

**Community Relations &
Public Participation**

Policy Type: GOVERNANCE PROCESS | GP-D-2.2

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging with citizens. Community relations and public participation enrich Council's decision-making processes and enable Council to represent the community effectively.

Community Relations

- 1 Council takes a long-term view and builds organizational and community capacity through dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning.
 - (1) Council commits to develop and maintain meaningful Council/community relations to fully appreciate and understand community values.
- 2 Council makes decisions as representatives of the community as a whole rather than based on personal or individual citizen interests.
 - (1) As representatives of the community, Council has a responsibility to identify and understand their collective values, wants, and needs.
 - (2) Council gathers data reflective of the diversity of the community, ensuring all members have a voice and are represented.
 - (3) Council considers dialogue from various, diverse sources in policy decision making.
- 3 Council engages with the community to be responsive to their values, wants, and needs.
 - (1) Council encourages dialogue beyond citizens who are easy to reach, bringing new ideas and energy from a wider range of community members and stakeholders.
 - (2) Council keeps in touch with public opinion on key issues and service satisfaction.
- 4 Council supports and encourages connections between residents, groups, and organizations to build a strong, connected community.
 - (1) Council shares ideas and learnings from other communities, organizations, and residents to ensure the community is growing together.
 - (2) Council promotes improved relationships within the community through encouraging positive, respectful relationships.
- 5 Council ensures transparent community relations creating strong community trust and increased understanding of the decision-making process.

Public Participation

- 6 Public participation supports decision-making processes related to City policies, projects, and services that have an impact on the public. They may be implemented in the following circumstances:
 - (1) To fulfill legislation or regulation requirements;
 - (2) To respond to requests initiated by the community or Council;
 - (3) To support new policy, projects, or service implementation;
 - (4) To support existing policy, projects, or service evaluation and change;
 - (5) To address potential impacts on the community, such as quality of life, or the environment;
 - (6) To address issues associated with strong community views, concerns, or emotions.

- 7 Council facilitates and supports effective public participation to:
 - (1) Improve decision making;
 - (2) Enhance community relations;
 - (3) Increase understanding of community values;
 - (4) Be responsive to community values, needs, and wants;
 - (5) Ensure inclusive public involvement; and
 - (6) Enhance Council's ability to effectively represent the community as a whole.

- 8 Public participation processes are sufficiently resourced by the organization (human and financial assets are assigned, while capacity limits are respected).

- 9 The International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Core Values and The City of Red Deer's Public Engagement Guiding Principles guide all public participation processes.
 - (1) IAP2's Core Values:
 - (a) Those affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
 - (b) Promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
 - (c) Promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
 - (d) Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
 - (e) Seek input from participants in designing how they participate.
 - (f) Provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

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- (g) Communicate to participants how their input affected decisions.
- (2) The City of Red Deer's Public Engagement Principles:
 - (a) Participation is meaningful (the questions used are genuine and the input gathered impacts the policy, plan, program, design, or service in question).
 - (b) Participation is scoped and scaled appropriately to the issue's importance (or potential impacts), degree of potential conflict, and diversity of opinion it may engender.
 - (c) Participation is informed (framing of issues and sharing of research or facts, and options supports thoughtful contributions by all concerned).
 - (d) Participation starts early and continues throughout the process (input opportunities are integrated into all stages).
 - (e) Active outreach is undertaken to reach those most likely to be interested in or impacted by the initiative (communications and go to them approaches are key).
 - (f) Diverse voices are heard and conflict is reduced (a range of tools helps to access a broad range of ideas and opinions).
 - (g) The process is transparent and communication-rich (sharing information/options, documenting input received, communicating results decisions/action).
- 10 The Public Participation Spectrum, which was adapted from IAP2's Spectrum, provides guidance to determine the level of public participation appropriate for each project. Movement across the spectrum represents the increasing level of public influence on decision making and level of commitment from The City and the public.
 - (1) **Consult:** To obtain public input and feedback to test concepts or options and/or clarify issues or expectations.
 - (2) **Involve:** To work directly with the public throughout the process to better understand each other's perspectives, concerns, and goals.
 - (3) **Collaborate:** To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives, recommendations, and preferred solutions.
 - (4) **Empower:** To delegate some or all aspects of decision making to the public.
 - (5) The Spectrum is divided into two zones: the Input Zone and the Engagement Zone.
 - (a) The **Input Zone** applies to routine or non-complex projects and collects information from the public through input or feedback based methods. (Consult)
 - (b) The **Engagement Zone** applies to projects that are more complex, high profile, or controversial and engages the public in conversation and dialogue focused methods. (Involve, Collaborate, Empower)

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INPUT ZONE	ENGAGEMENT ZONE		
CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goals			
To obtain public input and feedback to test concepts or options and/or clarify issues or expectations.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to better understand each other's perspectives, concerns and goals.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives, recommendations and preferred solutions.	To delegate some or all aspects of decision making to the public.

Definitions

- I1 Community Relations: The establishment and maintenance of positive, respectful community relationships that enable City Council to represent the community effectively.
- I2 Public Participation: A process that supports the public's involvement and contributions to sustainable decisions.

Document History:

Policy Adopted	October 1, 2018
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