

A background photograph of a community event at dusk. In the foreground, a man in a light blue shirt is talking to a woman wearing a purple and yellow patterned shawl. Several children are nearby, some holding popcorn. In the background, there is a playground with a red canopy and residential houses under a twilight sky.

Engagement Strategy

CITY OF VAUGHAN

CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



The City of Vaughan is dedicated to fostering a community that is safe, welcoming and inclusive. We are working toward a collective vision that ensures citizens, stakeholders and community organizations feel valued, heard and appreciated.

The City of Vaughan's Stakeholder and Community Engagement Strategy will align our efforts with the needs and views of everyone who lives and works here. We understand that now more than ever, community engagement is a vital and integral part of the city-building process.

I am calling on you to be the change you want to see in your community. The City of Vaughan encourages citizens to get involved and help shape the future of our city. By participating in our many engagement opportunities, you will learn about the city-building and decision-making processes of municipal government while providing feedback on key priorities in the City's 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan. Your insight and ideas will support our efforts to build a world-class city that reflects the individuals and businesses we proudly serve.

City-building is a team effort, and together, we have made tremendous strides. In Vaughan, we take great pride in providing an exceptional quality of life and standard of living that is second to none. Ours is a city where everyone is encouraged to reach their full potential, actively participate in civic life and have equal access to opportunities.

Vaughan is blessed with thoughtful and engaged community leaders who continue to advance our city to new and unprecedented heights. Together, we will lay the foundation to build a strong future today and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, P.C.
Mayor

ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

The City of Vaughan values the voice of its citizens and is dedicated to having constructive dialogue with the community that is open, transparent, accessible and inclusive. City building is a collective effort and a priority in the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

The City understands that insight collected through the community engagement process provides Vaughan Council and City staff with meaningful information to support sustainable decision-making. Until now, a strategic, overarching direction for community engagement had never been implemented. Senior leaders and staff have stressed the need to establish a more rigorous and transparent methodology to planning and designing engagements. They also recognize that weaving sound engagement methods into the



City's standard business practice and embedding it in the corporate DNA is a priority that contributes to building an exceptional city.

The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Strategy is not just a commitment to involving citizens, businesses and stakeholders in conversations about municipal decisions that interest and/or impact them. It is a deliberate approach to making it happen. This strategy is intended to be a guide for City of Vaughan employees responsible for the planning and execution of community engagement plans or activities.

The foundational aspects of this strategy are influenced by internationally recognized best practices for engagement as endorsed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). Staff from the City's Corporate and Strategic Communications department have participated in professional skills and knowledge development through interactive, practitioner-endorsed and IAP2-licensed training that is considered the international gold standard for planning effective community engagement. They have successfully received internationally recognized certificates of completion.

The City also examined current engagement practices among 16 similar-sized municipalities and regions in Ontario and used this information as a benchmark for expanding Vaughan's engagement methods.

Additionally, City of Vaughan staff, and Vaughan citizens through the 2018 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, had valuable insights to share in terms of needs and opportunities that have also been considered as part of this strategy:

- 62 per cent of citizens believe they can influence municipal decisions by participating in community engagement events
- 37 per cent of citizens prefer to attend town hall or public meetings (up from 32 per cent)
- 78 per cent of citizens are either very or somewhat likely to use online voting
- 86 per cent of citizens say they have a strong sense of belonging to Vaughan
- A consistent, corporate-wide approach is needed to aid staff in deciding how to engage appropriately and strategically
- A common understanding of engagement across all levels of staff and Council must be developed
- New channels for engagement and innovative platforms for telling our narrative should be explored
- Increase internal capacity for engagement
- Reduce ad hoc, spontaneous or "knee-jerk" engagements to improve their quality
- Make an effort to ensure the inclusion of representative samples of community views where appropriate
- Inspire greater public trust, confidence and shared ownership in city-building initiatives

A VISION FOR THE STRATEGY

To lay the foundation for effective citizen and stakeholder engagement in order to facilitate a climate of trust and culture of listening and action, including:

- Developing a multi-faceted and overbuilt approach to planning and executing community engagement
- Seeking out opportunities to engage:
 - with Vaughan's diverse community
 - with a variety of stakeholders
 - beyond the usual suspects
 - internally with employees

- Promoting citizen and stakeholder participation through various channels, as well as through new digital options
- Leveraging tools and technology to engage with citizens at convenient times and places to increase participation
- Continuing to promote a go-to-where-the-public-is approach
- Providing strategic advice and support to staff in their engagement initiatives



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The following guiding principles were developed by the IAP2 to be used as a code of ethics to govern the development and execution of engagement processes. They align with and support the association's core values, which inherently define the expectations and aspirations for a community engagement process. These guiding principles help the City of Vaughan make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially impacted parties and serve to ensure and enhance the integrity of the community engagement process.

1. **Purpose.** The City supports community engagement as a process to make better decisions that incorporates the interests and concerns of affected stakeholders and meets the needs of the decision-making body.

2. **Role of Practitioner.** The City will enhance the citizens' and stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.
3. **Trust.** The City will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the engagement process among all the participants.
4. **Defining the Public's Role.** The City will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.
5. **Openness.** The City will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.
6. **Access to the Process.** The City will ensure stakeholders have fair and equal access to the

- community engagement process and the opportunity to influence decisions.
7. **Respect for Communities.** The City will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."
8. **Advocacy.** The City will advocate for the community engagement process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.
9. **Commitments.** The City will ensure all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.
10. **Support of the Practice.** The City will stay informed of new developments and standards in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of community engagement.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY ACTIVITIES

This strategy will be realized through the following objectives and key activities:

OBJECTIVE 1:

Introduce an organizational framework that defines a strategic corporate-wide approach to planning and executing engagement.

- **Activity 1:** Establish a corporate strategy for engagement.
- **Activity 2:** Establish a Council-approved corporate policy for engagement.
- **Activity 3:** Develop a step-by-step engagement guidebook complete with templates, worksheets and resources for staff.
- **Activity 4:** Establish a common definition of “engagement” by creating a made-for-Vaughan engagement spectrum.
- **Activity 5:** Evaluate the success of project-specific engagements.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Ensure stakeholder and community engagement activities and events are as accessible as possible.

- **Activity 6:** Provide multiple engagement channels.
- **Activity 7:** Expand the **Have Your Say** page on vaughan.ca.
- **Activity 8:** Explore new digital tools.
- **Activity 9:** Conduct a citizen satisfaction survey every two years.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Ensure stakeholder and community engagement activities and events are as inclusive as possible.

- **Activity 10:** Develop a process for identifying citizens and stakeholders impacted by and/or interested in a given project/decision.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Build staff capacity for planning and executing engagement.

- **Activity 11:** Develop and deliver a training program for staff on planning and executing engagement.
- **Activity 12:** Provide ongoing support and subject matter expertise.
- **Activity 13:** Develop and maintain a list of pre-qualified vendors that can provide independent facilitation and engagement management services.

OBJECTIVE 5:

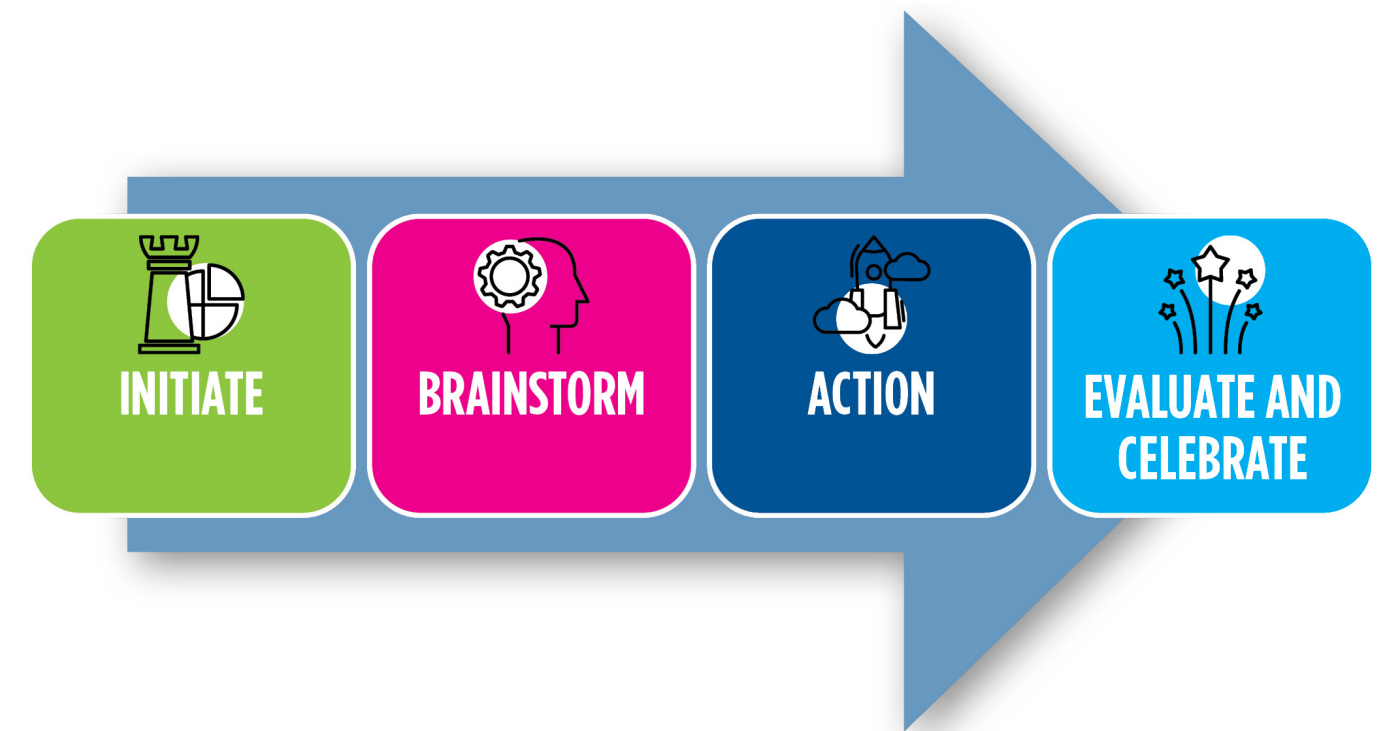
Enhance public relationships.

- **Activity 14:** Increase public trust in local government.
- **Activity 15:** Encourage an active and engaged community.



PLANNING FOR MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Planning for meaningful and effective engagement at the City of Vaughan involves four main steps:



During the **Initiate** and **Brainstorm** phases, an understanding of the what (what is the decision to be made and where might the public be able to contribute), who (who is impacted by and/or interested in this decision), when (when is it appropriate to connect with the public on this) and how (what are the most effective techniques to collect feedback or bring people together) is gained. These planning stages are imperative to ensuring a successful **Action** phase.

The **Action** phase opens the door to dialogue. It’s during this phase that the public is welcome to provide input and feedback on elements of the decision. It typically aligns with the launch of the main project itself.

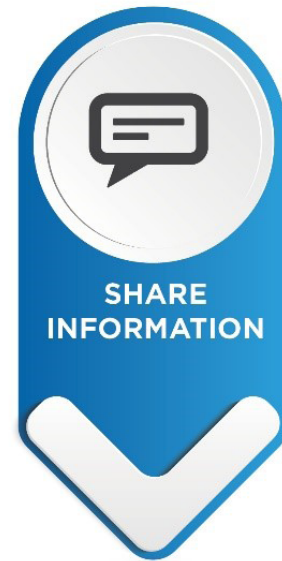
The **Evaluate** and **Celebrate** phase takes place once the project is complete and a decision has been made and is a reflection on the success of the engagement process.



THE VAUGHAN ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM



The following chart outlines the Vaughan Engagement Spectrum. It is a tool that helps project teams define the public's level of involvement in any given engagement process. From left to right, it moves from collecting and compiling input to bringing people together, which means the role of the public becomes more complex at each stage. It also outlines the City's promise to the public at each stage. Information is also always being shared at each level.



GOAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the necessary context and background information in a timely manner
ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate in plain-language • Respond to questions for clarification • Provide additional information as needed • Report back on all outcomes
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication channels are established • Impacted/interested parties feel adequately informed • Transactional

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



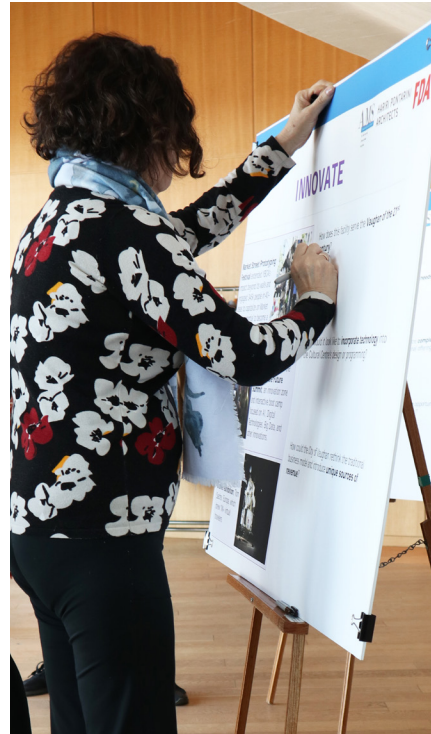
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and learn about views, ideas, concerns and expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect feedback on options and alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide channels and opportunities for listening to take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and acknowledge views, ideas, concerns and expectations • Report back on all outcomes • Describe how input was considered/used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants feel heard • The City understands the community narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens are offered a high-level opportunity to contribute • Participants see their feedback in action • Participants feel heard



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work directly with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the public in various aspects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are reflected in the options or alternatives developed • Describe how input was considered / used • Report back on all outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to the public for advice and innovation • Incorporate advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate negative impacts • Element(s) of surprise are gone • Visible partnerships are created • Co-operation is increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and partnerships are built • Citizens/stakeholders advocate on behalf of the City • Negative impacts are reduced or eliminated



SAMPLE TECHNIQUES TO ENGAGE



COLLECT AND COMPILE INPUT

Listen and Learn

- Access Vaughan surveys
- Focus groups
- Hotlines
- Popups
- Public hearings
- Public meetings
- Special Council Meetings

Consult

- Community mapping
- Interviews
- Open houses
- Surveys

BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Include

- Design charettes
- Site tours
- Workshops
- World cafés

Co-create

- Advisory committees
- Online discussion groups
- Task forces



CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE

Communications planning is an important aspect of engagement planning. The City of Vaughan recognizes that it is one thing to provide avenues for stakeholders to provide feedback and input, however, reaching impacted and interested stakeholders to notify them about the opportunities to provide input, then motivating participation, plus facilitating informed participation, is a whole additional, and very

important, layer of effort. The City has a range of channels and tactics for achieving this:

- Advertising
- Backgrounders
- Brochures
- Direct Mail
- Earned Media
- Email
- Event Calendar

- Factsheets
- FAQs
- Information Booths
- (e)Newsletters/Mailers
- Podcasts
- Press Releases
- Signage
- Social Media
- Video
- Website

GLOSSARY

Citizen: an inhabitant or resident of the city of Vaughan. For the purposes of this strategy, the terms citizen and resident can be used interchangeably.

City building: the mindful intent to improve a city through planning and development, and supported by community engagement, to drive diversity, inclusivity, sustainability, mobility, and economic prosperity.

Community: a group of people within an identified geographic area and/or who may share common interests or values.

Community engagement (or public consultation or public participation or citizen engagement or public involvement): the process of inviting the public to participate in conversations about municipal matters that interest and/or impact them for the purpose of making sustainable decisions.

Council: the elected representatives of a community.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2): the preeminent international organization advancing the practice of public participation and promoting and improving the best practices associated with successful and meaningful public engagement in relation to individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.

Public: refers to all those who are impacted by, or may impact, the decision-making process. In a municipal context, this can mean: citizens; individuals who work in, go to school in, enjoy leisure activities in or travel through the city of Vaughan; people and organizations that own property or do business in Vaughan as well as internal

stakeholders and other decision authorities who can impact the decision process.

Spectrum of Public Participation/ Spectrum of Engagement: a spectrum of participation designed by the International Association of Public Participation to assist with defining the public's role in any engagement process.

Stakeholders: includes individuals or groups with a vested interest in the outcome of a decision; impacted individuals, groups, communities and political entities; and individuals, groups or organizations that could be impacted by the decision-making process.

