

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
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Item No. 9.1.1
Halifax Regional Council
February 16, 2016
February 23, 2016

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Councillor Wayne Mason, Chair, Community Planning & Economic
Development Standing Committee

DATE: February 4, 2016

SUBJECT: Planning and Development – Public Consultation Renewed

ORIGIN

Motion passed by the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee at a meeting held on January 21, 2016.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 3(d) of the Committee's Terms of Reference – "The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee shall provide oversight of the Municipality's Regional Plan and Regional Planning initiatives by being involved in developing the Municipality's approach to public participation programs for various planning processes such as regional and municipal planning strategy amendments."

RECOMMENDATION

That Halifax Regional Council

1. Direct staff to develop a new Administrative Order, which would outline required and optional engagement activities for planning applications, policy amendments, and new policy development undertaken by the Planning & Development business unit and return to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee when this work is complete;
2. Direct staff to investigate opportunities to implement new engagement tools as well as modernized existing tools on a go-forward basis in an effort to modernize the planning process;
3. Initiate the process to consider amending the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy so as to require consistency in public consultation requirement / standards throughout all Municipal Planning Strategies and Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies; and
4. Direct staff to return to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee on a yearly basis with the purpose of reporting on an engagement activities performed in that year, and recommended improvements to the process.

BACKGROUND

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee considered a staff report in regard to a review of the public consultation practices associated with planning projects undertaken by Planning and Development.

DISCUSSION

The Committee endorsed the staff recommendation as noted above

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are set out in the January 6, 2016 staff report included as Attachment 1 to this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee is a Committee of Regional Council comprised of six Councillors. The meetings are open to the public and the Committee's agendas, minutes, and reports can be viewed at Halifax.ca.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ALTERNATIVES

The Committee did not provide alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Staff report dated January 6, 2016.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant 902.490.6520

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Item No.
Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee
January 21, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY: Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director, Planning and Development

DATE: January 6, 2016

SUBJECT: Planning and Development - Public Consultation Renewed

ORIGIN

Part VIII, Section 208 (c) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter requires the following:
"establish a consultative process to ensure the right of the public to have access to information and to participate in the formulation of planning strategies and by-laws, including the right to be notified and heard before decisions are made pursuant to this Part;"

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- Administrative Order Number 54 respecting the procedures for developing administrative orders;
- Section 219 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter; and
- Regional Plan Policy G-1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Direct staff to develop a new Administrative Order, which would outline required and optional engagement activities for planning applications, policy amendments, and new policy development undertaken by the Planning & Development business unit and return to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee when this work is complete;
2. Direct staff to investigate opportunities to implement new engagement tools as well as modernized existing tools on a go-forward basis in an effort to modernize the planning process;
3. Initiate the process to consider amending the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy so as to require consistency in public consultation requirements / standards throughout all Municipal Planning Strategies and Secondary Municipal Planning Strategies; and
4. Direct staff to return to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee on a yearly basis with the purpose of reporting on engagement activities performed in that year, and recommended improvements to the process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Consultation plays a key role in the success of any planning project undertaken at HRM so as to ensure the knowledge, experience, and feedback of its communities can help shape its continued successful development. As such, Planning and Development is recommending a review of the public consultation practices associated with planning projects undertaken by the business unit. A number of issues exist within current public consultation practices which include but are not limited to inconsistency in implementation, an inability to 'right-size' engagement, and engagement tools which are not reflective of the modern paradigm. Staff has already begun implementing improvements to aspects of the consultation process that do not require formal legislative amendments, and will continue to improve these administrative aspects throughout the next year. In addition to this, it is recommended that Council direct staff to begin work on a new Administrative Order which would outline required and supplementary engagement activities for planning applications, policy amendments, and new policy development undertaken by the Planning & Development business unit. Further, staff is recommending coinciding changes be initiated to the Regional Plan which would ensure consistency of policy application across the region.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

The Planning and Development Department is currently undertaking a comprehensive renewal of its policies, processes, and organization alignment in an effort to modernize and streamline current practices. An integral component of this renewal will be the methods used in communicating and engaging with the numerous stakeholders that are impacted by the decisions and recommendations made by the department. Re-assessing the tools that are used in order to engage with the public and stakeholders is one of many initiatives being brought forward by the department in order to improve the way that planning and development of HRM is carried out.

Receiving input from community stakeholders at the appropriate stages is fundamental to the success of any planning process. Over the past decades, the community consultation practices surrounding planning applications have grown from a legislatively required public hearing to the current standards of organizing public information meetings, receiving feedback from planning advisory committees, providing information on websites, surveys, and more. The development industry, the tools available to engage, and the lives of citizens have however changed dramatically since these consultation processes were first created.

The municipality is now at a point where a comprehensive evaluation of the consultation tools available to planning staff and Council is necessary in order to ensure the planning process remains accessible to citizens, and that HRM is getting the best possible community input with the resources available. Staff would like to develop a single comprehensive Public Consultation policy which would apply to all planning applications and planning projects considered by staff and Council. The current process utilized for these applications and projects involves the re-development of a consultation strategy for each case. A new policy could not only enable consultation to be "right-sized" for each individual application being considered, it could also work towards standardizing the consultation tools used throughout the Planning and Development department in an effort to grow more consistent in our community outreach practices in a way that remains consistent with the 2008 HRM-wide Community Engagement Strategy. Furthermore, the development of this toolbox would modernize the engagement process, providing more engagement options to the public in addition to reaching segments of the population not currently reached.

Project Objectives

General objectives of the project can be summarized as the following:

- The community's ability to influence the decision of various municipal authorities is formally recognized.
- Citizens are encouraged to participate in civic life through a variety of mediums.
- Public consultation processes are transparent, credible, effective, and useful to the decision making process.

- Public consultation processes strive to be inclusive to all citizens making effort to remove the barriers to participation found in many typical consultation methods.
- The public consultation process is modernized to reflect the modern lives of citizens and the technology available to outreach into the community.

Current Legislative Consultation Requirements

Broadly speaking, planning work completed within HRM can be divided into two categories. In one area of work, planning policies, studies, and other guiding documents are authored to provide the blueprint of future municipal growth. In the second area of work, applications which are submitted by individual property owners are assessed against existing policies and by-laws to determine their suitability, and to assess whether or not they are consistent with the policy direction that Council has provided. These two types of planning work are dealt with differently both from the perspective of Provincial legislation as well as to the consultation requirements outlined within HRM's own documents.

The Halifax Charter stipulates the broad legislative requirements for community consultation (Attachment A). Section 219 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter requires Council to adopt a public participation program concerning the preparation of planning documents which establishes *'...ways and means of seeking the opinions of the public...'* Most often, the document utilized for this requirement is the 1997 Public Participation program recognized by Council resolution, and as further described later in this report. For planning applications, public hearings are required by the Charter, which also goes into further detail surrounding the timing of required newspaper advertisements which notify the public that these meetings will take place. Beyond these two requirements, all public engagement currently undertaken has been at the complete discretion of HRM, and has grown over time to become the adopted practice through custom and culture.

Beyond Provincial requirements, a combination of pre and post amalgamation Councils have committed the Planning and Development department to performing a variety of engagement activities which differ depending on the plan area and application type being proposed. In some planning areas, the applicable Municipal Planning Strategy or Land Use Bylaw may identify specific consultation requirements for Public Participation. Several Plans require the creation of a Public Participation Committee, to be engaged if a particular type or scale of development is being pursued. Others require input from specific boards such as the Watershed Advisory Board dependent on the implications of certain applications or projects. The Site Plan Approval process is another application type referencing a unique engagement approach to applications. The varying types of consultation required adds complexity to a planning process which can already be difficult to understand.

Very little in the way of consultation is definitively required through law in the current system. For the majority of planning applications and policies being considered by Council, engagement could be legally considered complete by the sole practice of advertising for and holding a Public Hearing at the time of decision. A component of the project discussed in this report could be to apply a more rigorous baseline standard of consultation to be applied in the case of all applications with the ability to increase the scope and intensity of this consultation as required on a case by case basis.

1997 Public Participation Policy

In 1997, Regional Council adopted a public participation program for amendments to municipal planning strategies (MPS) (Attachment B). Under the program, applications for Municipal Planning Strategy amendments are categorized as either local or regional applications. The current public participation program outlines the procedure for local or community based applications while applications of a regional nature would be subject to a public participation program customized for the specific application or project.

The public participation program for local MPS amendment applications involves:

- Holding a public meeting;
- Following a specific notification process for such a meeting;
- Providing Council with minutes of the meeting; and
- Providing written submissions from the public on the application.

It is important to note several nuances of this policy as it currently exists. First, the policy applies only to MPS amendments, and needs to be specifically referenced by Council resolution if it is to be used in other application types, or in the development of planning policy. Second, the program does not prevent either Regional Council or Community Council from taking additional measures as may be deemed necessary to obtain public input regarding amendment of any MPS or the Regional Subdivision Bylaw. Third, it is of note that current engagement practice frequently involves consultation over and above what is required within the 1997 resolution. In certain projects over the past years, unique engagement tools have been implemented for projects inclusive of public workshops, surveys, public participation committees, live-streaming and on-line portals. While engagement over and above that which Council mandates is not seen as problematic, it is seen as more transparent both to the general public as well as to applicants for planning projects to develop a document where the standards and expectations for engagement can be referenced within a Council adopted policy or strategy.

HRM Community Engagement Strategy

In 2008, Regional Council clarified its approach towards community engagement with the adoption of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. The strategy recognizes the importance of community engagement in the development of policy, programs, and services, and is embedded in the Regional Plan through Policy G-1 stating the following:

G-1 The HRM Community Engagement Strategy, approved by HRM in 2008, shall guide how HRM will inform, consult with, and engage the public in developing and implementing its programs and services.

The strategy provides a policy and strategic action direction which guides how HRM informs, consults with, and engages the public in developing and implementing its programs and services. The Community Engagement Strategy is based on a Continuum of Community Engagement from Information Sharing to Consultation to Active Participation (Attachment C). The Strategy does not mandate specific community engagement methods, but rather introduces a consistent strategic approach which equips HRM with the tools needed to conduct meaningful, inclusive, and effective public involvement. The Strategy stresses the importance of designing a clear and effective engagement process that is fully integrated with the overall project, and includes a number of tools to assist staff in the process.

DISCUSSION

Issues in the Current Process

Lack of Modernity

The current program for community engagement does not necessarily reflect the modern world where time demands on individuals and families are ever more increased. It is expected that many individuals would benefit from an increased number of consultation options which do not involve spending multiple hours on a weeknight shortly after or during the dinner hour discussing a planning application or policy. In a standard application process, participants to the process could expect to attend as many as 3-4 meetings to be witness to all public steps. In instances where there is a significant change, such as a Plan Amendment, this number can be as high as 5-6 meetings. The increasing public expectation with respect to consultation is that information, and the ability to provide feedback on that information, is available on an "as required - when requested" basis. Technology has evolved to the point where this is now possible.

Inconsistency in Practice

In the absence of a unified public consultation approach applied to all planning application and policy work, unique consultation approaches are often developed on a project by project basis based on the scope of required work, the impact of the proposed change, and staff capacity. In addition to being a time consuming process, this approach has the potential to create imbalance where two projects of similar scope, impact, and typology offer different opportunities for the public to provide feedback.

Citizen Survey

The 2014 Citizen Survey identified 'Development' issues, including topics relating to downtown, oversight of the process, and urban sprawl, as the top issue facing the Municipality over the next 5 years with a total of 36% of respondents indicating this. Further identified within this survey is that Development / Planning / Zoning ranked number 4 in a list of most recent regional service they contacted the Municipality about, ranking ahead of such issues as taxes, snow removal, and transit. These two statistics provide clear direction from the community that the work being done by Planning & Development is important to HRM citizens, and that two-way communication on these issues is an expected and necessary part of citizen satisfaction.

Councillor Survey

As part of the Planning & Development renewal process BMA Management Consultants surveyed Regional Council in February 2015. Thirteen responses out of a possible 17 were received. One question specifically asked Council for their comments on how public consultation surrounding planning applications could be improved. Concerns for the existing process were evident and included the need to improve on-site signage, the current reliance on newspapers for notification, and a desire to use plain language within documents, amongst others. This feedback will be considered a future public consultation policy should Council direct staff to develop one.

Industry Feedback and Staff Experience

Feedback with regard to the existing public consultation tools was sought both from HRM staff with multiple years of experience utilizing the existing public consultation tools as well as from a group of stakeholders within the development industry. Industry stakeholders were represented by architectural, engineering, planning, and development firms whose planning applications have been subject to the existing consultation practices in recent years. By and large, feedback from both groups provided was consistent and included the following:

- The current Public Information Meeting process was identified to be confrontational and not beneficial to the process of identifying solutions to potential problems;
- The practice of newspaper notification was thought to be an outdated one which can be relatively expensive and time consuming;
- The internet and social media was thought to be an underutilized tool of engagement and notification;
- The consultation process as currently organized creates a 'bottleneck' in the process and is not conducive to processing planning applications in an efficient manner; and
- Both industry and staff agreed that a process of developer led engagement could be beneficial to all parties involved with caveat that this shift of responsibilities resulted in reduced processing times for planning applications and policy development.

Renewing Engagement

While no two planning applications or policies are identical, the current system of engagement offers little flexibility in the process which they are subject to. Given there is no single tool for engagement which is without flaw, or which addresses the needs of every stakeholder, any revised approach to engagement should focus on broadening the number of tools available to engage with while defining the terms and parameters that these tools are implemented under. An ideal approach would provide a range of options within an 'engagement toolbox' where staff is able to recommend the appropriate tool for the job based on application type. Adding flexibility to the current system would allow for engagement 'right-sizing' while still allowing for the flexibility to add to the scope or extent of engagement given the unique circumstances of individual projects.

Staff will continuously strive to improve the quality of engagement we can offer the public. In doing this, the recommended short term approach would be to focus change toward four key areas. The first is improving and modernizing those engagement tools we currently employ. The second is to identify and implement new engagement tools which are not currently used by HRM Planning and Development, or which may have been used sporadically but with success in the past. The third is to standardize through the application of an Administrative Order a baseline level of engagement required in the case of all

applications and planning projects to ensure consistency and to manage stakeholder expectations. This Administrative Order would also satisfy the requirement of the HRM Charter to adopt a public participation program concerning the preparation of planning documents. The final area is to improve communication of engagement activities and the relative levels of success or failure achieved in using the tools at the disposal of staff. This would include a commitment to outline the engagement activities clearly to the public at the outset of the process, in addition to staff reporting back to Council on engagement activities on an annual basis.

Administrative Order Application

The Administrative Order provides an excellent tool for Council to solidify the required administrative steps for a given process that does not require a public hearing. At present, the Planning and Development consultation processes are derived from a Resolution of Regional Council from 1997. Council resolutions are however by their nature, difficult to find on the HRM website, and cannot be altered from how they were originally passed. This has led to the practice explained earlier in this report where individual tools and strategies for engagement are implemented in many of the planning applications and projects reviewed. Compiling the tools available for use into a single document would add to the transparency of the engagement process and create more consistency between projects, while still allowing Regional Council to make changes to the document in an efficient manner.

As stated earlier in this report, the adoption of an Administrative Order would in fact represent an increase in the amount of public engagement that is currently legislatively required by the Province or by HRM itself. The Administrative Order could be crafted so that the extent of consultation would err on the side of additional engagement activities to ensure this important component of the planning process is comprehensively completed.

Baseline Engagement Standard

While the purpose of the engagement toolbox is to provide a greater amount of flexibility to allow the 'right-sizing' of engagement to a specific project, it is recognized that projects of all scopes will require a minimum degree of public engagement to ensure transparency of the process, and availability of information. As such, a new Administrative Order would likely mandate a baseline engagement standard to be used in all planning applications, policy amendments, and new policy development regardless of scope or impact. This standard would increase the amount of certainty which exists surrounding where on the continuum of engagement a specific project will exist, given the very limited legislative requirements that currently apply as discussed in background section of this report.

Examples of Improved Tools of Engagement

Some planning projects will require the use of unique engagement tools in order to ensure the values of the community are reflected in the reports and recommendations staff make to Council. The goal of staff in selecting engagement activities for a planning application or project would be to ensure the scope, and intensity of the engagement is reflective of the relative impact of the project. While new tools have been implemented in a variety of planning projects in recent years, this has been done inconsistently on a case by case basis. Staff is now seeking Council's authority to implement new engagement tools as well as modernized existing tools on a go-forward basis. This would ultimately be an iterative process. While some of the improvements discussed in this section have already been implemented, or are well on their way to fruition, others will require more assessment of how they would be refined to suit the HRM context, and to develop training and communication strategies on these changes to the process. A synopsis of these tools can be found in the succeeding sections of this report.

Enhanced Website Presence

The existing 'Active Planning Applications' section on the Halifax.ca website has been a successful tool in providing the public with detailed information regarding specific planning applications, and the details on what upcoming engagement opportunities will be occurring. With this said, it is felt that this tool is underutilized, with the site having further potential. Other Canadian cities have websites where feedback can be submitted directly from the webpage which contains this information (Appendix D). Ideally, this would consist of a submission form on the page where, when comments are sent, the comments would be directed into a searchable database accessible to staff. A second improvement option for the website

could be to include a subscription button on each application page (Appendix E). This would allow a resident to be notified by email when additions or changes to a page take place, thereby keeping them informed of the progress on a project. In the recently improved planning application webpage, an interactive map has been included which identifies on a map the specific properties which are the subject of planning applications under consideration, and provide a direct link to the webpage where additional details can be found. Finally, the website would be an appropriate location to hold web-based surveys which relate to specific planning applications (Appendix F). It is anticipated that increased use of these types of tools could provide useful feedback to staff and Council on a widely used basis.

Improved PIM Format

The Public Information Meeting (PIM) scheduled for virtually all planning application and policy projects is amongst the most resource intensive elements of the planning process, and one which can often be the 'bottleneck' preventing otherwise straightforward applications from moving forward expeditiously. The current process has also been described by applicants, members of the public, and HRM staff alike as one which can be unnecessarily adversarial. While face to face meetings with the public will always form an important part of the engagement process for many high impact, high profile, or controversial projects, there is value in increasing the amount of discretion used in identifying which applications or processes require this level of engagement. There is further benefit in altering the current 'stand and defend' format of PIM's to allow information and ideas to be exchanged in a less confrontational manner. Additionally, early outreach through community networks, different meeting forms or times of day may be beneficial in reaching demographic groups which have typically had low levels of participation within the public process, albeit still impacted by development proposals.

In some cases, it may be more practical for the municipality to play a role in assisting the developer to design a consultation program, and to have the developer lead this program. This is a system that is used successfully in multiple Canadian Municipalities. By working together to create terms around the design of the program, and methods for collecting input, HRM planners can still ensure a high standard of engagement is being obtained. Staff would rely on applicants for planning projects to perform the administrative and organizational tasks surrounding these meetings in accordance with a framework defined at the outset of the process. Citizens would still be able to contact Planning Staff directly, submit comments and provide feedback. For the majority of planning applications, a Public Hearing will remain as the foremost opportunity to speak directly to the decision makers should there be a desire to do so.

Review all MPS/LUB specific requirements

A review of Plans and Bylaws indicates there are inconsistencies in how public consultation is approached in different Plan areas. In some instances, these inconsistencies are remnants of pre-amalgamation planning frameworks. For example, in the former Town of Bedford Plan Area, PIM's are required for particular Planning Application types. (Attachment G) As part of this report, it is recommended that plans be reviewed to ensure that all consultation and engagement standards are consistent with the direction provided by Regional Council in the proposed Administrative Order. The recommended manner of accomplishing this goal is to amend the Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy so as to require that all subordinate Municipal Planning Strategies conform to the consultation standards of a subsequently approved Administrative Order.

Modernize Site Notification Signage

As part of the existing process for planning applications, it is required that signage be erected on the subject property indicating the type of planning application submitted, the type of development which would be permitted should the application be approved, in addition to information regarding where further information can be obtained if so desired. Current signage is of a uniform size regardless of the context of the property, without pictures or graphics, inconsistent with HRM branding practices, and is of a technical nature. Signage of this type can be vastly improved upon. Other cities have used plain language, infographics, maps, renderings, and branding in an effort to make the planning process more accessible to all citizens (Attachment H). Staff would endeavour to implement an improved standard of signage which would substantially improve communication with the public with a negligible additional cost.

Modernize Mail-out Notification

Presently, households within a defined radius of the site of a planning application will be sent a 2 page letter informing them of basic information pertaining to the application. Information includes the existing zoning, the applicable Municipal Planning Strategy definition, a technical description of the change or project proposed using by-law terminology, a map of the affected area, as well as meeting dates, times, and purpose. Similar to the existing on site signage process, letters currently being sent are highly technical in nature, and fail to reflect the plain language graphic focused mailings implemented by other Canadian cities (Attachment I). Staff has begun the process of updating to a postcard style of mailing which provides a more straightforward outline of the requests/changes to the site being proposed while identifying where opportunities to submit feedback or receive additional information can be found.

Review Use of Social Media

Social media can be an incredibly powerful tool for reaching large numbers of people in a timely manner, and at a time and pace that is convenient for the user. It has the further benefit of reaching a demographic segment of the populations which may not be currently engaged through the use of tools such as evening public meetings or newspaper advertisements. These benefits must however be balanced with the potential drawbacks of there being a lack of experience with these engagement methods within the municipality, and the unknown amount of resources required to provide near 24 hour a day - 365 day a year monitoring of these types of tools. Potentially, a system can be explored to use these tools to 'inform' the public, while using other tools for the 'engagement' component of consultation. To begin, a pilot program could be focused particularly around Major Application types. It is recommended that these changes be explored in consultation with HRM Communications staff.

Planning Advisory Committee

A total of 3 planning advisory committees currently provide recommendations to Community Councils on planning matters in their respective geographic areas. Within the terms of reference for these committees, there are currently no requirements for specific expertise, or experience within the planning, construction, architecture, or development fields. As such, these committees serve the role of a type of community focus group which provides feedback from a small sample of area residents. Potential improvements to this system could involve enhanced training opportunities for committee members, or changes to the terms of reference to require baseline knowledge of planning principles. Additionally, improvements to the overall procedure through which planning matters are presented to these committees could be explored in an effort to ensure a streamlined, efficient, and transparent process.

Public Education

Staff would recommend expanding its engagement with the community in a more proactive manner through educational programs which speak to planning and its processes in a more abstract way, and separate from specific applications or projects. Other Canadian Cities have implemented programs where a series of interactive workshops in planning are offered offering a certificate of completion of the full series is completed (Attachment J). These workshops provide information on both best planning practices utilized throughout the country and world, specific workshops on the policies and guidelines which govern their city, as well as workshops which help explain the municipal processes which planning applications and projects are subject to. The provision of this baseline information is important not only in raising the profile of planning and development related issues, but also to enhance the quality of feedback received from the public by providing a baseline of sound planning principles.

Plain Language Documents

Technical language and the excessive use of acronyms can at times obscure the planning process and its primary goals. Plain language guidelines can assist in avoiding this pitfall without losing the technical rigour existent in a plan or by-law. When individuals are speaking a common language, it is easier to communicate the ideas and desires generated through engagement. Renewing documents with this goal in mind could result in a higher quality of engagement and feedback from the public reflective of a better understanding of the topics and issues at hand.

Regular Reporting

At present, the Planning and Development department does not record aggregate statistics pertaining to total number of engagement events, attendance, or mail outs sent. Statistics are currently only available

on a by-project basis. Moving forward, staff will endeavor to compile statistics of this nature which staff sees as having the immediate benefit of publicizing the extent of community outreach in a given year with the added benefit of providing baseline data to allow assessment the of community interest in a given year. Over time, these reports will allow trends to be identified which will provide staff and Council with an additional tool to determine the strengths and weaknesses of respective tools within the engagement toolbox, and providing quantitative data leading to future changes to processes.

Conclusion

Consideration of changes to the existing consultation tools as outlined within this report reflect the modern engagement best practices implemented by municipalities across Canada. Beginning work on a new Administrative Order would result in a more consistent and transparent engagement process where all parties know and understand the expectations of all those involved. Additionally, the new process would modernize the tools used within the Public Engagement process so as to ensure consistency with the goals of the overarching Planning and Development Departmental renewal.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

While the financial implications to HRM could be significant should Council choose to implement the proposed Administrative Order, it is not possible to fully account for their impacts until an order has been drafted, and the costs for specific processes accounted for. Generally, it has been assessed that the proposed changes in process will result in an overall reduction of existing costs. For example, funds currently utilized for staffing, particularly with regard to overtime associated with evening meetings, could be re-allocated towards improving technology, enhancing web-presence, and investigating the use of social media. The "right-sizing" approach will be key to cost effectiveness. Other changes discussed in this report, such as those to mail out or site signage, would be minimal and, in most cases, would be incurred by the project applicant.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To date, staff has held preliminary discussions with the development industry to obtain feedback on the current system of public engagement. Additionally, a 2007 consultant study on community engagement practices also included focus groups with members of the public who participated in HRM planning processes with staff also collecting meeting evaluation forms from the public within larger planning processes for several years. Should Committee direct staff to proceed with this system of engagement, it is recommended that additional and more specific conversations occur with groups that are most frequently involved in the planning process potentially including but not limited to the Urban Development Institute, the Planning Advisory Committees, and the Homebuilders Association.

Any decision of Regional Council to adopt an Administrative Order would require a Notice of Motion for the adoption of the Administrative Order followed by consideration of the motion a minimum of 7 days following it being made. This process is as per Administrative Order 54 respecting the Procedures for the Development of Administrative Orders.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council may choose to retain the existing practice of community consultation utilizing the 1997 Public Participation Resolution of Council as well as the principles of the 2008 HRM Community Engagement Strategy to develop consultation plans on a project by project basis.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Excerpt from the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter – Section 219
Attachment B: Public Participation Resolution of Regional Council – February 25, 1997
Attachment C: IAP2 Continuum of Public Participation
Attachment D: City of Ottawa Webpage: Comment Submission to File Lead
<https://app01.ottawa.ca/postingplans/commentForm.jsf?lang=en&appId= 8JS5MQ&newReq=true>

- Attachment E: City of North Vancouver Webpage: .RSS Webpage Update Subscription page
<http://www.cnv.org/RSS/RSS%20Guide>
- Attachment F: City of Waterloo Webpage: Current Online Surveys.
<http://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/surveys.asp>
- Attachment G: Bedford Municipal Planning Strategy Excerpt. Policy CP-9.
- Attachment H: City of Toronto new proposed Development Notification Signage
http://publicrealm.ca/wp-content/uploads/NoticeBoards_r6b150_Page_2.jpg
- Attachment I: City of Vancouver updated mail out notification Before and After
<http://www.vancourier.com/news/developing-story-city-of-vancouver-designs-easier-to-read-development-signs-1.382197>
- Attachment J: City of Edmonton Planning Academy Webpage Excerpt
http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/planning-academy.aspx
- Attachment K: Table of Current Engagement Practices

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Carl Purvis, Acting Supervisor of Community Planning, 902-490-4797

Attachment A: Excerpt from the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter – Section 219

**Public participation program
219**

- (1) The Council shall adopt, by policy, a public participation program concerning the preparation of planning documents.
- (2) The Council may adopt different public participation programs for different types of planning documents.
- (3) The content of a public participation program is at the discretion of the Council, but it must identify opportunities and establish ways and means of seeking the opinions of the public concerning the proposed planning documents. *2008, c. 39, s. 219.*

Halifax Regional Municipality

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL

February 18, 1997

TO: Mayor Fitzgerald and Members of Regional Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

 K.R. Meech, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed

 Dan English, Commissioner of Community Services

DATE: February 11, 1997

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM FOR MUNICIPAL
PLANNING STRATEGY AMENDMENTS**

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

June 12, 1996, North West Community Council session

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council consider the adoption of the public participation resolution attached as Appendix "A".

BACKGROUND

The Halifax Regional Charter provides that the approval of amendments to all municipal planning strategies within the region rests with Regional Council. The responsibility for land use by-law amendments, rezonings, development agreement approvals, and minor variance application appeals is delegated to Community Councils. Excluding secondary plans within the former City of Halifax, there are currently seventeen(17) municipal planning strategy documents in place covering all areas of HRM.

Under the Planning Act (Section 34), the preparation and amendment of municipal planning strategies requires the adoption of a public participation program, the intent of which is to ensure and identify the means by which the public will be provided an opportunity to have input. This public participation program is intended to be over and above the public hearing process required for the adoption/amendment of municipal planning strategies.

DISCUSSION

Before amalgamation, each of the municipal units had approved its own program of public participation. In all instances, a public information meeting was required prior to a municipal council holding a public hearing to consider a particular matter. In Halifax, Bedford and the County, this meeting was held by a Planning Advisory Committee while in Dartmouth, where there was no PAC, the meeting was held by planning staff. Staff believe that the same general approach should continue with the Regional Municipality.

In addition to requiring that a public meeting be held, each of the pre-amalgamation units also included specific conditions concerning the advertising and/or timing of the meeting. In all cases, a newspaper advertisement of the meeting was required. In Bedford and the County, the advertisement was required at least one week prior to the meeting; Halifax and Dartmouth had no specific timeframe. In Dartmouth, the public meeting had to be held at least five clear days prior to a public hearing to consider the matter while in Halifax the meeting was required within four weeks of the matter having been referred from Council to the PAC. Bedford and the County had no specific requirements concerning the timing of the meeting. Implicitly, however, just as in Halifax, the public meeting was a mandatory step for the PAC to follow in the process of making a recommendation to Council. Staff supports the continuation of this practice.

Implications of Community Councils

Prior to amalgamation, Halifax County Municipality had a similar division of responsibilities between the Municipal Council and the Community Councils as exists in the Region today, i.e., the responsibility for approving plan amendments did not rest with the Community Councils. However, in recognition of the fact that these community councils have an obvious interest and stake in any changes to the municipal planning strategies within their respective jurisdictions, Municipal Council adopted a public participation program which recognized and supported these interests.

In situations where a plan amendment was being considered in an area where a community council functioned, the public participation program required that the Community PAC serving that particular area rather than Municipal Council's own Municipal PAC, would hold a public meeting within the community. In these instances, the Community PAC was considered to be functioning as an area advisory committee to the Municipal PAC.

The Halifax County process required that the recommendation from the Community PAC to Municipal PAC be forwarded via the Community Council. While the Community Council had the ability to question and ask that a Community PAC reconsider a recommendation, it could not overturn or prevent such a recommendation from proceeding to the next level. If there were situations where the Community Council could not agree or accept the recommendation of the Community PAC, it could make its own alternative recommendation.

At the present time, five Community Councils have been approved by Regional Council. There is considerable variation concerning the PAC structure within these community council areas:

1. There is a new PAC for the entire North West Community Council area.
2. The Marine Drive, Valley & Canal Community Council will soon appoint a new PAC.
3. A PAC covers part of the Harbour East Community Council area.
4. The Halifax Peninsula Community Council has appointed a PAC.
5. The Chebucto Community Council has decided not to have a PAC.

Proposed Public Participation Program

In recommending a public participation program concerning plan amendments, staff suggest that a distinction be made between amendments which are considered to be regional in nature and those which are more local. Public participation concerning regional issues should be handled directly by Regional Council while for amendment proposals of a more local nature, staff believe that public participation should be channelled through the various community councils and their PACs.

One of the significant benefits of amalgamation is the ability to consider region wide policies and regulations. The implementation of policies affecting all or large parts of HRM will involve amending all or several municipal planning strategies. Regional issues do not, however, necessarily involve more than one planning strategy. For example, issues related to the Halifax downtown area or to the International Airport are arguably more regional than local in nature despite being addressed in only one municipal planning strategy. Given the range and diversity of regional planning issues which might arise, specific public participation programs should be approved on a case-by-case basis. This report will, therefore, focus upon a public participation program for local plan amendment proposals.

The minimum requirement for a public participation program should include a duly advertised public meeting which provides an opportunity for all interested persons to express their opinions. Although there was variation among the pre-amalgamation units, it is considered a benefit to having a staff report prepared and available prior to a public meeting. Such a report would provide an explanation of the issue involved and options by which it could be addressed. It may also address what additional information is considered necessary to justify or support any change. Whether prepared

before or after a public meeting, however, a detailed staff report is considered to be an integral part of the plan amendment process and should be available for Regional Council's consideration before a public hearing is held.

The plan amendment process which is reflected in the public participation resolution in Appendix "A", includes the following steps:

1. All plan amendment proposals would initially be brought to Regional Council for direction. A staff report would be prepared for each proposal which would outline the issue and provide a recommended course of action. This report would also indicate whether or not, in staff's opinion, the issue was local or regional in scope. For regional issues which Regional Council decides to pursue, staff would recommend an appropriate public participation program for Council's consideration.
2. For more local planning issues, Regional Council would refer the matter to the appropriate Community Council/PAC where a public meeting would be required. Where a PAC exists, that body would be responsible for holding the public meeting. Where no PAC exists, staff or the Community Council would hold the required public meeting.
3. Following the public meeting, the PAC (staff, where a PAC does not exist) would submit its recommendation to the Community Council along with minutes of the public meeting and any written submissions and/or staff report(s) prepared concerning the issue.
4. The Community Council would consider the information and recommendation of the PAC (or staff) prior to making a recommendation to Regional Council. All information considered by the Community Council, including any PAC recommendation and staff reports would be forwarded to Regional Council.
5. Staff prepares specific amendments and/or advice on amendments, to accompany the Community Council/PAC recommendation to Regional Council.
6. Regional Council would consider the advice and decide whether or not to hold a public hearing.
7. If a Community Council or a Planning Advisory Committee is not in place for the area effected by the amendment the processes referred to above would be carried out by staff.

CONCLUSION

As the body charged with the responsibility for approving planning strategy amendments, the Planning Act requires that Regional Council adopt a public participation program. The program outlined in Appendix "A", follows the same basic model as that which existed in the four municipal units prior to amalgamation. It is designed to solicit public input from the area(s) directly affected and is also intended to be supportive of the Community Council framework which is now in place for all of HRM.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Requiring public meetings may have budget implications related to committee meeting expenses.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Status Quo - Regional Council could continue to use the public participation programs which existed prior to amalgamation. Staff does not recommend this course of action as it is, at best, only a short term solution and does not recognize the reality of new Community Councils.
2. Regional Council could approve an alternative public participation program from that put forward in this report. Staff would require further direction from Regional Council before being in a position to comment.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix "A" - Resolution concerning public participation program
Flow chart outlining process for local plan amendments

Further information regarding the contents of this report may be obtained by contacting Bill Butler, Donna Davis-Lohnes or Bill B. Campbell, Managers of Planning Services, Central, Eastern, Western Regions, respectively.

For additional copies or for information on the report's status, please contact Gail Foisy, Admin/PAC Coordinator at 490-4937

APPENDIX "A"

RESOLUTION REGARDING
A PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM FOR
MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY AMENDMENTS

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of Halifax Regional Municipality does hereby adopt the following public participation program pursuant to Section 34(1) of the Planning Act, Statutes of Nova Scotia 1983, Chapter 9, for the purpose of Municipal Planning Strategy amendments:

1. All requested or proposed amendments to individual Municipal Planning Strategies shall be directed to Regional Council for preliminary review. Where Regional Council determines that it does not wish to entertain a plan amendment proposal, no further action shall be taken.
2. Where Regional Council determines that it wishes to further consider the merits of a plan amendment proposal, it shall make a determination as to whether the matter is of regional or local significance. Where an issue is considered to be a local planning matter, the following procedures shall apply:
 - (a) Regional Council shall refer the matter to the appropriate Community Council/PAC.
 - (b) The Community Council or the PAC having jurisdiction for the area affected, or municipal staff where no PAC exists, shall hold a public meeting concerning the proposed amendments.
 - (c) Notice of the public meeting at which the proposed amendments will be discussed, shall be published in a newspaper circulating in the area affected a minimum of seven (7) clear days prior to the meeting. The notice shall indicate the time, date and place of the meeting as well as the location(s) and hours during which written material concerning the proposed amendments may be inspected by members of the public.
 - (d) Minutes of this public meeting and all related written submissions and staff reports shall be forwarded to the Community Council along with the recommendation of a PAC, where one exists.
 - (e) The Community Council shall forward its recommendation and all related information to Regional Council.
 - (f) If a Community Council or a Planning Advisory Committee is not in place for the area effected by the amendment the processes referred to in clauses (b) to (e) shall be carried out by staff.

3. Nothing in this resolution shall preclude Regional Council or a Community Council from taking such other measures as are deemed necessary to obtain public opinion regarding the amendment of any municipal planning strategy.
4. All other public participation resolutions which may be in effect are hereby rescinded.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the resolution of which this a true copy was duly approved by Council at a duly called meeting of the Council of Halifax Regional Municipality held on the ____ day of _____ A.D., 1997.

GIVEN under the had of the Municipal Clerk under the corporate seal of the said Municipality this ____ day of _____, A.D., 1997.

Vi Carmichael
Municipal Clerk
Halifax Regional Municipality

Attachment C: IAP2 Continuum of Public Participation

The IAP2 Participation spectrum

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public	Promise to the public	Promise to the public	Promise to the public	Promise to the public
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP2 International Association for Public Participation.

http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf

Attachment D: City of Ottawa Webpage: Comment Submission to File Lead
https://app01.ottawa.ca/postingplans/commentForm.jsf?lang=en&appId=__8JS5MQ&newReq=true



Application:
Ward:
Application #:
File Lead:
Current Date:

I / we want to receive notice of public meeting(s) held by the Planning Branch to discuss this proposal, and a copy of the final decision (select checkbox).

*** Indicates a required field.** Information is also required when an applicable decision is appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.

*Name : _____
Organization: _____
*Mailing Address : _____
*City : _____
*Province : _____
*Postal Code : _____
*Phone Number : _____
*Email Address : _____

Further notice will not be given if required * information is missing or incorrect.

*Comments :

Supported Attachments (.pdf, .doc, .txt, .rtf, .xls, .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .bmp) :

If possible, when selecting the option to notify a councillor(s), please include your e-mail address.

- Send a copy to the ward councillor
- Send a copy to other members of Council
- I have read and accept the conditions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)

Attachment E: City of North Vancouver: RSS Webpage Update Subscription page

<http://www.cnv.org/RSS/RSS%20Guide>



RSS

HOME | RSS | RSS GUIDE

RSS Guide

RSS GUIDE

NEWS ROOM

LATEST NEWS FROM THE

We've Got Community Grants

Deadline: January 31

Apply at www.cnv.org/CommunityGrants

Recycling?

We've got a new app!

See www.cnv.org/WhatsNew

Don't Forget Fido!

Licence Deadline: January 31

See www.cnv.org/WhatsNew

Planning An Outdoor Event?

Booking Deadline: January 31

See www.cnv.org/WhatsNew

I Love My City

Check this out www.cnv.org/ILoveMyCity

Sign Up for CityConnect

eNews Right to Your Inbox

Info at www.cnv.org/CityConnect

To be notified of site updates, you may subscribe to pages using Really Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS is a notification system that alerts users when updates are made to a subscribed webpage.

We have identified key pages that may be subscribed to within the City website. Visit www.cnv.org/RSS and click on any of the links to be taken to the feed for that page. Depending on what browser you are using, you will be prompted to subscribe to the page. These subscriptions will be available as either bookmarks or as feeds that are accessed through your browser. You can also use a news aggregator such as Feedly, NewsBlur or The Old Reader to access your subscriptions.

Other options for receiving up-to-date information about the City include our social media channels including Facebook and Twitter or visiting the What's New page.

RELATED LINKS

- [News Room](#)
- [Stay Connected](#)

RSS AGGREGATORS

- [Feedly](#)
- [NewsBlur](#)
- [The Old Reader](#)

TWITTER UPDATES

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER



City of North Van

@CityOfNorthVan

Not-for-profits serving #NorthVan

residents, apply for a Community Grant

only: GTZPb. D.L. Jan 31

pic.twitter.com/7a4Pn5GLN

[Show Photo](#)

Share |

Attachment F: City of Waterloo: Current Online Surveys
<http://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/surveys.asp>



Surveys and Feedback Forms



Online surveys are one of the ways the City of Waterloo collects public feedback.

We encourage you to complete these short surveys to have your say on the programs, services and initiatives that impact you.

Current surveys

Web review feedback survey: The City of Waterloo is currently reviewing its website (www.waterloo.ca) to determine the value it delivers to its users. Your participation in this survey will help us to improve our web presence to serve you better.

Registered program evaluations

Please complete an online survey on any programs you or your children participate in to help us improve our program development and delivery. We update evaluations as needed to meet seasonal programming needs.

- Adult and senior programs
- Aquatics programs
- Kids' day camps
- Leisure and active living programs
- Dance Craze Programs
- March Break Madness
- Winter Break Madness

Bedford Municipal Planning Strategy

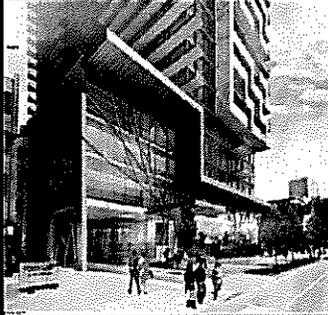
Policy CP-9:

It shall be the intention of Town Council to hold a public information meeting on all rezoning and development applications prior to BPAC forwarding a recommendation to Town Council. The proponent shall participate in these public information meetings. Notices for such meetings shall be distributed to owners/occupants of dwellings within 500 feet of the area proposed for rezoning or a development agreement and a notice shall appear in the newspaper at least seven days in advance of the meeting.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

FILE # 14 159-828 STE-27-OZ

50 Wellesley St East | Ward 19, Toronto & East York District



ARTIST CONCEPT



ARTIST CONCEPT



WWW.TORONTO.CA/PLANNING/DEVELOPMENTAPPLICATIONS

HEIGHT 104.5m FLOORS 37		APPROX. POPULATION 500-700	HERITAGE None	GREEN STANDARDS TIER 2
	BICYCLE PARKING 95	TREE REPLACEMENT -0 +7	SUBWAY DISTANCE 30m	PARKING SPOTS 184

A combined Official Plan and zoning by-law amendment application has been filed to permit a 37-storey, 365 unit, predominantly residential development with at grade retail.

HAVE QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK?



City Planner Mark Chion
416-397.1761 | mchion@toronto.ca



Ward 19 Councilor Kristin Wong-Tam
416-392-7903 | councilor_wongtam@toronto.ca



PUBLIC MEETING JULY 24, 2014
Metro Hall, 55 John Street



@CITYPLANTO #14159828

Scan for detailed project information



Translate this sign

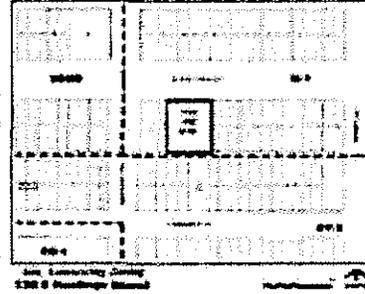
REZONING AND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION 720-730 East Hastings Street (DE416884)

CitySpaces Consulting Ltd., on behalf of Vancouver Public Library and YWCA Metro Vancouver, has applied to the City of Vancouver to rezone 720-730 East Hastings Street from M-1 (Industrial) District to CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District. The proposal is for a 6-story mixed use building including:

- a 1,896 m² (20,500 sq. ft.) space for a new Vancouver Public Library (VPL) Government Executive / Shakespeare Branch, on level 1 and part of level 2;
- a 216 m² (2,300 sq. ft.) YWCA community programming space on level 2;
- 21 YWCA supported housing units on levels 3-6;
- a proposed total floor space of 3,939 m² (42,400 sq. ft.);
- a proposed floor space ratio (FSR) of 3.3; and
- underground parking, including 36 bicycle parking stalls and 22 parking stalls.

FURTHER INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED AT:
City of Vancouver Planning Department
Re zoning Centre - City Hall East Wing (3rd Floor)
Phone: 604.673.7636 | E-mail: rezoning@vancouver.ca
Website: vancouver.ca/resppp

Or by contacting the applicant: CitySpaces Consulting, 604.687.2281



**PUBLIC HEARINGS
NOT YET SCHEDULED**

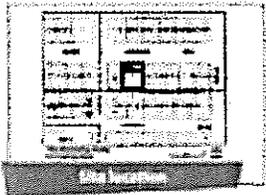
This sign has been posted by the applicant in accordance with the notice of the Director of Planning.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

720-730 E Hastings Street

- PROPOSAL:**
- To rezone and develop a 6-story building with:
 - Government Executive/ Shakespeare Library Branch on the main floor;
 - YWCA programming space on second floor;
 - 21 YWCA housing units on levels 3 to 6.

APPLICANT:
CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. on behalf
of Vancouver Public Library and YWCA
Metro Vancouver



**LEARN
MORE**

Open House:

Re zoning Centre
4871 Broadway, Suite 401, North Shore
Thursday, June 22
9 AM - 7 PM

For more info
visit us at:
vancouver.ca/resppp
or Call 3-1-1



City of Vancouver
Planning Department
Re zoning Centre
4871 Broadway, Suite 401
North Shore

Attachment J: City of Edmonton Planning Academy Webpage Excerpt:
http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/planning-academy.aspx

Planning Academy

**Play a part in planning Edmonton's growth and change
Join the Planning Academy!**



Thanks to everyone who participated in the spring Planning Academy courses. The fall 2015 Planning Academy schedule is now available.

What is the Planning Academy?

The City of Edmonton's Planning Academy offers a series of courses designed to provide a better understanding of the planning and development process in Edmonton. The City developed Planning Academy to help Edmontonians:

- better understand and participate in the planning process, and
- better understand the roles, rights and interests of all parties involved in the planning and development process.

The Current Planning branch of Sustainable Development will offer each course at least once a year and city staff will facilitate the courses.

Courses vary in length from three to six hours and participants will receive a manual, instruction, and light refreshments. Sessions will consist of discussions and "real life" activities to increase participants' understanding.

What courses can I take?

The program consists of core and elective courses. Participants can earn a Certificate of Participation by completing the three core courses and one elective course. Participants are welcome to take any course, in any order, whether or not it will lead to a certificate.

Core Courses:

1. Land Use Planning – The Big Picture.
2. Getting a Grip on Land Use Planning.
3. Come Plan With Us.

Elective Courses:

1. Urban Design.
2. Transit Oriented Development.
3. Transportation.
4. Infill

For more information:

Planning Academy: 13th Floor, 10250 - 101 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3P4

Title Lindsey Routledge
Telephone 780-944-0965
Email planning.academy@edmonton.ca

Attachment K – Table of Current Engagement Practices

Tool	Description	Benefits	Drawbacks
Public Hearings	Public Hearings are a legislated requirement of most planning applications or projects. Individuals within the public are invited to provide their feedback and ask questions in front of Council immediately prior to Council making the final determination on the request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents are provided the opportunity to speak directly to the decision makers; Debate occurs within an open and public forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council meetings and the materials required in their anticipation require considerable resources The reports and materials required for a Public Hearing require review by multiple HRM departments which requires a long lead-up time prior to a report reaching a Council agenda.
Planning Advisory Committees	Planning Advisory Committees (PAC's) have been a more recent inclusion to the engagement toolbox whereby citizens selected by Council to represent their community are afforded the opportunity to comment on and provide a recommendation directly to Council with regard to planning applications and planning matters more generally. Members are appointed to a select term, and meet monthly. Meetings involve HRM staff giving a presentation involving the project, policy and process, followed by a discussion of the issues by the committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They facilitate community feedback provided by individuals who have been versed in the processes and policies of HRM planning; They afford representatives of the public an opportunity to express support or concern for a project which is directly referenced in the staff report and Council discussion; They allow Councillors who sit on these committees an opportunity to see the project early in the process, and see how the project does or does not evolve based on community input. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given that the committees consist of members of the public, it could be argued that PAC duplicates the objectives of the PIM or Public Hearing; The addition of another formal meeting further lengthens the planning application process; Experience in the field(s) of planning, development, or architecture are not pre-requisites to being a committee member, and as such input provided is that of residents and not experts in the relevant field.
Public Participation Committees	A Committee consisting of residents, and stakeholders formed to provide input on and guide the development of a specific planning project, policy, or application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committees can often create a sense of ownership of the policy being created by the community that creates it, increasing buy-in; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work done by these Committees can often duplicate input provided by other public meetings, or feedback provided by a Planning Advisory Committee; A lack of background within design or development can result in a steep learning curve for Committee members and significant time expenditure in the Committee learning about basic principles of planning and/or architecture.
Design	The Design Review Committee is a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and Council can draw from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small design community within Halifax in addition to the time commitments

Review Committee	group of professionals with experience in the development industry whose role it is to review policies and applications pertaining to the Site Plan Approval Process which at present time relates specifically to the Regional Centre.	collective experience of other experts in the development / planning field to add value to planning projects.	required can make it difficult to fully staff this committee.
Public Information meetings	Public Information Meeting's (PIM's) are the most commonly used engagement tool for planning applications within HRM. The typical format for this meeting is for HRM staff to give a presentation involving the policy and process, followed by a second presentation by the applicant for the project going into further detail surrounding the specifics of their development. These presentations then give way to a question and comment period which fills the duration of the event. These meetings typically last 1-2 hours and are held on weeknight evenings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chance for stakeholders to speak face to face; • Giving community residents an opportunity to hear each other's perspective as it relates to a shared issue; • An engagement method which all stakeholders understand and are familiar with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That it tends to be adversarial in nature given the "us vs them" format of the meeting; • That it is not accessible to all family types and demographic segments given it being held exclusively on weekdays in the early evenings; • That it has a high monetary cost for HRM with a typical PIM resulting in many hours of staff time spent outside of typical office hours; • That insuring Councillor availability and booking an appropriate venue can often result in delays to application processing times; • Holding a meeting for all planning applications regardless of their scope or impact can result in 'engagement fatigue' where citizens become disengaged.
Notification Mail Outs	Notification Mail Outs typically involve a 'fact sheet' listing the quantitative information relating to a planning proposal, in addition to a synopsis of when the next engagement or community event will be taking place and how additional information can be obtained. While costs can be high for this in comparison to other engagement tools, it does ensure that all impacted parties will be aware that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders are familiar with this engagement method and understand its role in the process; • The engagement tool is proven and reliable being used in cities throughout the country and world; • The method is passive from the citizens perspective as it does not require them to have access to technology, to visit the property, or to attend a meeting; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current process can be a drain on staff resources given the time involved in printing, folding, addressing, and mailing information; • Often, mailouts are addressed to property owners and not occupants, and as such citizens who rent a home as opposed to live in one may not be informed of a planning application; • The process is slow and expensive in comparison to other electronic

	an application has been submitted, and that they will have an opportunity to speak to the issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific distribution areas can be selected to ensure information is provided to as many people who require it, but no more. 	engagement options.
Surveys	Surveys have been used occasionally in the past where in consultation with the applicant and the area Councillor, it was felt either that a PIM would not be necessary or appropriate for reasons of scope, or that other recent engagement activities have indicated that further and more specific feedback be sought. Surveys have typically been completed through mail-out forms, however web-based surveys have been used in planning policy projects with expansion into planning applications being possible in the future, allowing for an easier tabulation of results / comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active method of seeking feedback and input from individuals selected specifically based on how they will be impacted by a proposed change; • Facilitates citizens providing input on their own time and at their own pace; • Allows for participation by those who do not have the time/ability/etc. to attend a meeting; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative feedback can be difficult and time consuming to tabulate / summarize; • Feedback flows only one way, and there is no opportunity for discussion based on the feedback or questions received.
Active Planning Application Website	The Active Planning Application Website is the current practice of providing information on the HRM website with regard to all active planning applications. Information typically includes a synopsis of what is being requested, plans and or submissions from the applicant, and an indication as to what point in the process the application is in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website is easily updated so that information can be kept current and accurate; • Information can be accessed by the public at a time and at a pace convenient to them; • Providing information on the website does not add time or costs to the planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website is currently underutilized in its current format given that submissions cannot be directly submitted from this page; • Not all demographic segments may be comfortable with using the internet to obtain or submit information which may decrease the population reached through this tool.
Information Sheets	Frequently Asked Questions or Fact Sheets provide a compilation of statistics, maps, or policies in addition to a synopsis of the subject application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sheets are easy to produce and simple to read; • Sheets can provide a useful synopsis of development or projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information sheets reflect a 'snapshot in time' for a project and policy, and cannot be updated following their release as compared to web-

	which is often included in project mail outs or offered as a hand out at Public Information Meetings.	which could have application wider than their current use.	based engagement tools or information.
Newspaper Notices	Newspaper notices are a traditional way of communicating meeting and Public Hearing times to communities. Some processes, such as public hearings, legislatively require a newspaper ad to be placed in certain publications a specific number of days prior to the event occurring. In other cases, such as PIM's, the practice of newspaper notification has grown to be a part of the custom and culture, but is not legislated through Provincial or Municipal law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements provides tangible evidence that the public was notified of an application or engagement opportunity; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process is slow and expensive in comparison to other electronic engagement options; • Newspapers reach a limited portion of the population given the increased prominence of web-based news, and the decrease in print-media subscriptions;
Site Signage	Site Signage is the most local and visible method of communicating to immediate neighbours that a planning application has been submitted on a site. This is the most utilized method of communicating planning applications, and with good reason. Ease of installing signage, and the number of impacted people that it reaches is central to its success. With that said, there still lies room for improvement in existing HRM site signage practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an affordable and accessible method of notification for the applicant; • Signage reaches the important local population most desired in engagement; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where policy changes impacting a large portion of land are taking place, signage on a specific site may not be practical or possible; • Current signage is not "right-sized" for the lot it is located on, and can therefore go un-noticed on large scale properties seeking to be developed; • Signage is not currently branded, nor does it use particularly accessible language which citizens not familiar with the planning process could understand; • Pictures and maps are not included on signage which could help in understanding the request being made.