (14.5% or 58/400). Recreation and parks was the third most commonly mentioned category (12% or 48/400). Highway speed, city taxes, and downtown redevelopment issues were all 4th in terms of numbers of mentions (9% or 37/400).

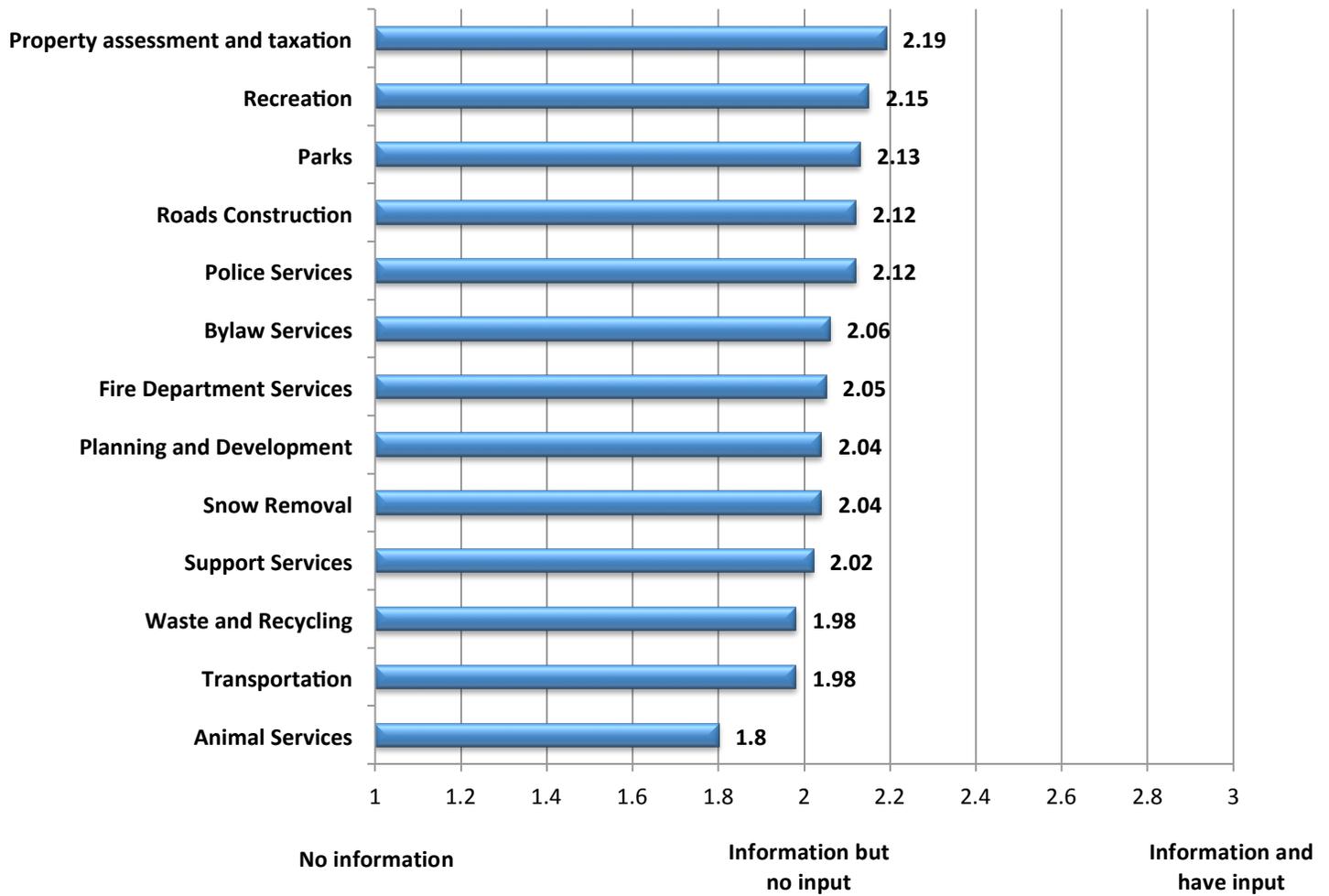
If we combine the similar categories of road construction, traffic and transportation, and highway speed then 41% (164/400) commented on this overarching area related to transportation.

Issue Areas Mentions
(Open-ended, can mention multiple ways)



Respondents were asked about their interest in communication on a list of pre-chosen municipal service areas. Choosing 1 meant they were not interested in any information regarding the area, choosing 2 meant they'd like information but weren't interested in providing input back to the City, and choosing 3 meant they'd like information and would be interested in providing input to the City for this area. The averages for these areas all fell in the middle range. See Appendix A for individual graphs for each area.

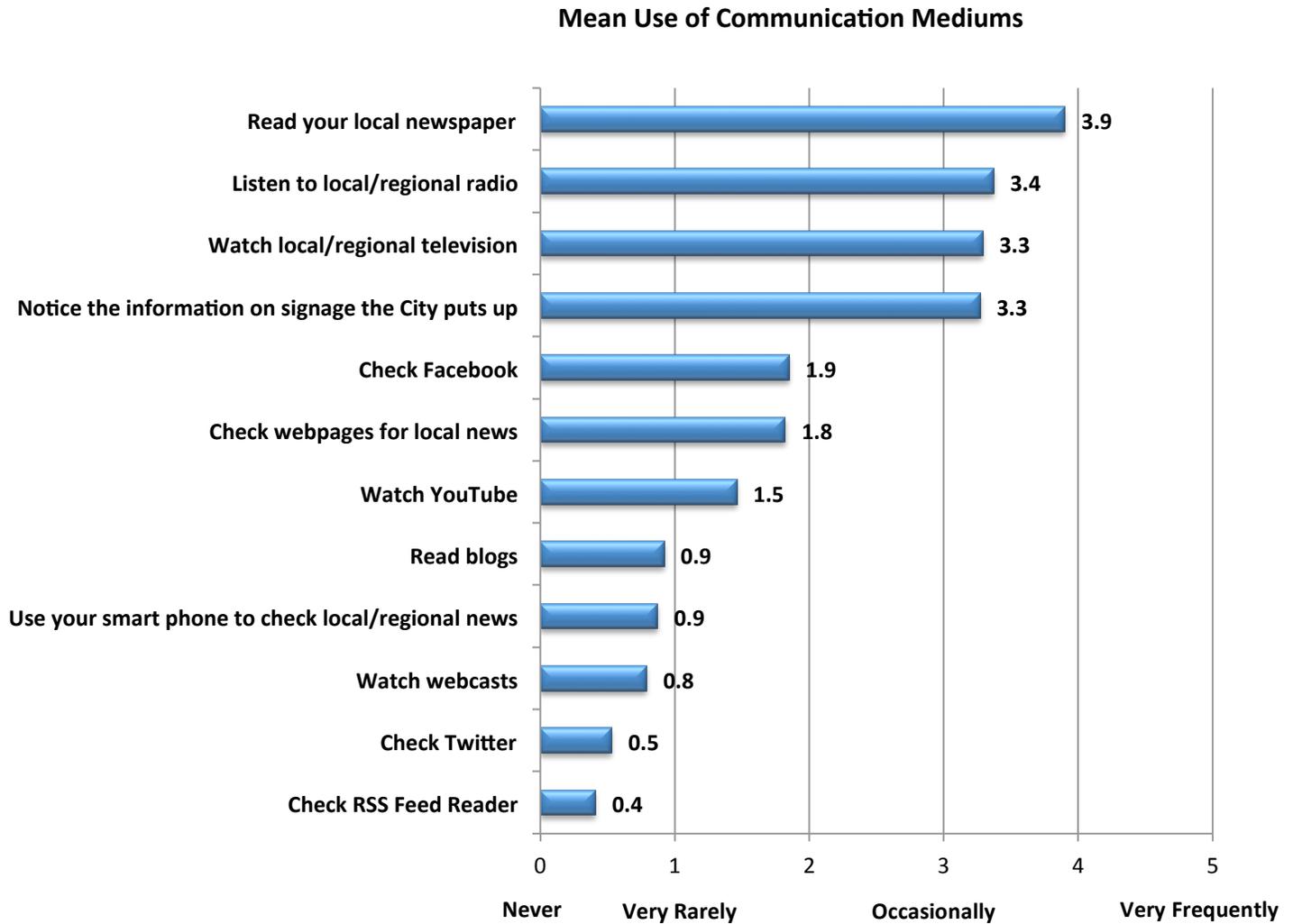
Mean Interest in Involvement



Communication Mediums

To determine the most popular communication mediums Fort Saskatchewan residents currently use, a list of communication channels was produced. Some methods only work in one direction (e.g. using newspapers to send information from the City to residents) whereas others have the potential to be two-way (e.g. Facebook to send out updates and to collect feedback from residents).

The scale ranged from 0 = never to 5 = very frequently. Newspapers had the highest average use (3.9/5) followed by radio (3.4), television (3.3) and City signage (3.3).



Younger groups were much more likely to use Facebook, YouTube, blogs, Twitter, webcasts, smart phones, and RRS feed readers.

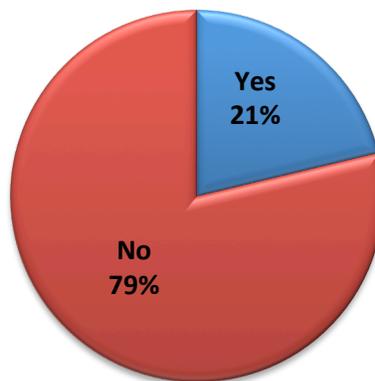
Age Group	Comparison of top 4 Mean Communication Methods			
18-29	1) Facebook	2) Radio	3) Newspaper	4) YouTube
30-44	1) Newspaper	2) Radio	3) Signage	4) Television
45-64	1) Newspaper	2) Television	3) Radio	4) Signage
65+	1) Newspaper	2) Television	3) Radio	4) Signage

The full table comparing the means by age is displayed in Appendix B.

Interaction with City

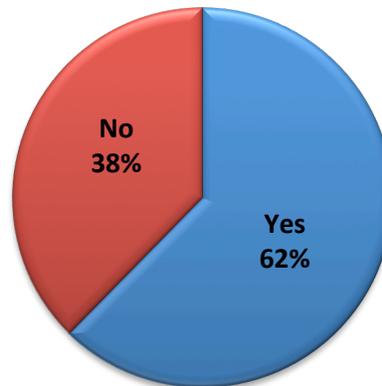
When respondents were asked if they had every provided input directly towards City Council 21% said they had (85/400).

Have you ever provided input directly towards City Council?



Of those who had provided input to City Council, 62% felt their input influenced the council’s decision making process.

Do you feel your input influenced their decision-making process? N=85



Respondents were also asked what their input to council was regarding. A list of these 85 individuals' comments is provided in Appendix C.

Providing Feedback to the City

All respondents were asked if there was anything the City of Fort Saskatchewan could do to make it easier to provide feedback. The 332 responses to this question generally fell into eight main categories, including, in order of frequency of mention:

- **Internet-based**
 - Feedback link on City website, online forums, more and better information on website; email communication
- **Surveys / questionnaires**
 - Online, telephone, mail, newspaper, available on bus routes
- **Communication regarding opportunities to provide feedback**
 - Newspaper ads, televisions ads
- **Public meetings**
 - Discussion forums, town hall meetings, evening meeting to increase attendance
- **Direct personal contact**
 - Dedicated telephone contact person, complaints hotline, one-on-one interaction
- **Social media**
 - Facebook page, blog, text messaging
- **Open City Council meetings to the public**
- **Comment box at City Hall**

The full list of comments is provided in Appendix D.

Last Comments

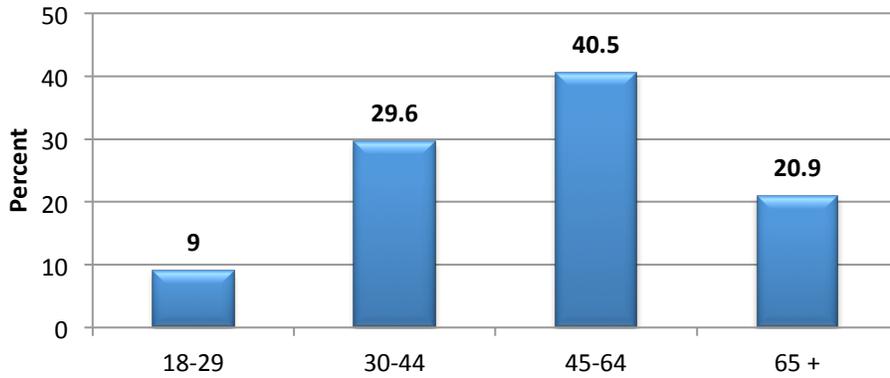
Respondents were also asked as a finishing question if there was anything else they'd like to add. Three hundred and thirty one individuals responded with comments, all of which are listed here.

- A town channel with ads and events
- Advertise more in the local papers and television
- All of the city councils are approachable and ready to listen to anybody and the senior staff as well
- Check signs in residential areas regarding traffic
- City should look into economic development and what it can do for the city
- Continue to add information to city website put complaints to bylaw officers through email
- Control speeding in and around the residential areas built by the highways
- Conversation groups
- Could be a lot more vocal in local papers and we need a local radio station
- Could have their own radio station
- Council is working very well
- Direct contacts should be available to address concerns
- Electronic billboard could have a little more information
- Form committees involving tax payers getting more input
- Give out more information in the flyers and send out more flyers
- Have a pamphlet that they hand out quarterly
- If they can put it in the paper and times where everyone can get together to discuss
- Increase frequency of getting information out
- Inform the staff on the city council about all the info they need to know about the city
- Information is not shared on a broader scale Radio and TV advertisements can help
- Internet based as opposed to print
- Keep costs to a minimum
- Keeping websites up to date
- Like to receive local newspaper and recreation guide
- Local media does a good job of keeping people informed
- Make hotline direct to council
- Make it accurate information in regards to sending all the information out at once
- Make it more accessible
- Make more open source data available
- Make offline feedback available
- Mayor should be more honest
- More info on recreational activities and events
- More information in one way or one place
- More user friendly webpage
- New City Hall building and plans should have been more transparent
- Pass on information via internet
- People who live in condos should have the same treatment as those who do not in regards to taxes
- Police services should provide more information
- Post times of their council meetings in the paper
- Provide their minutes from their meetings to the public to inform them of who is in favour

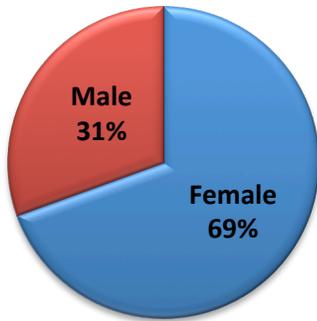
- Providing feedback online
- Putting too much money into paper with regards to its aesthetics
- Send out more media via newspaper and need more everyday info
- Sent out newspaper of more info on a quarterly basis
- Setup online information links and inform the people
- Share more information and involve the people in decision making
- Snow should be removed away from the houses instead of making piles on the street
- Something easy to access like a blog or in the newspaper that is flexible
- The booklet is a waste of money and it is not used enough
- The city needs to add a salted swimming pool instead of having a chemical one
- The city should finish the Dow centre
- The city should take out a big ad in the newspaper
- The font is too small in the paper for seniors to read
- The sign by the Dow moves too quickly
- The street lights by the Esso and CIBC should have turning arrow because there are many accidents
- The Sturgeon Creek Post is very useful for local news
- They are doing a pretty good job
- They do not care what happens to the people in one community but they do in a different community
- They need to make Fort Saskatchewan their number one priority not Edmonton
- They should publish newsletter for all residents
- Use all local papers for city announcements
- Use more media that is targeted to all ages and using more than just newspaper
- Use more resources that people use every day like Facebook and TV
- Wal-Mart downtown should be removed and commercialize the downtown area
- Want to see retirement condos for seniors sixty and over
- Website is good enough keep up with info on website
- When a new program is out they should advertise more
- When emails are sent to certain council members it would be nice for those members to reply
- Would like to see results of this survey

Demographics

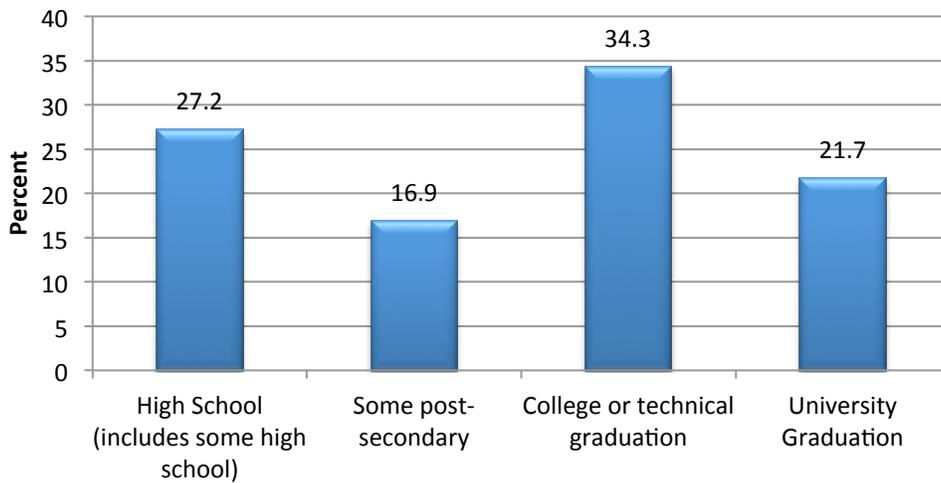
Age



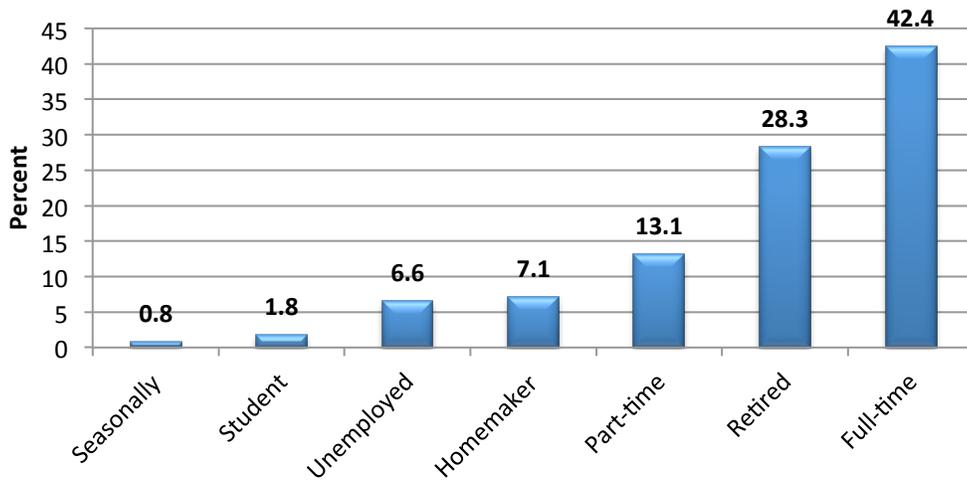
Gender



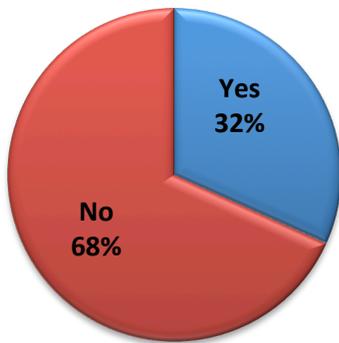
Education



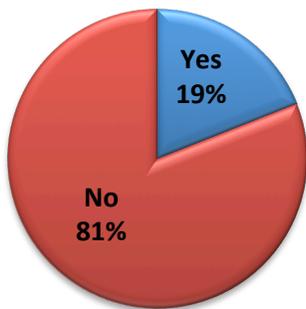
Employment Status



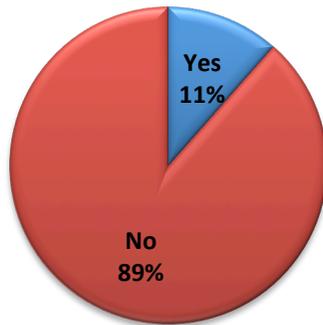
Do you belong to any local organizations?



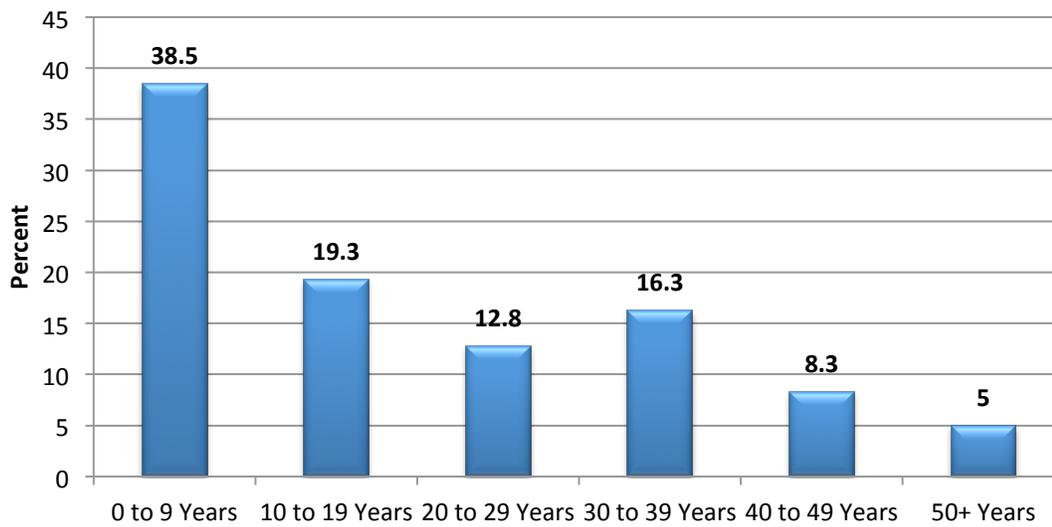
Do you commute to Edmonton?



Are you a shift worker?



Years in Fort Saskatchewan



PART 2 – ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey identical to the random sample survey was made available to individual who wished to participate but had not been picked up in the random survey. Thirty-one respondents completed the survey online. This section features the results of the online survey.

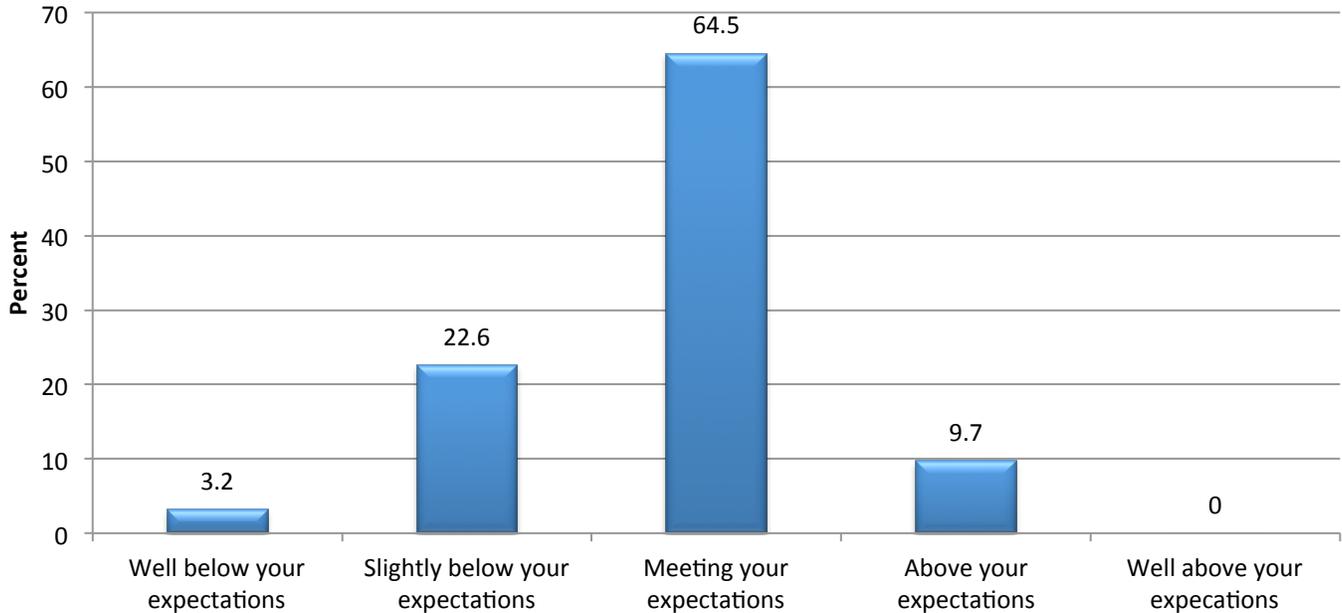
Current Situation

Respondents were asked how they currently receive information from the City of Fort Saskatchewan. This was an open-ended question in which individuals could name as many methods as they wished.

- At city facilities (i.e. DCC) 2. Mail outs to my house 3. Fort Saskatchewan Record 4. Signage in the city
- City Website and as well from the Fort Record newspaper
- City Website
- City Website
- City Website
- City Website, local newspaper
- City Website, Record
- City Website, the Fort Saskatchewan Record and Sturgeon Creek Post
- City's Website and the Fort Record newspaper
- Email, newspaper and City website
- Emails, bulletins, notice boards, city employees, newspapers, friends
- Fort Record, City Publications
- Fort Record, city website and activity/networking in the community.
- Local updates from my staff (we are a local business working in Fort Saskatchewan)
- Mail
- Mail and in the Fort Record
- Mail, get the spring and fall booklet in the mail. What I read in the newspaper
- Mail, website
- Newsletter; newspaper and web sites
- Newspaper or on-line
- Newspaper or the Fort Leisure Guide
- Newspaper, community events, city publications, word of mouth.
- Newspaper, directory's, the "fort report", schools.
- Newspaper, E Mail
- Newspaper, email & website
- Newspaper, sometimes I get a direct mail out asking me to participate-- or email
- Newspapers, fitness directories, reports from city council and my volunteer committees.
- Newspapers, town signs i.e. Dow, and service directories.
- Sturgeon Creek Post
- The Post

When respondents were asked to rate the information the City of Fort Saskatchewan currently provides its citizens, approximately two-thirds of respondents said their expectations were being met. Twenty-five percent reported that information was either slightly or well below their expectations. Thirty one people answered this question.

Would you say the information from the City of Fort Saskatchewan regarding its programs, services, or new initiatives, is...



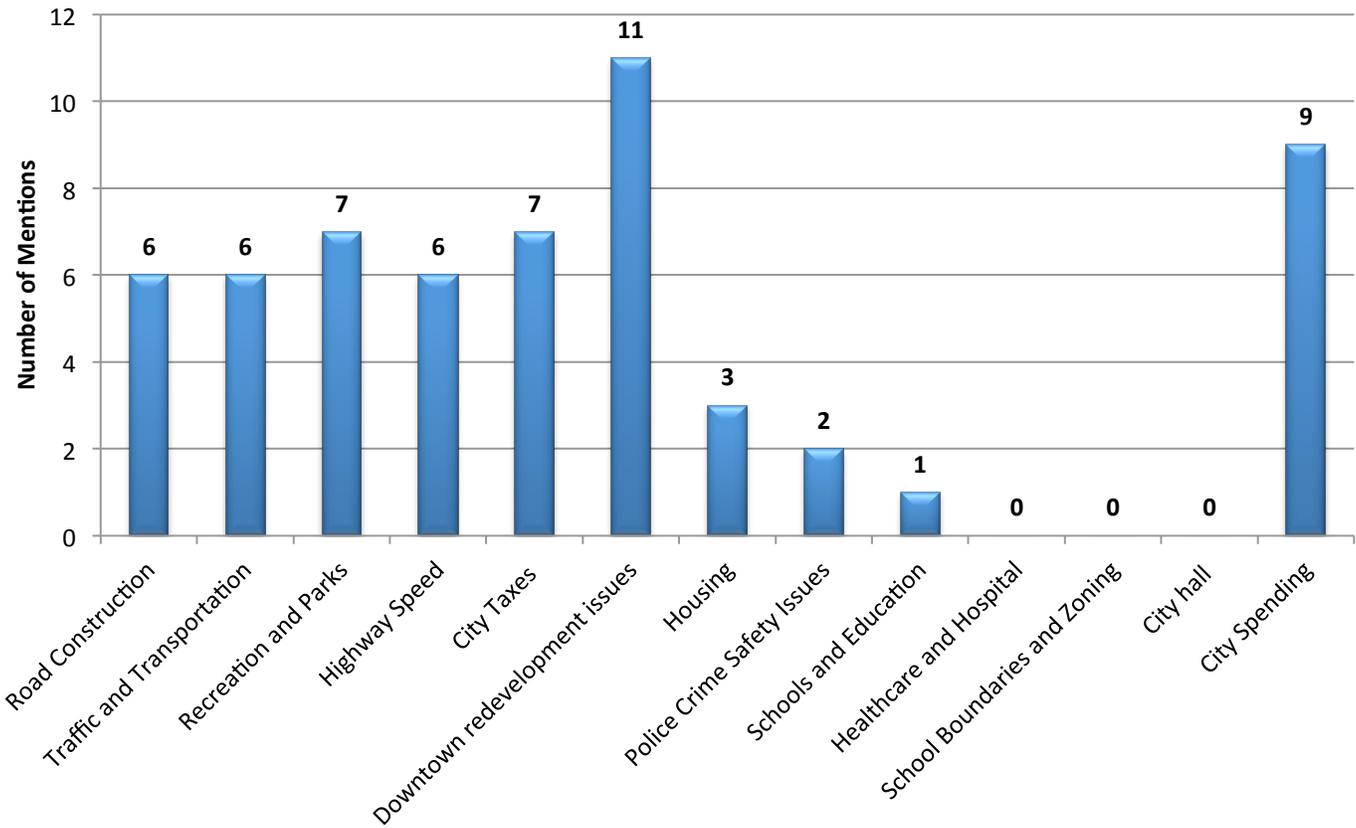
Municipal Issues of Interest

Respondents were asked to name what they felt were the 3 most important issues facing the municipality today. These comments were then categorized according to similar groupings and then counted to create a graphical representation of the most common issue areas mentioned by participants. (An excel sheet provided along with this report contains the categorized comments to be referred to for better understanding of specific issues raised.)

The most often mentioned issue was downtown redevelopment issues (11 mentions of this). This was followed by city spending (9 comments).

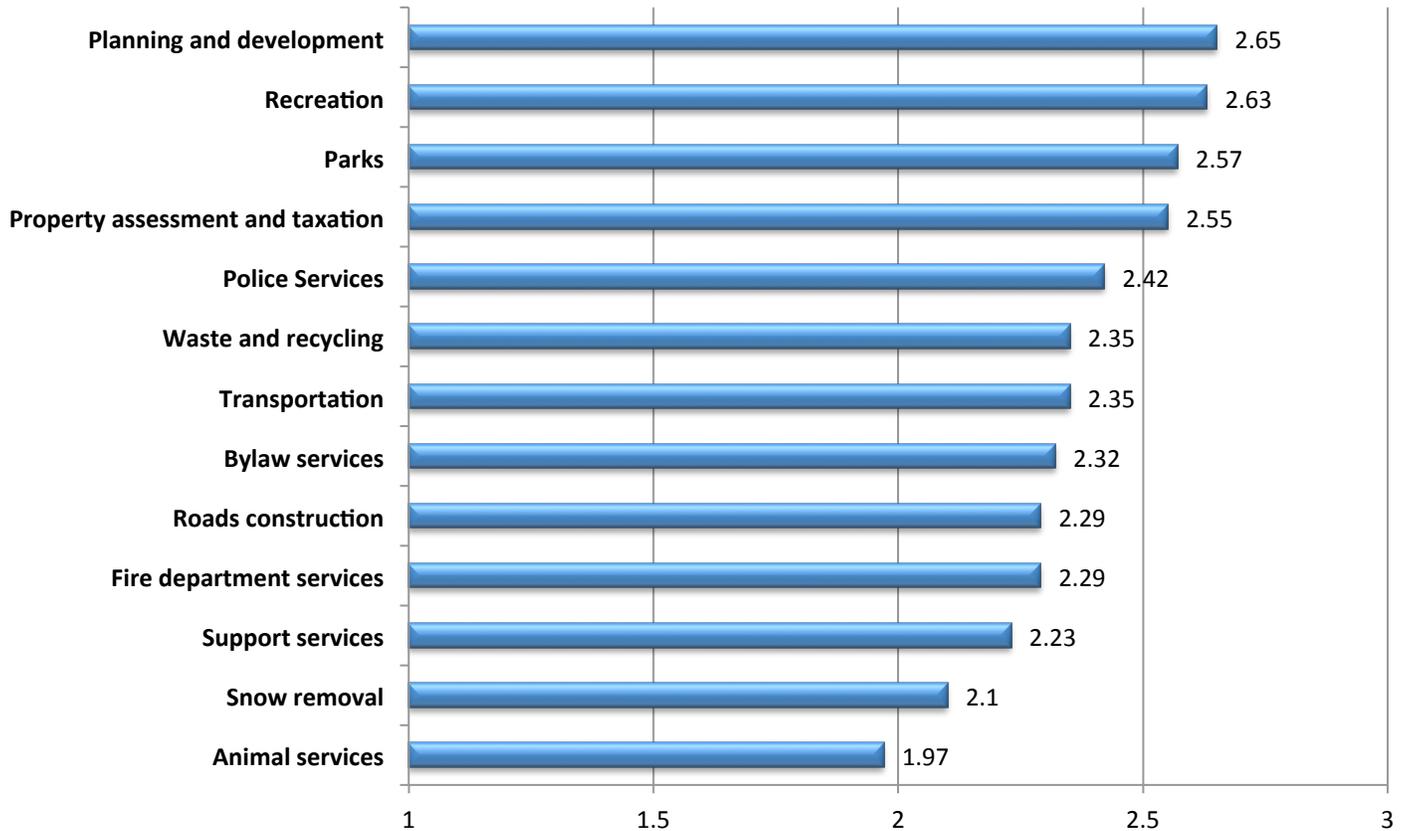
Issue Area Mentions

(open-ended question, each individual named multiple areas)



Respondents were asked about their interest in communications on a list of municipal service areas. Choosing 1 meant they were not interested in any information regarding the area, choosing 2 meant they'd like information but weren't interested in providing input back to the City, and choosing 3 meant they'd like information and would be interested in providing input to the City for this area. The averages for these areas tended to fall in the mid to high range.

Mean Interest in Involvement

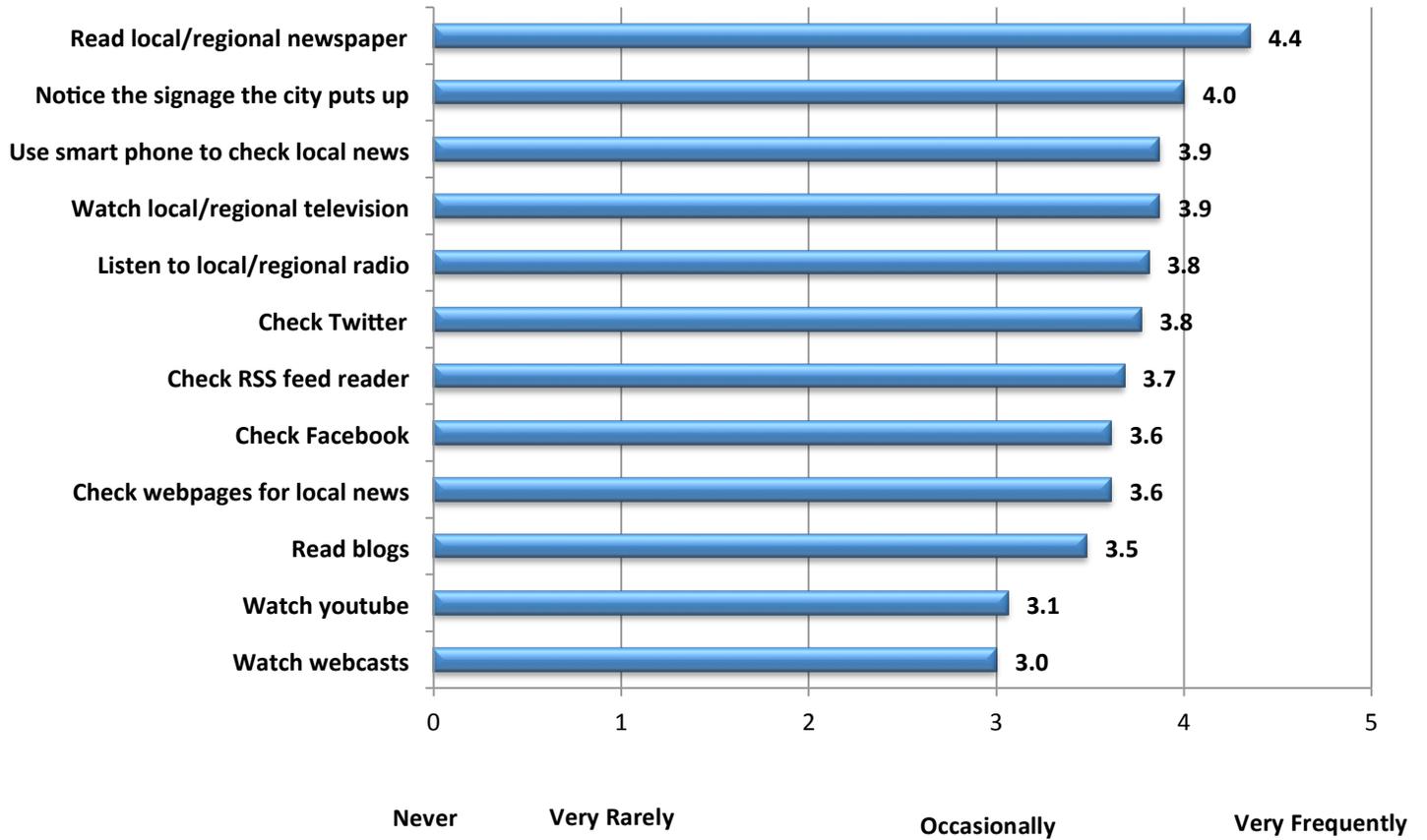


Communication Mediums

To determine the most popular communication mediums Fort Saskatchewan residents currently use, a list of communication channels was created. Some methods only work in one direction (e.g. using newspapers to send information from the City to residents) whereas others have the potential to be two-way (e.g. Facebook as an outlet for feedback from residents).

The scale ranged from 0 = never to 5 = very frequently. Newspapers had the highest average use (4.4/5) followed by city signage (4.0), using smart phones (3.9) and television (3.9).

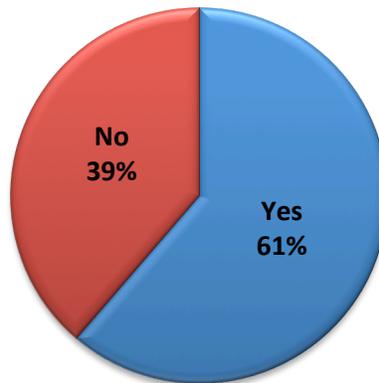
Mean Use of Communication Mediums



Interaction with City

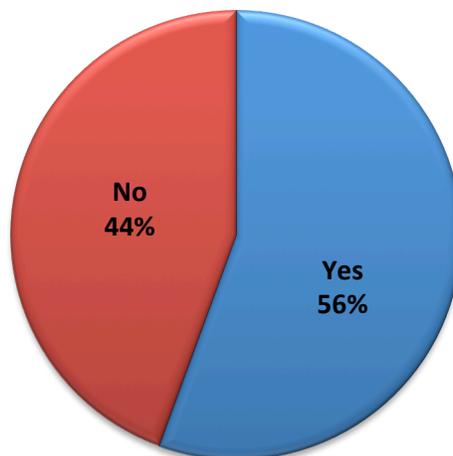
When respondents were asked if they had every provided input directly towards City Council 61% said they had (19/32).

Have you ever provided input directly towards City Council?



Of those who had provided input to City Council, 56% felt their input influenced the council's decision-making process.

Do you feel your input influenced their decision making process? N=19



Respondents were also asked what their input to council was regarding. A list of these 19 individuals' comments is provided in Appendix E.

Providing Feedback to the City

All respondents were asked if there was anything the City of Fort Saskatchewan could do to make it easier to provide feedback. Nineteen responded with comments, all of which are listed here.

- Facebook Page
- Have a Facebook page, have a radio station
- Have the mayor attend programming on how to properly interact with the public and give her a seminar on customer service.
- Hundreds of things. Communication is very poor. Many meetings, such as appeal board hearing, neighbourhood plans, are never made public. Decisions need to be made public.
- I have no problem phoning and making suggestions, or asking for information, etc. However, many times my requests, although listened to, are not fulfilled.
- I think the current mechanism works.
- Listening for a change - Hell will freeze over first.
- More online input methods for city council; Online is good
- Not really. If I felt moved to have a conversation with the City I would take the initiative to do so.
- Not sure what the process is now?
- Nothing that I can think of at this time. Those who I speak to or contact are very open-minded and responsive.
- Provide more notice of when meetings are happening, ensure meetings are in evenings or weekends, allow various methods of feedback: meetings with facilitation, on-line, mail out surveys etc
- Questionnaires like this are wonderful!
- Side with the residents once and while to make it appear that public feedback is important
- Town Hall meetings
- Would like better access to city council agenda items

Last Comments

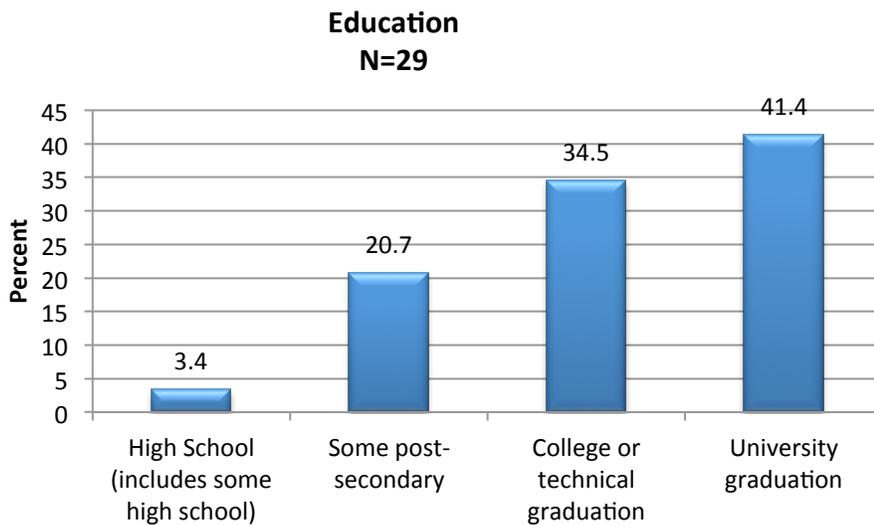
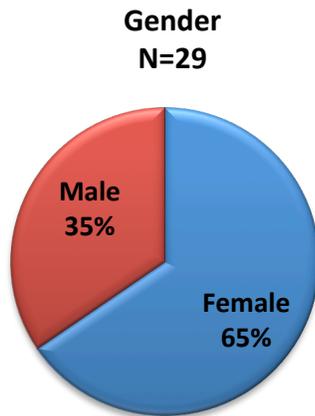
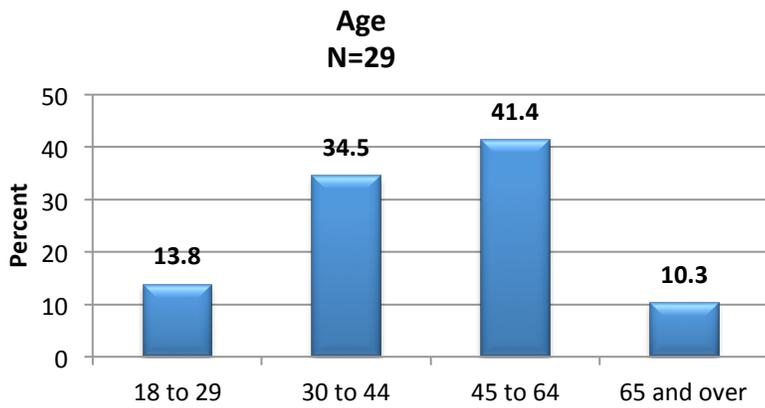
Respondents were also asked as a finishing question if there was anything else they'd like to add. Thirteen responded with comments, all of which are listed here.

- Need more promotion on downtown businesses- need more publicity and input on new srs facility
 - How do rural residents receive information?
 - I am on the Canada Day Committee and most of my dealings with City Council have to do with when I see them with regards to Canada Day.
 - I know there are some people who criticize the City for its perceived lack of communication. But, really, if people want to be involved and engaged there are more than ample opportunities to do so and it is their responsibility to do so. People shouldn't grumble and complain after the fact.
 - I think that the information should be posted in ALL the local papers, not just the Fort Record.
 - It is necessary for Harbour Pool to offer additional introductory (young children's) swim lessons on weekends. Not everyone is a stay at home parent able to take kids for lessons during the week. Twice I have tried to register within minutes of registration opening and could not get a spot - have had to resort to pricey private lessons.
-
- It seems if people care enough to be involved, they know how to keep in touch and how to keep on top of what's happening in the Fort. The city is really good at putting the information out there. Unfortunately, in my

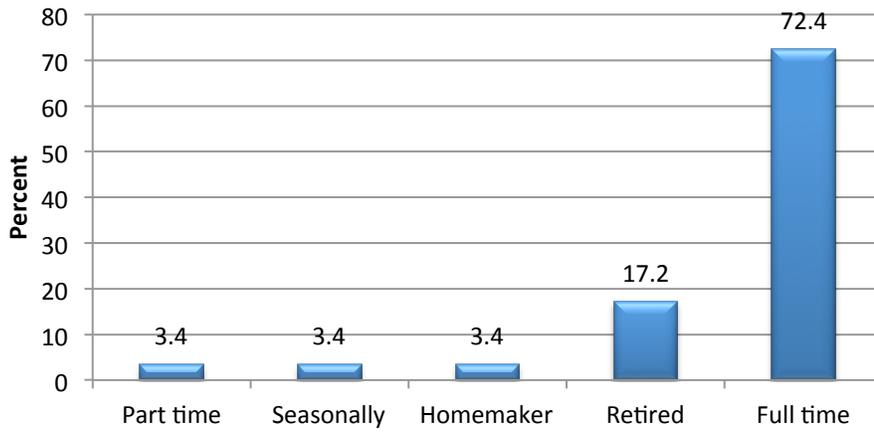
experience, people don't pay attention. They don't read our paper, they don't check the city website or even read the signs on the side of the road and then when something has happened that gets their attention they complain that no one told them! I guess the only other thing one could do is have a town crier standing on the corner by the schools or farmer's market to let citizens know what's happening. Of course I'm joking, but it would be the only way to get people's attention.

- Just keep up the good work you all are doing
- Provide a feedback loop whereby residents have an opportunity to see how their input has influenced decisions. When I responded earlier that my input has influenced decisions, it is not yes all the time and I am not so sure all residents would feel this way. I happen to be an individual who is often sought after for my advice by city staff and council so my experience is quite unique, but even so, I am not so sure that my input has influenced or how it has influenced. One example is that I provide a lot of input related to the new civic building but since it was approved in a plebiscite and some advice provided subsequent to that, I have not seen what the detailed plans are for the new building despite having been involved in all stages up to now. The sod turning is Monday and nothing has been shared publicly, even though our new mayor sat on her election platform of more public sharing of information.... Yah.. so where is it? Public information and input stopped the day we said "yes". Once the plans are finalized and the construction begins, there is no changing it then. Only a select few had input in this final stage and I don't even know who that is besides city staff and council... who is representing the citizens and how do I know he/they are representing what I might want them to represent.
- Quit being so arrogant and secretive for a start.
- Social Media is key in communicating in the fast paced society.
- There should be a complaint line. The website is good, how about making a kiosk at the library and DCC and other City buildings using the website and allowing better access.
- Use your website.

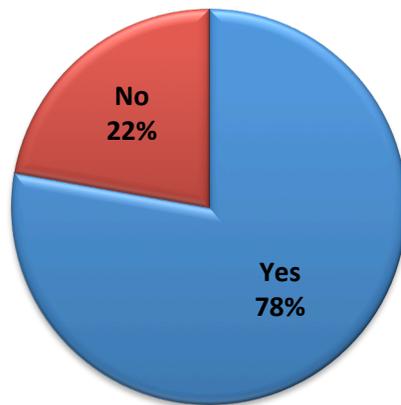
Demographics



Employment Status N=29

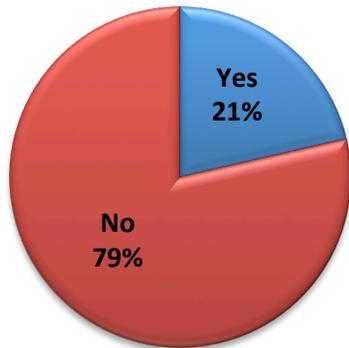


Do you belong to any local organizations? N=27



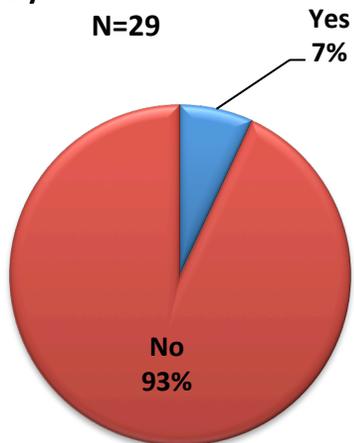
Do you commute to Edmonton?

N=28

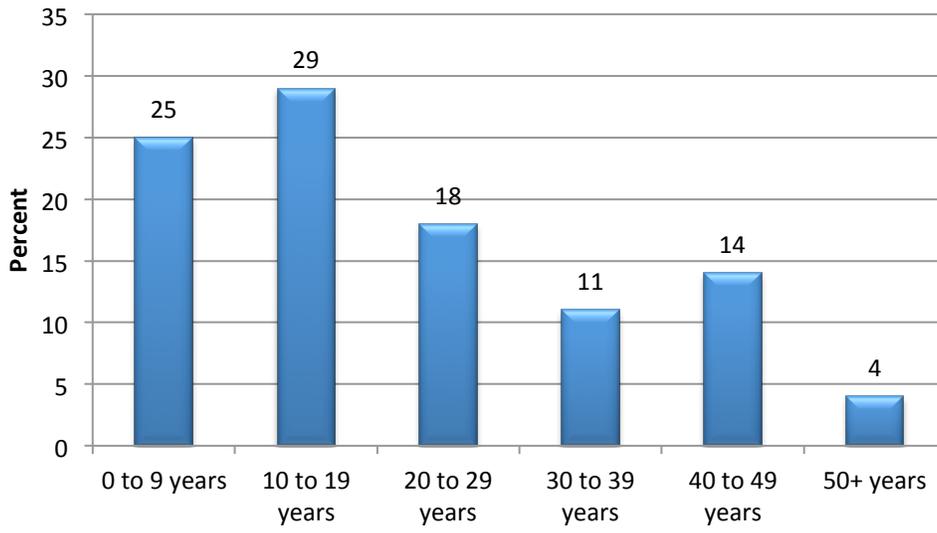


Are you a shift worker?

N=29



Years in Fort Saskatchewan
N=28



PART 3 – SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

In mid-June 2011, four small group sessions were conducted with citizens from Fort Saskatchewan. Session participants were asked to identify which communications and consultation approaches employed by the City are most effective, to indicate what the City is doing well with regard to communications and consultation, and to offer suggestions for improving communications and consultation practices. The following section provides a summary of the input from the small group sessions.

Feedback on Communications

Most Effective Communications Approaches

- Local newspapers
 - All local newspapers
- Mailings
 - Letters, information packages
- Social media
 - Particularly for younger demographic
- Internet-based
 - Website, email
- Word-of mouth
 - Public carries message; community cheerleaders
- Face-to-face contact
 - Particularly for directly affected citizens
- Messages through community leaders, institutions and organizations
 - Information to membership
- Signage
 - Electronic and portable signs
 - Portable signs
- Multi-pronged approach
 - Use a variety of channels tailored to specific demographics
- Public meetings

Communications – What the City is Doing Well

- Effective use of newspaper, website, Internet
- Good job of getting the message out (e.g. Downtown rehab project)
- Communicating with citizens about the 100 Avenue project
- Notifying neighbours immediately when someone wants to build something
- The Fort Report provides good information about the City three times per year
- The City Page in the Fort Report is current and provides good information

Communication – What Requires Improvement

- Provide citizens with up-to-date information on an ongoing basis
- Use of community leaders as communication channels; networks to get the word out
- Show how projects affect the individual
- Disclose when something does not go well
- Follow-up on concerns and complains in a timely manner
- Know your audience, target message and approach to demographic
- Use multiple approaches
- Provide directly affected citizens with plenty of advanced notice regarding local projects
- Ensure that all directly affected citizens receive communication; put it in their hands directly
- Update the website regularly; ensure information is current
- Celebrate our successes
- Be more open and transparent; there is a feeling that things are done behind closed doors at City Hall

Feedback on Consultation

Most Effective Consultation Approaches

- Internet-based
 - Website, blogs, surveys, electronic messaging
- Face-to-face contact
 - Similar to the 100 Avenue project
- Social media
- Approach used for City Centre Square
 - Particularly for youth
- Public meetings
- Door-step meetings for small projects

Consultation - What the City is Doing Well

- Good job of open houses and public forums, but public fails to attend
- Great job of the City Centre Square communication and consultation process; use it as a model

Consultation – What Requires Improvement

- Inspire enthusiasm and passion to get people involved
- Demonstrate to citizens that their feedback and opinions matter;
- Indicate how the information collected will be used
- Show participants that their input has been heard
- Indicate why and how decisions are reached
- Include a range of opinions and perspectives
- Allow the consultation to change direction if the community points it that way
- Be accountable, accept responsibility for your job
- Use multiple approaches – single approach does not work
- Make people feel it is important and meaningful for them to be involved
- Formalize the planning process to identify audiences that need to be targeted and the consultation timing
- Share information from small group discussions with the wider audience
- Determine how not to lose people with quality information because they are too busy to participate

PART 4 – ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

One-on-one interviews were conducted to discuss the City’s communications and consultation practices with four individuals representing City of Fort Saskatchewan elected officials, staff and volunteers. Following is a high-level summary of the interview feedback.

Communication and Consultation Approaches

- It is difficult to capture the public’s attention with the range of media available; tremendous amount of “noise” and the messages often get lost.
- Communication and consultation approach needs to be more creative to draw the public; events and activities should be fun (games, contests, parties).
- There are a range of existing and readily available communication and consultation resources; “we don’t need to reinvent the wheel.”
- A variety (not just one) of communication methods need to be employed to effectively reach the public (e.g. one-on-one contact, letter drop, all newspapers, City website).
- The approach to communication and consultation should vary according to the target audience; need to identify whom the stakeholder is and how they want to be consulted.
- Engagement needs to be iterative.
- Must have message in place before using social media; “don’t tweet first, think first.”

Communication on Small Scale Projects

- Ensure directly affected citizens receive sufficient advance notice.
- Small projects such as road crack filling, other closures etc. cumulate; people should be informed even if the road closure is only a half a day.
- Notification for service road closure is about two blocks; notification for closure of a thoroughfare should be Citywide and should employ a variety of communication approaches (newspapers, website).
- Taxi companies and school bus operators should be informed about all road closures on a regular basis.

Role of the City

- The City must take a proactive approach to communication and consultation
- Communications and consultation are part of the role of City staff, managers and Council itself
- Communications and consultation plans need to be developed and implemented for all City projects, including small scale projects such as road closures
- Collaboration needs to be thought of as a “way of life” at City Hall; move away from project-based approach to building long-term sustainable relationships; we need to give the public a reason to trust City Hall
- More internal resources need to be dedicated to communications and consultation (e.g. keeping the City website up-to-date)
- Council needs to take message and get out there and listen and talk.

Public Perceptions

- There is a perception that decisions are made behind closed doors and that the City controls access to information; “let’s not let anything out until we are ready and feeling that plan is done.”
- The public is reluctant to become involved because they feel their input has not yielded results; people now don’t see where the advice has been used so won’t participate in future consultations.

PART 5 – SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Internal staff from the City of Fort Saskatchewan conducted a situational analysis of the communication and consultation approaches identified as most effective in telephone and online surveys, the small group sessions, and the one-on-one interviews. The purpose of the exercise was to assess the effectiveness of the current approach to communication and consultation, and to identify areas for improvement.

COMMUNICATION APPROACHES	Current	Effectiveness	Changes
NEWSPAPER (advertisements, City Page, articles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City news is advertised in the Fort Record on a template called City Page, typically a two page spread • Most City news receives editorial coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fort Record is the only broadsheet newspaper in the community and is read by most of the community • There are two additional newsletter weeklies • Citizens who do not read the City Page miss the public engagement notices • The City Page looks the same every week because of the template and readers have to review each item to identify areas of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public engagement opportunities would stand out more if they were advertised independently • City would be required to amend policy of all City notices appearing in the City Page
CITY WEBSITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for public engagement are well advertised on the website • The website provides lots information about programs, services • At times, the information on the website is not current • The site is not smart phone friendly • No social media applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very effective if someone checks the website and learns of an opportunity with enough notice to participate • Can effectively provide large volumes of background information (e.g. documents, maps, pictures) to help educate the user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A designated public engagement platform is required, which incorporates social media

<p>MAILINGS (letters, information packages)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of impact are mailed to all closest neighbourhood when a development permit applications is received by the City • The mayor uses mail correspondence on a regular basis • The Fort Report Citizen newsletter is mailed to every household on a quarterly basis • New resident packages are provided upon request and through Welcome Wagon with all contact information for City departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit applications notices are very effective as the information in the letter could have a very direct impact on the recipient • The Fort Report newsletter seems to have some value as we heard from the small group interviews but we know that it is still fairly as a source of information • The New Resident Information packages are very well received and in high demand from show homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an effort to become greener, the City will work to transition citizens from printed media to electronic media or news feeds
<p>ELECTRONIC MEDIA (radio, television)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only controversial issues get Edmonton-based electronic media coverage • Shaw Information Ticker can be useful to notify residents of events, meetings, etc. • A radio outlet is seeking a local operating license for Fort Saskatchewan and currently has an application before the CRTC • fortradio.com is an internet based radio service that posts all City news releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the exception of fortradio.com and Shaw, electronic media is not a reliable way to share information about local opportunities or events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local radio station would provide a wonderful new opportunity to inform citizens

<p>PERSONAL INTERACTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective approach for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to use the
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(word-of-mouth, community carries the message)	<p>connecting with informing key stakeholder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a solid email list of engaged citizens • Currently rely on email, attending group meeting, or phone calls • Council could play a role to inform the public 	some projects	approach more
SIGNAGE (electronic signs, portable signs, posters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensively use the Dow Electronic Message board to announce events and meetings • Some sandwich board signs are used for major events • Portable signs are not used outside of construction zones • Posters are used throughout facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dow Electronic sign is quite effective and the message can change easily • Sandwich board signs are very effective but are not currently used for public engagement opportunities • Posters are effective but not always incorporated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
SOCIAL MEDIA (Facebook, Twitter, text messaging)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Manager has a Twitter account but does not Tweet very often • Shell Theatre and Youth Coordinator use Facebook extensively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Facebook users find it an effective way to engage their audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, RSS and You Tube interfaces on our website

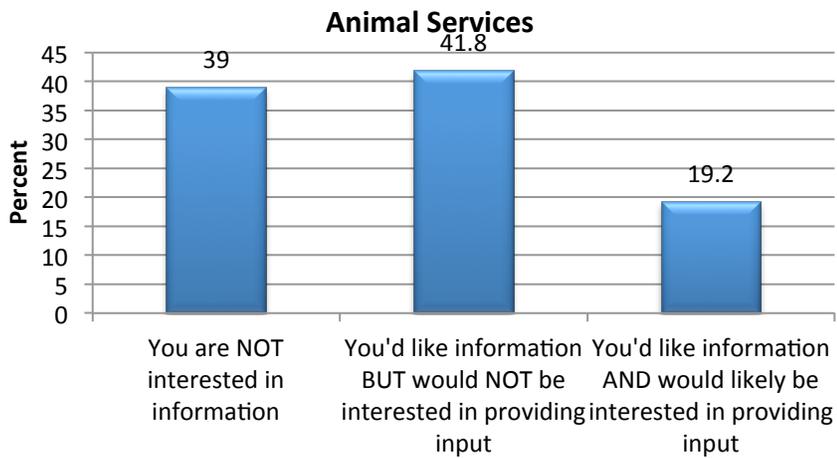
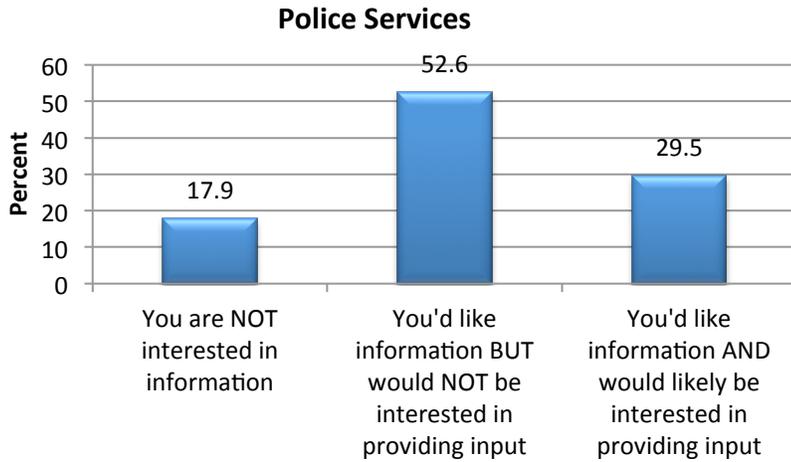
CONSULTATION APPROACHES	Current	Effectiveness	Changes
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<p>INTERNET-BASED CONSULTATION (website, email)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website is used to notify residents of all public input opportunities • Have an email list of many special interest groups, and citizens who have connected with the City the past • Email is used to invite residents to participate in consultation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of website on public processes has not been measured • Email is very effective but most people respond with regrets because of timing • Limited success attracting participation because the email list is comprised of busiest, most connected people in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email and website need to be used more effectively to connect with a diverse range of citizens and to encourage participation from individuals who typically are not involved (i.e., the “unusual suspects”)
<p>SURVEYS / QUESTIONAIRES (online, telephone, mail-back)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey Monkey has been used to collect feedback on some projects and initiative through a push web survey • Consultants have been retained to develop and implement web-based surveys • City conducts and annual citizen satisfaction telephone survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although online surveys are quick and easy to administer, results have been varied because it can be challenging to generate sufficient participation rates • The annual satisfaction survey is contracted to a research firm so results have been sufficient, however some people have mentioned they are tired of answering the same questions and administration is not seeing any new information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual citizens satisfaction survey was revised to focus on the Community Sustainability Plan • Will continue to use online surveys to solicit feedback, but will increase efforts to promote surveys and increase participation rates

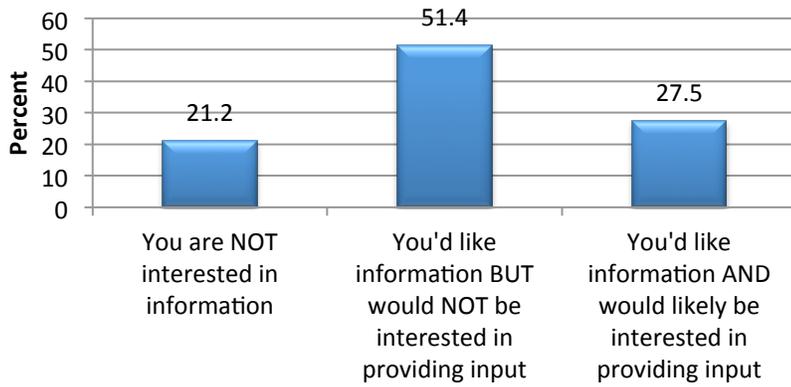
<p>PUBLIC MEETINGS (discussion forums, town hall meetings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings are conducted to gather public input for most City project • Town Hall meeting have not been used for several years • Citizens have the opportunity to and are encouraged to pose questions at the beginning of every public Council meetings • 2011 Community Workshop was cancelled twice due to lack of attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings are typically not well attended • Same people participate in public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been some success conducting meetings with groups in there own space and time
<p>DIRECT CONTACT (face-to face interaction with City representative, dedicated internal contact person)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Redevelopment has a dedicated contact • City Centre Square Advisory committee had dedicated resources for public engagement • Other projects such as West Rivers Edge are working directly with one user group (Nordic Ski Club) on a building and site development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contacts have proven to be very effective • Acting as the direct contact person can be extremely taxing • Closer interaction increases public expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff member(s) dedicated to public engagement will act as a direct contact for citizens
<p>PERSONAL INTERACTION (word-of-mouth, community carries the message)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically occurs when people are upset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has led to petitions to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More proactive and positive personal interaction with citizens is required
<p>SOCIAL MEDIA (Facebook, Twitter, text messaging)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Manager Tweets all public engagement opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not effective because City Manager has not developed a following 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to embrace digital engagement and generate following

APPENDIX A

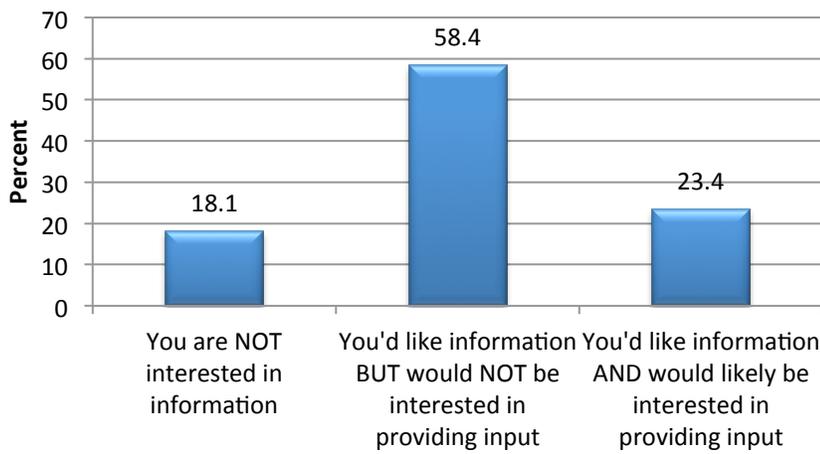
Interest in Municipal Service Areas from Public Survey



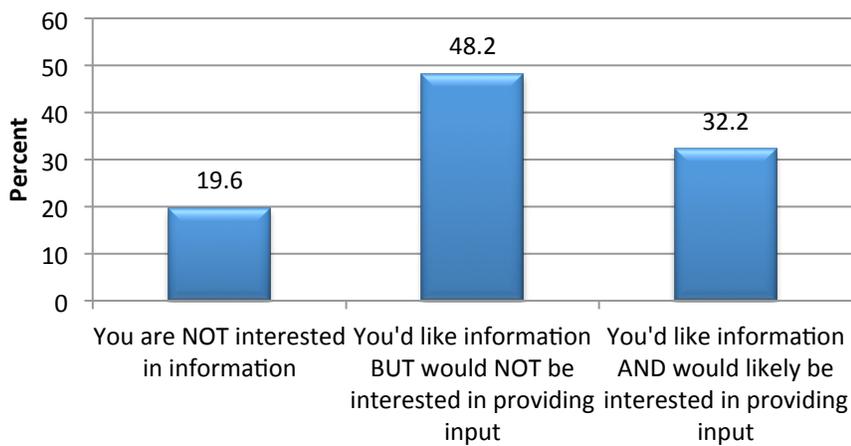
Bylaw Services



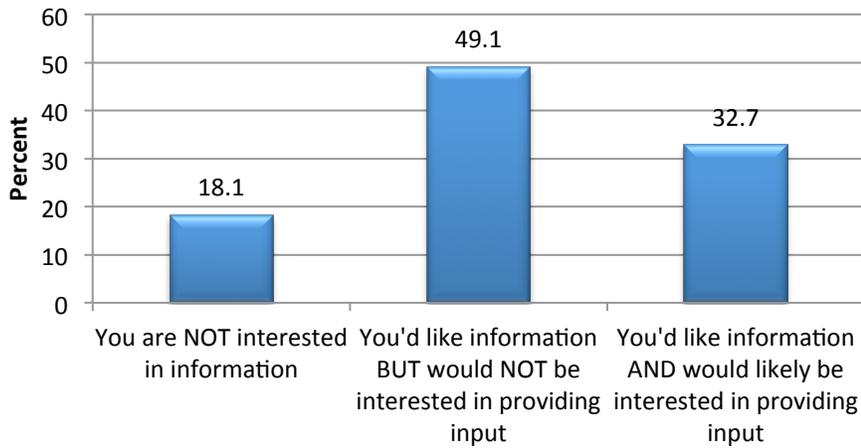
Fire Department Services



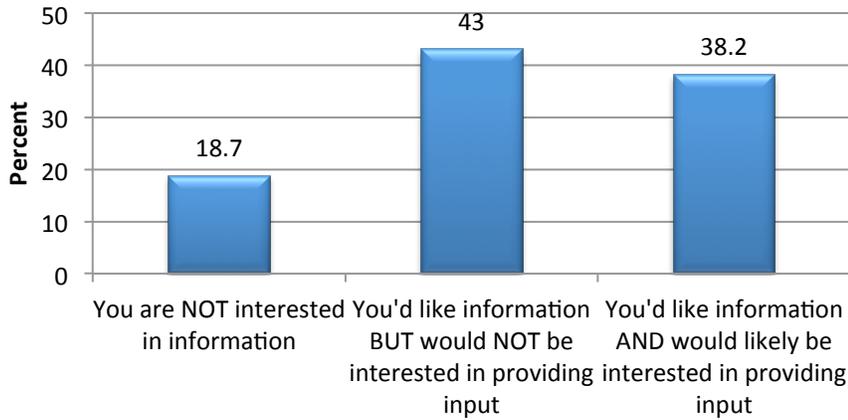
Parks



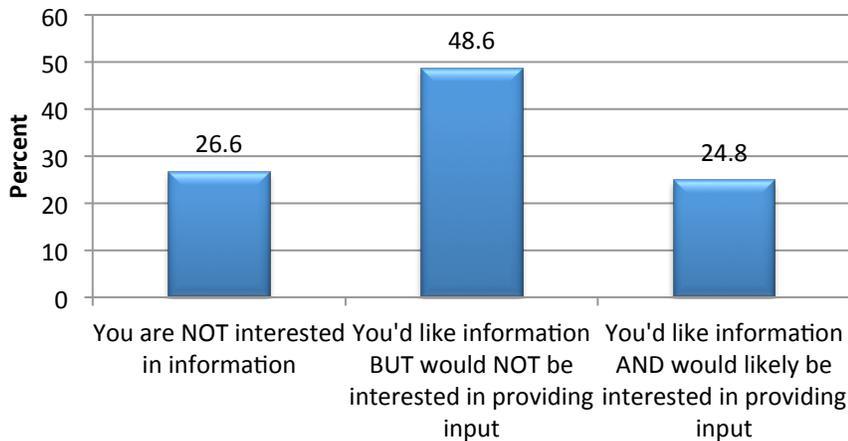
Recreation



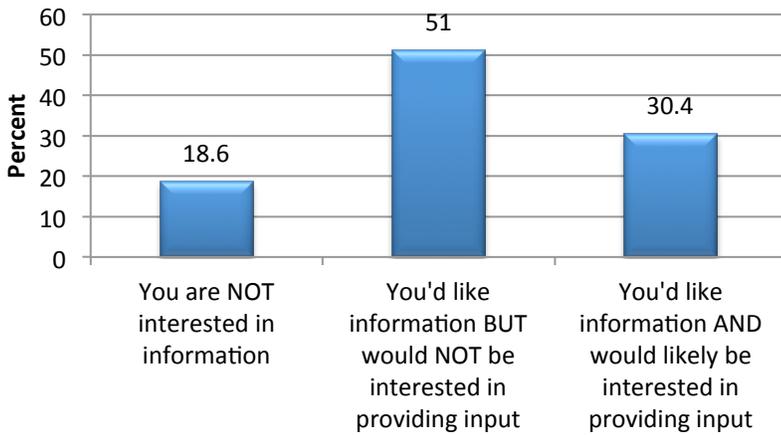
Property Assessment and Taxes



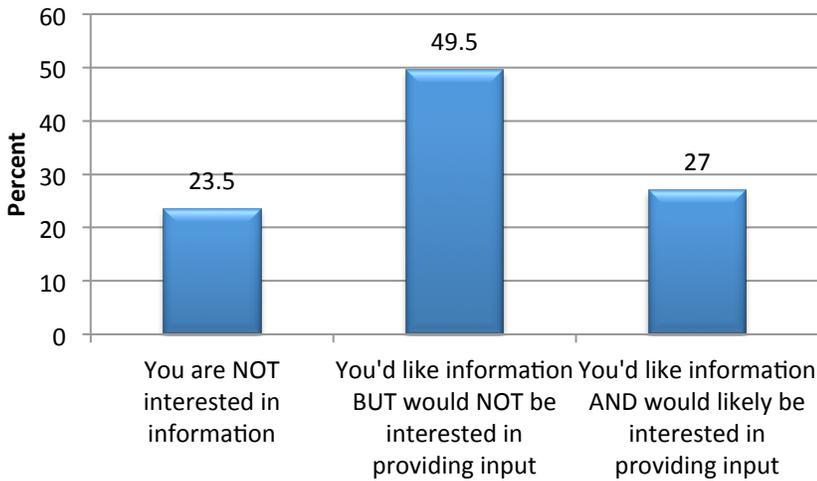
Transportation



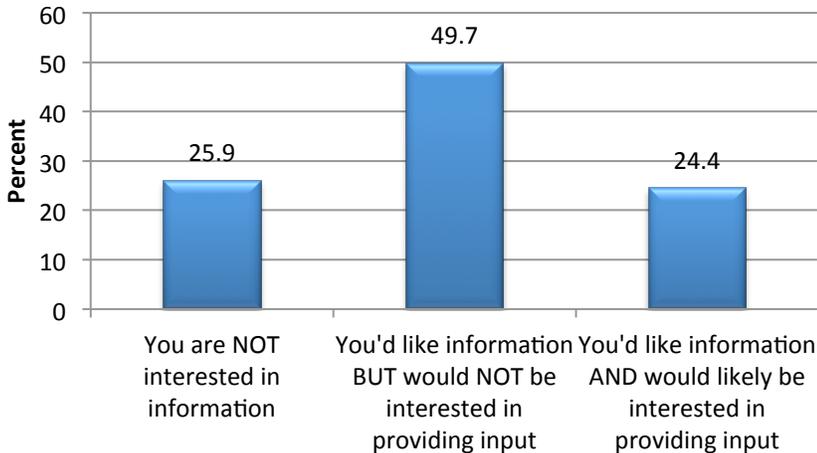
Roads Construction



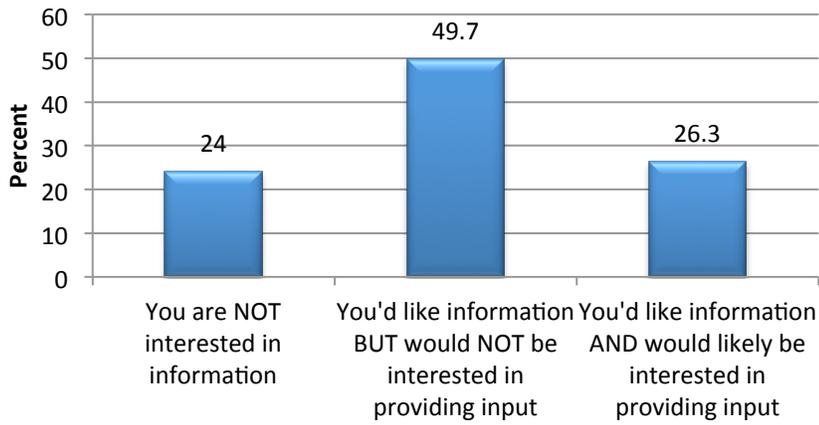
Snow Removal



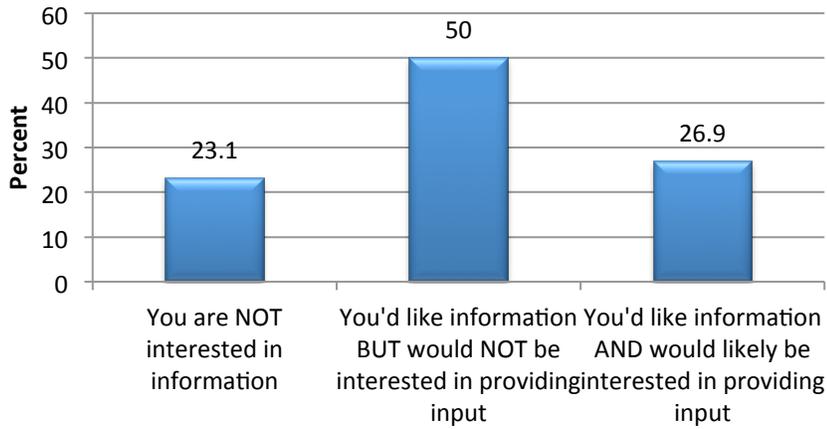
Waste and Recycling



Support Services



Planning and Development



APPENDIX B

Comparisons of Communication Mediums by Age from Public Survey

Table of Means; Scale is 0=Never to 5 = Very Frequently

Age	Check Facebook	Watch YouTube	Read blogs	Check Twitter	Watch webcasts	Check RSS Feed Reader	Use your smart phone to check local/regional news	Check webpages for local news	Listen to local/regional radio	Notice the information on signage the City puts up	Watch local/regional television	Read your local newspaper
18-29	3.8	3.2	1.2	1.1	1.3	0.8	1.6	2.0	3.4	3.0	2.9	3.2
30-44	2.8	1.9	1.3	0.8	1.1	0.5	1.4	2.3	3.5	3.4	3.0	3.6
45-64	1.3	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.6	1.8	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.0
65 +	0.7	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.4	1.1	3.0	2.9	3.5	4.4
Total	1.9	1.5	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.8	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.9

APPENDIX C

Individual Comments Regarding Previous Input to City Council from Public Survey

- A letter in regards to garbage disposal
- About crows by directly speaking with councillors
- Attended meetings and provided input about various committees
- Attended meetings and the Nurses Strike
- Brother is on the council in regards to the roads
- Budgets
- By emailing or by phoning Provided input on any city issue that I thought they were not doing right
- Called the city regarding park upkeep
- City Hall meetings Snow removal
- Club for the Fort Saskatchewan Nordic ski club
- Council meeting campground issues
- Custody legal issues
- Delivered flyers in the neighbourhood regarding 3 story walk-up in a residential area
- Email about the new civic center
- Emailed the city regarding taxation
- Enlarging the City Hall
- Go to meetings regarding giving ownership of mall to someone new
- Gravel company
- Group meeting regarding the bylaw height on buildings
- I appeared before the council regarding land and development
- I know councillors talked to about speed limits
- I phoned about a bylaw
- I phoned about bylaw issues and local business getting licenses
- I phoned about bylaws
- I phoned about conditions of the bike trail during winter
- Improving of the boat launch
- In a meeting The hiking and cross country skiing and funding for the trails
- Infrastructure planning and development
- It was regarding construction of the swimming pool and voting on first Dow center in a meeting
- Land development
- Letters and opinions
- Local business establishment and wrote to the city with comments
- Made a report to city council about historical resources advisory board
- Mail out survey construction of downtown
- Meeting in regards to traffic signs
- Meeting many different topics like roads and money spending
- Meeting regarding construction of the DCC
- Meetings on road infrastructure
- MSA board regarding if we were going to get a new arena
- Personally through mayor Policing and sports
- Phone and emailed regarding traffic lights on highway 21
- Phoned City Hall regarding bylaw
- Phoned counsellor regarding condition of play parks as they were hazardous
- Planning and development
- Planning for the future and downtown
- Policing
- Political art in city
- Provided input during meeting regarding the zoning change
- Provided input through the Nordic ski club about the Nordic ski club
- Provided input through various community associations Input depended upon each association

- Provided input to a friend who is a part of city council and it was regarding roads speed limits
- Public library
- Recreation for a skate park
- Recreational facilities more for the arts
- Refused to discuss it
- Refused to tell
- Regarding recreation facilities city contacted him
- Road development
- School boundary issues
- Speed limit and traffic congestion
- Submitted my email topic election
- Survey regarding services
- Talked to counsellors regarding policing issues
- Taxation of condominium
- Taxing on the golf course
- The building of a new city hall I participated via writing
- The Dow center development
- The new City Hall building
- The new City Hall building and campaigned
- Toboggan hill supported presentations
- Traffic
- Trying to stop neighbours from running a home business first through mail then personal appearance
- Upgrading the library
- User meetings and speaks about facility overbooking and lack of space
- Verbal one on one with a council member Refused to say what it was regarding
- Verbally at a council meeting about planning issue for suits in residential neighbourhood
- Was on city council and provided input on various things
- Went to a city council meeting and input was regarding vandalism
- Went to City Hall and did a presentation about parking at seniors centre and about construction
- With regards to the Dall Sentinel ball diamonds whether they were going to move it
- Work issue grants at work
- Work with city council so put in a lot of input
- Writing for a funding request for a program
- Wrote letter regarding parks and recreation that they should have ice in rinks year round
- Zoning for neighbours

APPENDIX D

Individual Comments on Providing Feedback to the City from Public Survey

- Ability to drop off letters at the town office making it easier to get a hold of members
- Add a comment box on city website
- Add info on the Internet
- Add more info to the city website
- Advertise more in the paper or TV
- Awareness of the process of how to provide feedback
- City meetings
- Comments section on the website
- Communicate meetings agendas to the people
- Communicate on a one on one basis and be truthful
- Communicate that you can provide feedback on webpage
- Complaint hotline
- Conduct surveys
- Daily polls on their website
- Discussion groups
- Do a better job of letting people know when they are going to have meetings
- Do more mail-in surveys
- Easier to access on the website
- Elaborate webpage
- Email surveys
- Expand more on technology and make it known to the people that there are many ways to provide input
- Feedback link on website
- Get new council members
- Give more days open to town meetings and separate buildings
- Have a Facebook page
- Have a link on their webpage to provide feedback
- Have a suggestion box where you can be anonymous
- Have surveys made easier to understand on the city website
- Have the meetings in the evening when more people can attend
- High speed internet in the country would make it easier to communicate
- If the staff on the city council would listen to peoples complaints and do something to fix them
- Just be available when I need them to be
- Let me know that they would like feedback by putting on their website in the report
- Let the public now where they can go to input information
- Let them know how and where to provide feedback
- Make a blog to update what is going on
- Make a suggestion box either online or at the City Hall for people to provide input
- Make council meetings open
- Make feedback accessible online
- Make live agents available
- More city meetings
- More surveys should be available online
- On the city website
- Open council to discuss issues and submit questions
- Open forums and being able to make suggestions online
- Open forums and have more than one date and evening hours
- Options available online to provide feedback
- Post council meetings and agendas ahead of time use web information more effectively
- Provide email addresses for questions or concerns
- Provide more information on how to get specific government department information
- Provide surveys over the phone
- Providing contact Info for Area Rep

- Providing feedback via email and the web would be the most efficient
- Publicly encourage people to provide feedback
- Put forums on website
- Put it in the newspaper
- Put more information in newspapers
- Questionnaires
- Questionnaires in the papers and on website They should let people know when there are meetings
- Should be able to contact someone by phone
- Should be able to speak directly to the appropriate person
- Should send out questionnaires
- Something online to provide feedback
- Submitting info on website would be helpful
- Survey on bus routes to include users of the buses directly
- Telephone surveying and mail surveying
- Text messaging service
- The scheduling of City Hall meetings to make them more flexible and more notice ahead of time
- They could ask questions of residents on Facebook
- They could do a mail out survey
- They could have a few more meetings with the public in regards to their decisions
- They have great communication already
- They should publicize what goes on in the meetings so citizens can have more input
- Topic area online to discuss and comment
- Use local paper for announcements
- Use more email requesting more written responses
- Webpage to submit comments and suggestions
- What they are doing is enough

APPENDIX E

Individual Comments Regarding Previous Input to City Council from Online Survey

- Blue bag recycling program with Shell
- The idea of a community clean-up program
- A number of bylaw issues. Some regarding the bylaws that some businesses faced when trying to deal with permits for the mall when it was city owned and the rules pertaining to non-profit groups and how the city deals with them and finding space for them to contribute to the community.
- As a member of the Policing Committee. Policing Initiatives like photo radar, speed limits, vandalism
- By speaking to some of the Councillors and, on occasion, the City Manager. City centre Square project and Downtown redevelopment matters.
- City Centre Square project committee
- Civic task forces and Committees
- Community Strategic planning session.
- Letter regarding development
- Many issues. Mostly by letter.
- Member of economic Development committee, represented the Fort Sask Chamber of Commerce, member of the DRAC Committee. Attended community planning workshop in the past.
- Most recently I emailed city council about the speeding along Pryce Alderson (when discussion about speed bumps/stop sign started).
- New Srs. facility new condo developments
- Originally proposed city centre Taj Mahal office building and Archstone condominium building
- Presentations to council, participation on committees, attend public input sessions, attend focus group, sit on advisory committee, social services, new municipal building, sustainability plan, city strategic plan, vibrant communities
- Roadwork. Taxes. Recreational parks
- Seniors and the promotion of a new facility.
- Speed limits in my community
- Through letters to the editor and was personally attacked by the current mayor for providing input. Her reaction to public input is frankly disgusting and discourages the public from providing input.
- My concern of a city of this size and potential not having full time fire/rescue response.