



## POLICY REPORT Governance & Priorities Committee

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**DATE:** August 11, 2010 **ENDORSED BY CITY MANAGER:**

**PREPARED BY:** Helen Cain  
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**SUBJECT:** Official Community Plan – Report on Public Engagement

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### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Council about the design and delivery of public engagement in the *Official Community Plan (OCP)* for which direction was provided in the *OCP Project Charter and Public Engagement Strategy*. Using the City of Victoria *Civic Engagement Strategy* as the framework for analysis, it provides an overview of the rationale for the selection of engagement techniques and outcomes and outputs. Techniques were selected to gather a large and meaningful body of information on community values, interests, goals and ideas that were used to help shape the broad policy directions in the proposed *OCP Framework for Plan Development*. The OCP process has already nearly achieved its targets for citizen involvement and serves as an informative example of the application of best practices in public processes. Public engagement for the OCP will continue throughout the subsequent stages of the project.

### Recommendation:

That Council receive, for information, the report on public engagement in the *Official Community Plan Update*.

Respectfully submitted,

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## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to update Council about the design and delivery of public engagement in the *Official Community Plan (OCP)* for which direction was provided in the *OCP Project Charter and Public Engagement Strategy*. It provides an overview of the rationale for the selection of engagement techniques and outcomes and outputs of the public process. Techniques were selected to gather a large and meaningful body of information on community values, interests, goals and ideas that were used to help shape the broad policy directions in the proposed *OCP Framework for Plan Development*.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 City of Victoria Civic Engagement Strategy**

Council endorsed the principles of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) on June 10, 2009. In March 2009, City Council identified the review of the organization's civic engagement practices as one of seven top strategic priorities. Following a study by consultant HB Lanarc, the Governance & Priorities Committee passed a motion on July 22, 2010 for Council to endorse the recommendations in the report, *Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria* ["Civic Engagement Strategy"]. The Strategy defines civic engagement as "timely and meaningful citizen and stakeholder involvement in civic priority setting, decision-making program development and service delivery."

### **2.2 Official Community Plan Public Engagement Strategy**

The *OCP Public Engagement Strategy* (Attachment A), which Council approved in January 2010, includes a variety of engagement techniques that are designed to engage different audiences at different levels. Phase 1 (January – March 2010) focused on research that provided the basis for informing the broad community about the OCP project and key topics to be addressed in the final Plan. This information included topic specific policy advice and data for specialized audiences and the presentation of this material in brief, plain language formats.

The OCP process identifies key engagement periods in Phase 2 (March - June 2010) focused on gathering ideas to develop broad policy directions and in Phase 4 when the City will engage the community in a review of the draft Plan. Overall, the *OCP Public Engagement Strategy* set a target of involving 4,000 residents and 1,000 non-residents.

The City retained HB Lanarc to assist in the design and delivery of the *OCP Public Engagement Strategy* and to ensure that its techniques are consistent with the *City of Victoria Civic Engagement Strategy*.

## **3. Issues**

The *Civic Engagement Strategy* is used as the analytical framework to assess the design and delivery of OCP public engagement and key outcomes and outputs.

### 3.1 Continuum of Civic Engagement

The *Civic Engagement Strategy* provides the policy framework for City projects that include civic engagement to select a position on a Continuum of Civic Engagement based on IAP2 principles and related techniques.

Each level of engagement in the Continuum builds on the previous levels.

- *Inform:* To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner.
- *Consult:* To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions.
- *Involve:* To work with the public to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.
- *Collaborate:* To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision-making.
- *Empower:* To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

The OCP process is positioned between “involve” and “collaborate”. Accordingly, the process was designed to both inform the public about the OCP, and to gather a large and meaningful body of information about the interests, perspectives, values, goals and ideas of community members in relation to OCP topics to help shape broad OCP policy directions.

### 3.2 Participant Identification

The *Civic Engagement Strategy* provides definitions and recommendations that are useful for the design of public processes, such as the identification of types of participants:

- **Stakeholders:** organizations, community groups, more formal associations representative of the wider community and having related interests.
- **Citizens:** the wider community and general public.

The *Strategy* includes a number of corporate-level recommendations including the principle of diversity (p. 54): While this is not advice for specific projects, the below recommendations are consistent with best practices for public processes in municipal planning which seek to identify and engage citizens and stakeholders that represent the “public interest”.

*(6). Diversity: The goal here is to ensure that staff and council understand and respond to the diversity of community members and stakeholder perspectives, and that stakeholder identification by the city reflects this diversity on an ongoing basis.*

### Recommended Actions

- *Outline stakeholder categories that are considered “harder to reach” historically (e.g. urban poor, single parents, renters, seniors, new immigrants, youth, etc.).*

In line with best practices in planning, the *OCP Public Engagement Strategy* objectives are focused on engaging diverse citizens and stakeholders including “hard to reach” groups.

- *Reach a broad range of stakeholders and community members*
- *Emphasize youth engagement*
- *Use strongly engaged citizens as a resource*
- *Use tools and methods to connect with “hard to reach” groups*
- *Integrate neighbourhood planning engagement*
- *Engage regional stakeholders.*

The OCP project identified and engaged 16 types of community stakeholders, representing a total of 188 organizations and groups, to engage in the Plan update. These include service providers and facilities with staff who work with “hard to reach groups” including single parents, urban poor, multi-cultural organizations, new immigrants, and people with disabilities, and youth:

- Business community
- City public advisory committees
- Community-building organizations
- Community centres
- Cultural organizations including immigrant settlement services
- Disability centres and groups
- Downtown service providers
- Employment centres and services
- Groups serving families and children including single parents
- First Nations facilities and programs
- Neighbourhood associations and residents groups
- Planning and development community
- Seniors centres and organizations
- Sustainability advisors and practitioners
- Young professionals (24-40)
- Youth (aged 13-24)

In addition, consistent with the Provincial legislation, staff initiated the formal consultation with institutional and government stakeholders, specifically: School Board No. 61; neighbouring municipalities; the Capital Region District; the Provincial Capital Commission; Province of British Columbia; Government of Canada; and First Nations.

#### **4. Analysis**

##### **4a. Engagement Techniques**

The purpose of OCP public engagement through Phase 2 of the project was to involve citizens and stakeholders in the development of broad policy directions. Techniques in the *Civic Engagement Strategy* were carefully selected to engage a diversity of participants, including “hard to reach” groups and youth (Attachment B), for staff to gain an informed sense of the perspectives, values, goals and ideas in the community to address in the new Plan.

#### 4a.i. Techniques to Consult and Involve

Techniques were used to **inform** the community and to provide balanced and objective information to assist citizens in understanding the project, their role and policy options.

- **Designated contact person:** City staff was available by phone and email to answer public inquiries. Approximately 10 calls or emails were received per week.
- **Discussion Papers:** Eleven discussion papers are posted on the OCP website.
- **Topic Sheets:** Two-page summaries on issues, trends and facts for 17 topics are available online and were widely distributed to citizens and stakeholders at events.
- **Community Profiles:** Facts and figures on key topics are also available online.
- **Website:** A dynamic, interactive website was developed to serve as the online “go-to” place information on the OCP, including research and events. From February to July 2010, there were 5,350 unique visits.
- **E-Newsletter:** From February to July, over 1,500 individuals and organizations received an email update on the OCP approximately every three weeks. The distribution list includes citizens and stakeholders, including those identified in the OCP process.
- **Printed Materials:** A wide variety of printed material was developed to be visually appealing, written in plain language, and followed a consistent visual identity.
  - *Postcards:* OCP information, including the website address.
  - *Fact Sheet:* Description of OCP and ways to get involved.
  - *Signage:* Above electronic survey kiosks to draw people in to participate.
  - *Mail-out Invitation:* Invitations to Forum 1 were sent to over 30,000 households.
  - *Posters:* Displayed in coffee shops and community centres to encourage citizens to participate in Community Circles.
  - *Display Boards:* 20 panels on key aspects of the OCP at Forums 1 and 2.
  - *Sandwich Boards:* Visually identified the presence of staff at OCP events.
  - *Connect Newsletter:* The OCP was featured in the spring issue of the *Connect* newsletter which is mailed to approximately 30,000 homes in Victoria. An OCP update will also be included in the fall issue.
- **Earned Media:** From January to June, six different media releases were distributed to media outlets to raise the profile of the project. Outreach to media resulted in 21 known articles and interviews including the Times Colonist, Victoria News, A News, Monday Magazine, CBC and CFAX. Outreach was also achieved through Facebook postings, free calendar listings in Monday Magazine, the Times Colonist, Shaw TV, Victoria News and a series of E-Bulletin emails to staff.
- **Advertisements:** Advertising prior to Forums 1 and 2 included print and radio ads on CFAX, KoolFM, JackFM, The Ocean, Times Colonist, Vic News, Monday Magazine, Nexus (Camosun) and Martlet (UVic).

#### 4a.ii. Techniques to Consult and Involve

A number of techniques were used to consult and involve the community. The goal was to gather citizen and stakeholder input on issues, ideas and options for the future, and to obtain feedback from citizens on this input to help guide the selection of policy directions.

- **Community Surveys:** The project began with a mobile kiosk and online survey from February to March 2010 that raised awareness among citizens and gathered initial input on public priorities. Another survey was used in June and July 2010 to gather public opinions about future growth scenarios. A total of 3000 people and 150 people participated in the two surveys respectively (Attachments C and D provide the survey questions).
- **Community Forums:** The planning process also included “open houses” called Community Forums. Forum 1 (March 26-27) was the formal launch of civic engagement; staff provided information on the OCP update, including background research, and staff and consultants made presentations on key topics. Forum 2 (June 25-26) presented Phase 2 citizen and stakeholder input on 10 topics, including future growth scenarios, to citizens through display boards and for discussion at workshops that helped to select broad policy directions for drafting the new OCP. More than 500 people attended Forum 1 and over 200 participated in Forum 2.
- **Presentations:** Staff gave presentations to City Public Advisory Committees and as requested to community groups through Phase 2 of the OCP. Approximately 400 people were engaged through presentations to groups such as youth, neighbourhood associations and the development community.
- **Community Circles:** Community Circles are “kitchen table discussions” in which citizens self-organize in small groups to discuss ideas and share feedback on issues. The City provided a Community Circle Workbook (Attachment E) with a set of instructions and questions to guide and enable citizen-led input (without staff involvement) on OCP topics. Input from 47 Community Circles, involving over 300 citizens, was gained through this technique.
- **Workshops:** The City also held a series of 23 small-group facilitated workshops between May and June with stakeholders. Participants shared their ideas in response to questions (Attachment F) that staff provided prior to each event. Staff organized the workshops around “communities of interest” and approached members of 16 identified stakeholder groupings. Representatives from 90 of 188 invited organizations and groups were participants including service providers for hard to reach citizens (e.g. urban poor; seniors; people with disabilities), and youth.
- **Youth Engagement:** The City engaged youth in a number of activities to gain ideas and input on the OCP.

Victoria High School: The Mayor gave a presentation to a school-wide assembly and students completed the first community survey at the school. City staff later held Community Circles with the Victoria High School Leadership 12 class over three weeks during class time. Approximately 20 students participated. Staff also trained some of the latter to volunteer as facilitators at the Community Café.

Victoria Youth Council: Staff held a workshop in collaboration with the Youth Council.

Community Café: In sessions with staff-trained youth facilitators, participants made community maps and joined discussions. Thirty young adults attended the café.

- **Citizen Insight Council**: A Citizen Insight Council brings together a randomly selected group of individuals to address a set of questions and issues. The City of Victoria partnered with Wise Democracy Victoria, a non-profit group, on two Citizen Insight Councils; one focused on sustainable communities (May 28-29) and the other on neighbourhoods (June 5). Twenty-one citizens engaged in an in-depth dialogue. The youngest participant was in their 20s and the oldest in their 90s.

#### **4a.iii. Techniques to Collaborate**

The following technique was used to collaborate with the community, in partnership with community representatives.

- **Citizen Advisory Committee**: A Citizen Advisory Committee, which is a panel of community experts, was established in September 2009 to guide the process for the review of the OCP and Neighbourhood Planning Program. The CAC reviews staff-prepared information and materials to provide feedback and advice.

#### **4b. Outcomes and Outputs**

The OCP public process has already nearly achieved the overall quantitative target to involve 5,000 citizens and stakeholders. There have been an approximate total of 4,690 participants in interactive engagement techniques and at least 2,700 are known to be residents. Also, the project has the added value of benefits and outcomes that go beyond its immediate scope.

##### **4b.i. Civic Engagement Strategy**

The OCP public process involved the use of techniques in the *Civic Engagement Strategy*. Specifically, the design of the OCP process has shown the usefulness of the Continuum of Engagement as a framework for the selection of appropriate and effective techniques for engagement. Moreover, innovative ways of engaging the public, such as Citizen Insight Councils, were applied in a City of Victoria-led process for the first time.

##### **4b.ii. OCP Public Engagement Strategy – Targets and Outputs**

The OCP Public Engagement Strategy included a list of quantitative measures of success for engagement with the general public (2,500 people) and specific stakeholders including neighbourhood organizations; community organizations; business and development community; youth; and subject area experts. The OCP process has already surpassed the overall quantitative target for public input. During the course of the engagement, it became evident that the measure of success with respect to stakeholders is not the number of participants alone, but how they were engaged and the high quality of information gathered about community interests, perspectives, values, goals and ideas that shaped the OCP directions. The latter was achieved by involving the general public and stakeholders, including “hard-to-reach groups”, through interactive techniques around well designed questions for the surveys, Community Circles, Workshops, Community Café, Citizen Insight Councils and discussions at Forum 2.

#### **4b.iii. Building Relationships**

The delivery of the *OCP Engagement Strategy* involved the cooperation and coordination of activities between Planning and Development Department and Corporate Communications. The latter played an essential supporting role in the OCP process by providing expertise in techniques to inform the community about the project and to attract broad citizen involvement. OCP staff also developed and strengthened the City's relationships with stakeholders, such as the Youth Council, through techniques including presentations and workshops.

#### **4b.iv. Stakeholder Database**

The organization of stakeholders around communities of interest in the OCP process has helped to populate a database that is housed in Corporate Communications. Many new organizations, groups and contacts were added to this list or updated which will be useful to other City departments with projects that involve a civic engagement strategy.

#### **4b.v. Youth Engagement**

It is recommended in the *Civic Engagement Strategy* (p. 43) that the City work with the Youth Council and the School District to engage youth in civic processes and to educate them on the importance of engagement. Youth engagement in the OCP process was done in partnership with the Youth Council and Victoria High School.

#### **4b.vi. Conclusions**

The OCP public process has nearly achieved its quantitative targets, and serves as an informative example of the application of key directions and techniques in the *Civic Engagement Strategy*. This report is an interim update on the OCP public process; an in-depth analysis of the use of engagement techniques in the *Strategy* will follow after the OCP project is completed.

### **5. Recommendations**

That Council receive, for information, the report on public engagement in the *Official Community Plan Update*.

### **6. List of Attachments**

- Attachment A: OCP Public Engagement Strategy
- Attachment B: OCP Phase 2 – Rationale for Civic Engagement Techniques
- Attachment C: Launch Survey Questionnaire
- Attachment D: Future Growth Scenario Questionnaire
- Attachment E: Community Circle Workbook
- Attachment F: Workshop Guide.