



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

FRAMEWORK | 2012



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The community strategic plan, “Shaping Our Future – City of Brantford’s Community Strategic Plan 2010-2014” continues to provide the foundation for the future direction of the municipality through the City’s commitment to being an accountable, responsible government. Council has committed to ensuring Excellence in Municipal Governance and Management and has approved the following strategic actions:

- *Brantford citizens will be engaged in, and informed about their community and their government*
- *The City of Brantford will be known for its open and accessible government*

In response to this direction, a Working Group was established to develop a Community Involvement plan that would provide a framework for both staff and the community of Brantford, tools and resources to support the implementation of a program and a communication plan for sharing the approved plan.

The intent of the following document is to provide guidelines, tools and resources for consideration when developing community consultation processes and activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Create a Community Involvement Policy and Framework?

Involving the Community in discussions on matters that affect them is a fundamental element of representative democracy. As part of the City of Brantford Community Strategic Plan, the City of Brantford is committed to Excellence in Governance and Municipal Management. Specifically the City is committed to engaging and informing the citizens of Brantford about their community and their city government; *the City of Brantford will be known for its open and accessible government*. In order to ensure community involvement, the City of Brantford has developed a Community Involvement Policy, Framework and a Community Involvement Toolkit.

The goal of this initiative is to provide decision makers, staff of the City of Brantford, and most importantly, the citizens and stakeholders with a consistent genuine approach that will set a standard of excellence for community involvement plans in the City.

What is Community Involvement?

Encouraging participation in the municipal government process helps Council understand the needs and priorities of the community, so they can make decisions with the community perspective in mind.

Community involvement is happening all the time. It starts with information that is provided to the citizens of Brantford. Effective community involvement, however, considers opportunities to go beyond simply providing information and looks at how and when to best connect with community. The end result of effective community involvement is decisions that are often more reflective of the community concerns and values.

Community involvement is about dialogue with the appropriate people...in the appropriate way...at the appropriate time.

Actively getting the community involved can...

- Build cooperative working relationships
- Clarify points of agreement and disagreement
- Promote positive attitudes and build support for new and ongoing programs and policies
- Gather a wide range of options for solving problems and improving service
- Prevent delays on projects
- Establish a positive environment where the community's opinions and feedback are valued and respected

Community involvement helps Council and City staff do a better job.

Community Involvement is a process that brings together individuals and groups from many levels, building cooperative working relationships and mutual understanding. Consulting with neighborhoods, interest groups, business and other affected parties is both desirable and necessary.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FRAMEWORK

What is the Framework for Community Involvement?

As the key part of Community Involvement, the City of Brantford has developed Framework to ensure a consistent approach by all City staff for all community involvement plans which consists of four elements.

Guiding Principles of Community Involvement that outline the City beliefs about community involvement and how its staff will reflect those beliefs

Continuum of Community Involvement which is a tool for determining the scope and purpose of involving the community, supported by the Community Involvement Handbook.

Community Involvement Handbook which provides a step-by-step strategic approach, to developing a Community Involvement Plan and evaluating the effectiveness of the process.

Community Involvement Techniques & Tips Resource Guide which outlines the various techniques and tools available to effectively involve the community and a number of tips for consideration to ensure success.

Each of the four elements is outlined in detail for your review. An integrated, strategic approach to involving the community will yield the best results and garner the greatest level of community involvement.

What will using the Framework do?

The elements of the FRAMEWORK are not exclusive of each other and should all be utilized for every project regardless of its complexity --- recognizing that less detail will be required for smaller, simpler projects. Using this framework will move community involvement past a mechanical and arbitrary exercise of saying “we consulted with the community” to creating shared solutions or recommendations that are credible, defensible and sustainable.

Consistent use of the Framework will ensure that:

- The scope of the involvement plan appropriately responds to, and aligns with, the size and complexity of the decision being made
- All stakeholders and decision makers will understand what information is being sought and how it will be included in the decision making process
- The people who need to be involved have been invited to participate
- Timelines, budgets and other resources respond to the scope of the project
- The process clearly adds value to the quality of the decision

What won't the Framework do?

The framework does not mandate specific community involvement formats to be used at specific times. To the contrary, in this world of complex decisions, sophisticated participants, and changing situations it is impossible to mandate such things as the type of event or whether or not there should be a focus group. The Framework is intended to communicate that it is essential to take a strategic approach to every community involvement plan hosted by the City of Brantford and make it specific to the project/issue.

The Framework will not address all of the challenges of managing the complex issues of community involvement. However, using a consistent, strategic approach will equip you with the tools you need to deal with the challenges. The Community Involvement Handbook will guide the process and provide supporting tools and resources when deciding on the level and method of community involvement.

Who should use the Framework?

Everyone considering community involvement. A Community Involvement Plan should be developed for every community involvement activity and be the result of using the Framework, Handbook and Resource Guide, regardless of who is responsible for the community involvement plan. If you are using a consultant or facilitator, they should have an integral role in developing the plan. The development and approval of the plan could be a part of the contract terms of reference. When initiated by the corporation, all Community Involvement Plans must be approved by the General Manager or designate of the respective area hosting the process (excluding those initiated by Council or Ward Councillors).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT--CITY OF BRANTFORD COMMITMENT

The City of Brantford recognizes the importance of involving citizens in the development of policy, programs and services. Community involvement is also the basis for building healthy, strong and inclusive communities.

The City of Brantford is committed to supporting an engaged community by ensuring there is a range of opportunities for the community to become knowledgeable about local government and actively involved in civic life in the City of Brantford.

The following Principles of Community Involvement will guide all future City of Brantford activities:

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	CITY OF BRANTFORD COMMITMENT
Value of Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Citizen participation is recognized as an asset, is valued and encouraged
Careful Planning & Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The purpose and the process are clear to all participants at the outset ○ Through comprehensive and inclusive planning, we will ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants ○ Community Involvement plans will be designed to involve the appropriate people at the appropriate time in the appropriate way ○ A balance and range of community perspectives will be provided to decision makers for consideration in the decision process
Inclusion and Demographic Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporate a diversity of people, voices, ideas and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy ○ Everyone potentially affected by the process has an opportunity to become involved ○ Barriers to access are recognized and overcome to ensure diverse, inclusive and balanced participation
Collaboration & Shared Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support and encourage community members, governments, community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good of the community

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	CITY OF BRANTFORD COMMITMENT
Openness and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are open-ended processes in which no specific outcomes are pre-determined ○ Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate the process ○ Are based on a mutual two-way learning between citizens and decision makers
Transparency & Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The process will be clear, open, respectful, fair, effective and transparent ○ Public records of the scribes, outcomes, range of views and ideas expressed and final decisions will be made available to all participants
Impact & Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential ○ The community has an opportunity to provide feedback at the various stages of the process
Sustained Involvement & Participant Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow for serious, substantive, deliberative, in-depth communication of values and principles, choices and trade-offs in search of common ground ○ Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality community involvement
Open Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The involvement process and each step of its progress will be communicated using clear and inclusive language via a variety of formats and channels of communication while ensuring accessibility to all ○ Communication is clear, timely and effective
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seek better ways of engaging the community and providing efficient and effective community notice and involvement processes ○ Community involvement will be evaluated for improvement of future involvement activities ○ Citizens are involved in the evaluation process ○ The focus is on outcomes, not merely outputs. Outcomes include many different types of benefits or changes

What are the roles and responsibilities of those involved?

There are five primary groups who will have a stake in decisions made by Council:

- Citizens of Brantford
- Community Organizations & Groups
- Staff Administration
- City Council
- Other Levels of Government

Anyone who is affected by a decision should be involved in some way in that decision.

The Citizens of Brantford: The citizens' (community's) main role is to actively participate in the process, keeping in mind the "greater good" while considering the current and future needs of the community.

Community Organizations & Groups: As an important connection to communities throughout the City of Brantford, community associations and special interest groups play an integral role in facilitating and participating in community involvement. These groups typically have unique knowledge of a topic or issue, or will be impacted in a unique and specific way. It is critical that these groups are identified and invited to participate.

Staff administration: Administration carries out the steps of the process, defines and implements the strategy, assesses and evaluates the tools and facilitates community participation in forums/formats appropriate to the issue at hand as supported in the Community Involvement Handbook. Administration is responsible for ensuring the proper process is established and used properly and that the guiding principles are consistently met.

City Council: Council acknowledges the community's involvement and Council members actively engage in community participation events. Making sure administration proposals, individual concerns and overall community benefit remain balanced.

When should the community be involved?

The primary reason for involving the community in a project or initiative is to provide decision makers with insights of the community that reflect a diverse and balanced range of perspectives so they can make informed and credible decisions. The community should be involved **when**:

- policies, procedures and/or programs are developed
- input is required from the community on a specific project, program or initiative
- the community's comments can have an impact on the design and development of a facility, structure, program or project
- it is important to build partnerships and strengthen relationships between the community and the City
- community buy-in is important to achieve success

What makes community involvement meaningful?

To be considered meaningful – for the community and the City –Community Involvement project or initiative should meet the following criteria:

Clarity of purpose: Participants must be clear on the role they will play in the process.

Reflect Diversity: Demographic factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, ability, socioeconomic status and place of residence can affect interests and values. A community involvement should represent the community's demographic diversity and make tangible efforts to allow for diversity in the community to be reflected.

Credible, balanced information: Participants must have balanced information about the major perspectives on any issue or initiative, so they can refine their perspective(s), voice their point(s) of view, and listen to understand those of other stakeholders.

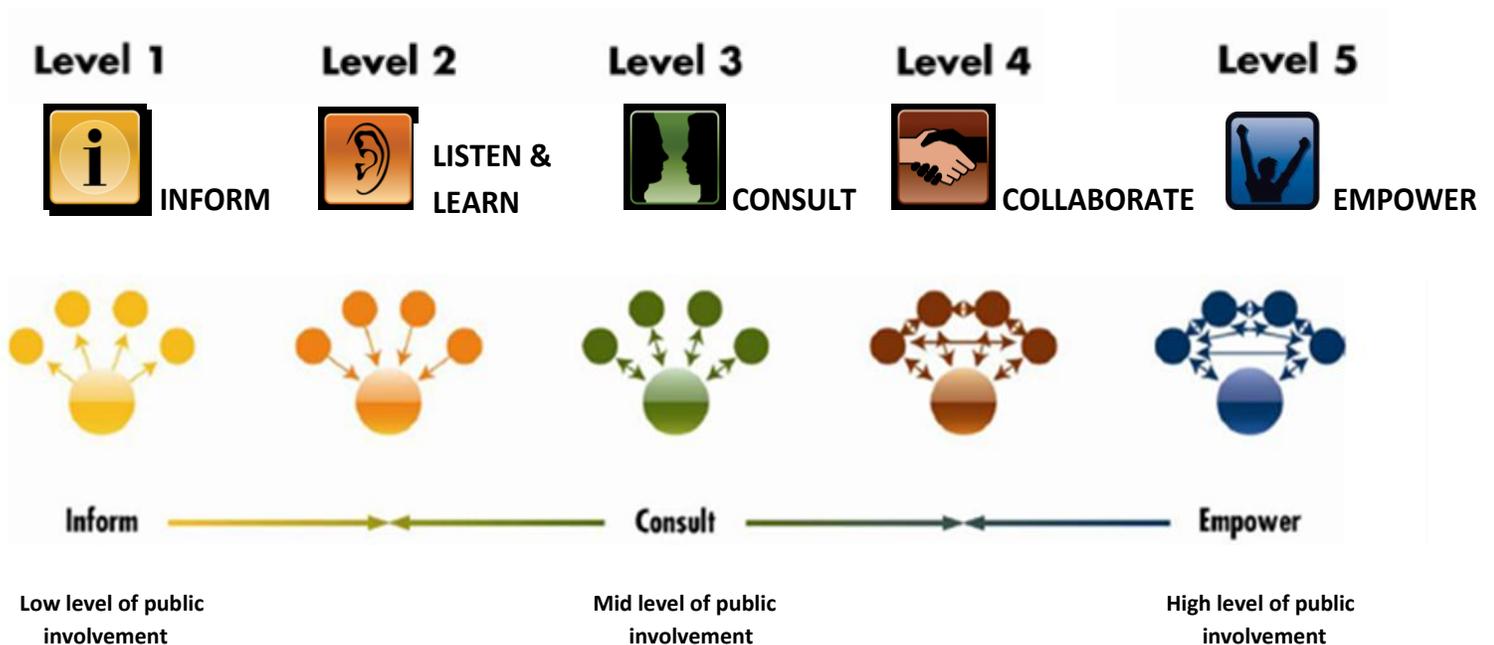
Organized and facilitated: Most consultation and involvement processes are facilitated by someone whose role it is to encourage participation that is respectful and equitable, so that discussions stay focused and sufficient time is given to the most important issues.

Communication of results: Results must be shared with the community.

THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT CONTINUUM

How should the community be involved?

There are five levels of community involvement. The following is an overview of the community involvement continuum. Note that each of the levels that can be used independently or in combination depending on the scope of the project:



This continuum demonstrates the various levels of community involvement. Each of these levels should not be seen as being isolated. Rather, each is a complementary approach that can be used independently, or in combination within a single community involvement plan. There are three main levels of involvement (Inform, Consult and Empower) with Listen & Learn and Collaborate necessary components of the overall strategy.

Level of Involvement	Description
<p>Inform</p> 	<p>This is the most basic stage of involvement. It means that citizens have the information they need to assess policies and initiatives to fully understand their impact. Or it is used to prepare the Community for more intensive forms of community involvement. Information is shared through agendas, minutes, reports, budgets, newsletters, advertising, web site, open houses and other forums.</p> <p>Through informing, the community has the opportunity to consume and perhaps comment on specific details within a proposal but have little opportunity to influence the substance and general direction.</p> <p>Relying on “informing” as to the sole form of community involvement should only be done where there is no opportunity for the community to influence policy outcomes because of technical or legislative constraints.</p>
<p>Listen & Learn</p> 	<p>City staff receives information from segments of the community, but formulates a decision independently which may or may not reflect stakeholder opinions. Gathering information about the community’s priorities is a good strategy when there is little or no information available to help Council understand the opinion of the community.</p>
<p>Consult</p> 	<p>This allows citizens the opportunity to <i>provide feedback on policy options before they are finalized</i>. Consultation is characterized by the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It tends to focus on a group of stakeholders • It seeks to test, validate or prioritize options that have already been developed, at least in preliminary form • Most often, it takes place in the early and middle stages of the policy process to test policy assumptions and directions • It establishes clear parameters within which stakeholders’ views may be accepted • It may involve tight timelines <p>City staff host separate discussions with stakeholder groups or segments of the community, collect ideas and suggestions and independently render a decision. This is effective when the general direction of an issue is constrained by time, technical and/or statutory constraints, but there is an opportunity for the community to influence details of the project</p>
<p>Collaborate</p> 	<p>This is when an issue or initiative is shared with the community as a single assembled group, gathering ideas and actively negotiating solutions, and then rendering a recommendation that reflects the group’s influence. This method is best used when the issue is value based, and when there is some opportunity for a shared agenda setting and open time frames for the deliberation of issues.</p>
<p>Empower</p> 	<p>At this level of involvement, the city shares the policy issue with the community and engages in a collaborative exercise of discussion and compromise to reach an agreement on a solution. More active participation through empowering allows citizens to more directly share in the decision making process. This means they are involved in defining objectives, formulating and choosing among options and developing implementation strategies. This level of involvement is less frequent. In general, this level of involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves individual citizens, not just the community as represented by associations and groups, in policy formation, prior setting and program delivery • Builds on, complements and generally moves beyond information distribution and consultation practices. It doesn’t replace information provision or consultation. Its purpose is to provide new opportunities to being interested parties together as creative, civic-minded individuals.

Each level of involvement along the continuum can be implemented using a range of tools and techniques. In the past, the City of Brantford used both traditional techniques such as advisory committees and community meetings, as well as more innovative processes such as community visioning. The complexity of issue(s) at hand, the desired outcome(s) of the process and the timeline, all help to determine which methods are most appropriate. A separate Community Involvement Handbook has been developed to assist staff with the various tools & techniques that can be utilized for each level of community involvement along the continuum.

What level will be used?

Community involvement will not be the same for every initiative. In fact, it's important that decisions about how best to involve the community are based on the project or initiative. Much of the business of municipal council is enhanced by community input. Nevertheless, there are decisions made by municipalities that normally do not include community input. Decisions are made by a person authorized to do so, and are issued to others simply to inform them that the decision has been made. These decisions include such situations as:

1. Emergency measures requiring immediate response (flood, police services)
2. Routine decision and required as part of municipal operations (snow removal)
3. Directed by law (improvements to water treatment plant)
4. Substantially affect only those that have already agreed to be affected through some form of contract (employment, volunteerism, accepted elected official)

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

Community involvement plans become more important when the municipality is making **Consultative or Collaborative** decisions. These have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Community notification and input are required by law (municipal environmental assessments)
2. The issue is a known concern of other parties, or is likely to have a significant impact on other parties (changes to parking, traffic or truck route bylaws)
3. The issue affects society's moral or emotional expectations (expanding recreation centre).
4. The issue affects the lifestyle or habits of citizens (road closures for events/construction)
5. People perceive there are risks associated with the decision (operating/capital budget)
6. Council or administration requests community input prior to making the decision (change in service levels)

Consultative and Collaborative decisions are common in municipalities (and are the type of decision primarily addressed through community involvement). However, the final decision rests with Council.



INFORM



LISTEN &
LEARN



CONSULT



COLLABORATE



EMPOWER

Factors Influencing the Choice and Timing of Community Involvement Levels

- Policy or statutory requirements
- Tailoring of approaches to goal and phase of decision-making
- Nature, complexity & risk associated with the issue
- Timelines
- Financial limitations
- In-house expertise
- Level of desired or required support from stakeholders and partners
- Level of influence participants expect to have
- Level of support from organizational and political decision-makers

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

At any given time throughout the City of Brantford, there are projects underway that require community input and participation. Many of these projects impact the quality of life in Brantford and affect the day-to-day lives of the people who live, work or play here. A step-by-step approach has been developed to assist the City when evaluating community involvement.

A Community Involvement Handbook (Appendix B) has been developed to help identify when to use each method of involvement, and how to effectively implement a program that will gain the necessary feedback, insights and involvement from your intended participants. It is intended to help the City of Brantford respond to growing calls for community involvement from its citizens by clarifying the types and best uses of the array of community involvement strategies and techniques available. The Community Involvement Road Map & Handbook outlines the strategic approach required for every project in which community involvement is a consideration. For each stage it is important to:

- **Consider** or think about the questions presented and ones that might come to mind
- **Confirm** the responses with others; and then
- **Commit** to a plan of action that aligns with the Continuum of Community Involvement and reflects the City of Brantford Guiding Principles

STEPS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

