



Public Engagement Strategy



www.Brockville.com/Official Plan

Prepared by:



In Association with:



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1.0 Introduction

Successful Official Plans, in part, owe their success to communication and the degree that public interest and awareness is created for the study process, for policy development and for implementation. Council is wise to promote the use of extensive public consultation. In our experience, early-stage public consultation greatly reduces public apprehension. This, in turn, may eliminate late-stage confrontational consultations with a citizenry that may not only object to the Official Plan presented but also resent the lack of early-stage consultation.

The consultation process must ensure that planning is responsive to and representative of the needs of the residents and key stakeholders. For each component of the engagement strategy, the following format will be used:

Prior to advertising the session, the material to be presented/reviewed will be approved by the Technical Steering Committee (TSC);

Advertisements will be placed in the local newspapers indicating the date, time and location of the meetings (at the expense of the City). Additional advertisement will be sought through “in-kind” exposure as described below;

The sessions will be structured to obtain specific input/comments/ reaction;

Minutes of meetings and a summary of any comments received will be prepared by the consultant, approved by the TSC and available for review by all interested parties.

Our strategy is based on a number of key public consultation principles including:

Inclusive

First and foremost, our program is intended to be inclusive and to engage a cross-section of the community. We aim to accomplish this by: (a) involving key stakeholder groups, and (b) reaching out to individuals who are not yet aware of their interest in land use issues in the City. To accommodate all interests of the community, we have planned for three separate sessions that will attempt to poll

individuals based on their particular interest (i.e. economic development, the waterfront and the downtown, and everything else).

Meaningful

Second, we intend to maximize meaningful participation by moving beyond typical public meetings and encouraging dialogue and deliberation among participants. We intend to achieve this through larger stakeholder / community workshops combined with smaller focus groups, where stakeholders representing different perspectives will have the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with one another, and with the discipline-lead.

Proactive

Third, we will be proactive in disseminating information to the public regularly through the web site, through regular newsletter updates, and through other consultation activities. Being proactive also means that we will try to identify and address issues and concerns before they become unmanageable.

Responsive

Fourth, we will be responsive and react quickly to comments and questions from the public. Any individual that has taken the time to participate should find out how their input has influenced the direction of the study, especially when it comes time to develop recommendations. Our issue-tracking database allows us to accurately document questions and comments and set in place a process for responding to them with up-to-date information. We will also make sure that the TSC and staff are aware of any issues that arise through regular reports and meetings.

These principles will be applied in public engagement activities designed to connect with the public and timed to provide valuable input into the Official Plan Program.

1.1 Public Meetings

Public Meetings are the traditional format for obtaining input from members of the public during large municipal projects. A Statutory Public Meeting held under the *Planning Act* is tentatively scheduled for the end of April/early May (2010) to present the Final Draft of the Official Plan prior to adoption by Council.

In our experience, the atmosphere at public meetings is not particularly conducive to encouraging the expression of opinions, listening to the opinions of others, encouraging creative solutions and partnerships to emerge and reduce emotionally charged confrontation. As such, we have focused our efforts on more effective consultation formats.

1.2 Open Houses

Open Houses are designed to be informal sessions where interested parties can review material (presentation boards, graphics, document summaries), at their own pace, and discuss issues with the consultant team and staff. This format is a particularly effective way of introducing the study and consultant team as well as allowing individuals “one-on-one” time with the consultant, either to ask questions or to discuss specific issues.

We have planned for four Open Houses throughout the process. The first Open House is tentatively scheduled for the last week in April (2009) to present and gain feedback on the Foundation Report/Basis Document. The second Open House is tentatively scheduled for the middle of September (2009) to present and gain feedback on the Land Use and Growth Management Strategy. The third Open House is tentatively scheduled for late January/early February (2010) to present and gain feedback on the Draft Official Plan. The fourth and final Open House is tentatively scheduled for early to mid April (2010) to present and gain final feedback on the Final Draft of the Official Plan.

1.3 Municipal Forums/Workshops

The forums and workshops are designed to be informal sessions used to gather input on a number of relevant topics. Three sessions will be held in total.

1. The first session is proposed to be lead by one or more of the City Councilors and will attempt to capture the important issues affecting participants. This session will serve as the kick-off for the program and is anticipated to be held in mid February (2009).
2. The second session is proposed to focus on economic development. This session will be facilitated by George Schrijver of WCM and will serve to capture the values of its participants and also to identify their likes and dislikes about their City. This session is anticipated to be held in mid-late February (2009).

3. The third and final session is proposed to focus on the Downtown and Waterfront areas. This session will be facilitated by Chris Tyrrell of MMM and Miguel Escobar of FCI and will serve to gather valuable input on both the Downtown and Waterfront areas and have the participants identify what they like, dislike, and where they see their Downtown and Waterfront in the next twenty years. This session is anticipated to be held in late February.

The following provides preliminary questions to speak to the fundamental matters to be addressed through consultation.

Values

1. What do you most value about the City of Brockville and about living here?
2. What do you most want changed about the City of Brockville and about living here?

Issues and Challenges

1. What are the biggest challenges facing the City? (Think about issues that are specific to the City and planning for its future – rather than issues like Provincial health care or education)

Vision for the Future – 2031

Looking to the future, imagine the City the way you want it to be in 2031. Thinking about how your ideal community looks, feels, and operates in the future:

1. What do you most value about your Brockville in 2031?
2. What do you most want changed about your Brockville in 2031?

1.4 “In-Kind” Exposure

An entire information broadcast network exists in the City. This network is comprised of local newspapers, local cable TV, community groups, associations, libraries, bulletin boards, and study supporters. We have had previous success in other communities using this network approach to inform the community about the importance of municipal policy projects. Best of all, the cost of utilizing an existing network is small in comparison to other methods, and the results are very positive. We will

prepare a one-page flyer to advertise and convey information to the public regarding project initiation, open houses, public engagement sessions, and significant milestones throughout the work program.

1.5 Program Branding

The City has been provided with several examples of the brand that could be used to market the public engagement components of the Official Plan program. This will be finalized in the next week to ensure that any notices or reports that are submitted include the brand.

1.6 Web Site

The Internet can provide up to date information on the study at the click of a button. While not every resident has access to the Internet at home, it can be assumed that every resident has access to someone who can “log on”, either through work, school, the City, libraries or friends and family. We suggest that an information page dedicated to the Official Plan study be established on the City’s web site. Updates can be made at each key stage; notice of upcoming consultation sessions can be posted; two-way communication can ensure that concerns are addressed in a timely fashion, avoiding situations where opinions are based on speculation rather than fact; and more people can be part of the study process.

All information posted or communicated in the form of answers to specific questions will be approved by the TSC. A log of all Internet activity can be kept as part of the consultation program file.

1.7 Key Contacts

It is suggested that the key contact for any interaction with the media be Maureen Pascoe Merkley where a day-to-day contact for general issues could be Lorraine Bagnell.

The key contact related to interaction between the Project Team and the City is Chris Tyrrell. Where Chris is unavailable, Greg Bender is the supplementary contact.