



# Engage Surrey

Surrey's Public  
Engagement Strategy



“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

Jane Jacobs

## Table of Contents

- 2 [Introduction](#)
- 3 [Why Engage?](#)
- 4 [Vision, Values and Principles](#)
  
- 6 [Background](#)
- 7 [Engagement Spectrum](#)
- 8 [Where We Are Now](#)
- 9 [Developing the Strategy](#)
  
- 12 [The Strategy](#)
- 13 [Engagement Framework](#)
- 14 [Strategic Actions](#)
- 16 [Implementation and Next Steps](#)





# Introduction

Surrey is known for its diversity. It is young, multi-cultural and diverse. These conditions, paired with the City's rapid growth, are reshaping the City, and in turn, the future of public engagement. As Surrey continues to grow, reaching out and hearing from these diverse voices will help create a City that residents identify with and an environment that fosters civic participation and inclusion.

## Why engage?

The City often makes decisions that impact the lives of its residents. These decisions may affect day-to-day services, new strategies and policies, and large city-building capital projects. Engagement is about bringing people into these processes. Making real connections with people creates relationships and builds trust. This encourages community buy-in for initiatives and fosters civic participation.



## VISION, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The vision for engagement is based on the principle that residents should have the opportunity to engage with their local government in a safe and welcoming environment. Where staff, Council and residents listen, learn and act in an open and inclusive manner. Where the quality of conversations takes priority over the quantity of voices heard.

Embedded in the vision is the intention to reach people of all ages, demographics, and abilities. Creating an environment where income, ability and language are not barriers to engagement and input is acknowledged and used to shape thoughtful decisions.

**Together, the vision, values and principles establish the foundation of engagement in Surrey.**

## Vision

Everyone in Surrey feels welcome and motivated to take part in shaping the city and lands where they live, work, learn, and play.

## Values

Respectful, Responsive,  
Transparent, and Accountable

## Principles

### Include everyone

Engagement should be as inclusive as possible. Sometimes barriers, not a lack of interest, deters people from engaging. Providing additional supports based on needs can help broaden engagement participation.

### Embrace differences

Reaching Surrey's diverse population requires a variety of outreach approaches. Considering participants' cultural and social identities and spoken language when designing and conducting engagement can help reach a more diverse and representative audience.

### Build relationships

Fostering relationships over time is more beneficial than having one-off conversations. Focusing on building ongoing relationships with organizations and community groups helps build trust and results in better shared outcomes.

### Increase capacity

Investing in training and education results in more meaningful engagement. Increasing staff's capacity to conduct engagement and the public's capacity to understand the process and their role in it, can lead to better engagement and project outcomes.

### Focus on process

A clear engagement framework provides consistency for staff, residents, and Council. Improving internal communication, collaboration, and implementation, creating efficiencies and reducing engagement fatigue.



# Background

## ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) is a non-profit organization committed to advancing the practice of public engagement. Municipalities across Canada and around the world use IAP2 guidance. The City of Surrey uses IAP2 to ensure engagement follows international best practices.

The City has adopted a modified version of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. This approach assumes that all engagement serves to 'inform' and that meaningful engagement aims to consult, involve, collaborate and/or empower, depending on the specific engagement objectives.

	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To obtain public feedback on analysis alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the direction.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION



# Where we are now

Today, the City engages more often with residents than ever before. Staff use a combination of formats and tactics to reach their target audience and invite them to participate in engagement. Typical marketing tools include newspaper advertising, postcards, posters and signage, as well as digital tools such as e-newsletters, the City's website and social media promotion. To engage with residents, staff use a variety of tools and techniques, including workshops, open houses, pop-ups and surveys.

The City has demonstrated best practices and won national awards for engagement. Projects where staff have employed innovative engagement techniques have led to increased participation and support for initiatives. But the City's engagement has also experienced limitations. For example,

instances where engagement was misaligned with messaging, was inconsistent, or was not as comprehensive as needed. Often, engagement results have not accurately represented community demographics. For example, Indigenous people, immigrants and refugees, people on low income and renters, people with disabilities, and youth, are often underrepresented.

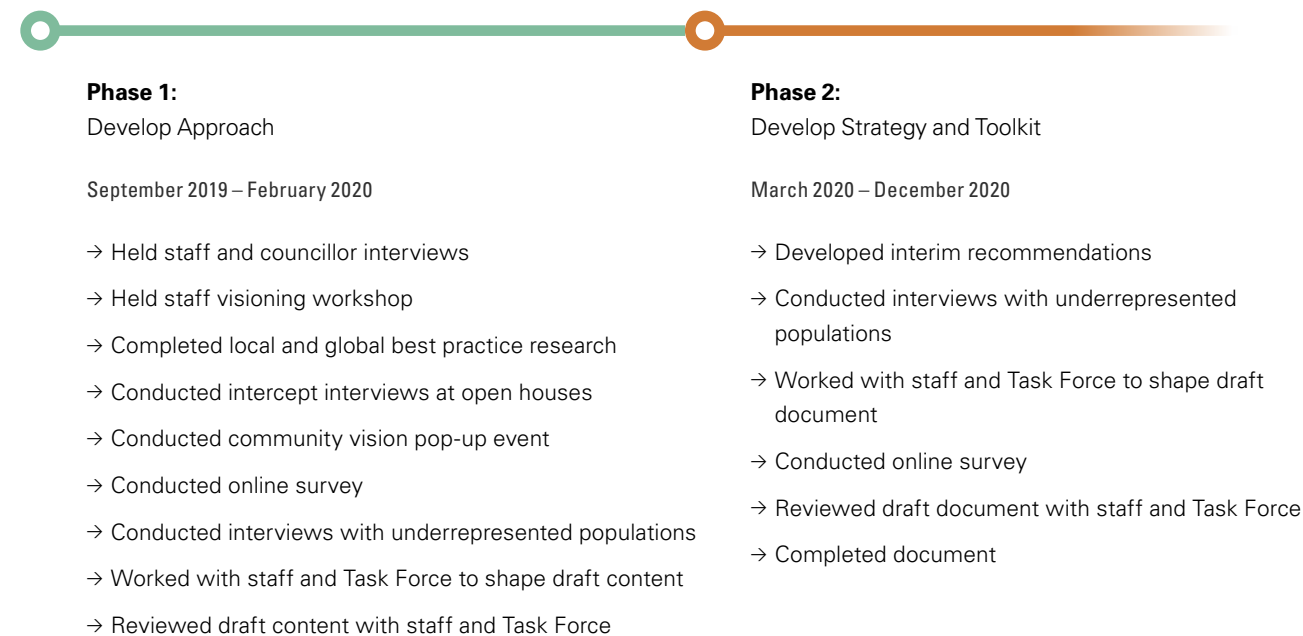
The intent of the Strategy is to build on current best practices and successes in the City, while acknowledging there is room to improve. The Strategy aims to leverage and strengthen existing staff capacity. It provides a coordinated framework and approach for conducting engagement. In doing so, it aims to increase consistency across all departments and elevate the quality of engagement.

## DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

The development of the Strategy and Toolkit used a holistic approach. It included community consultation, best practice review, and input from subject matter experts. The best available information was gathered to support evidence-based decision-making.

Emphasis was placed on reaching voices currently underrepresented through traditional engagement. Engagement activities included workshops, community conversations, interviews, open houses, and surveys. The engagement program was an opportunity to learn from the community to better understand existing challenges.

## Work Done





## CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

The development of the Strategy identified several existing challenges to engagement in Surrey. The most common are outlined below. These challenges limit resident participation and the progress of meaningful engagement in Surrey.

### Key Internal Challenges

- Limited resources (staff, training) to conduct meaningful engagement
- Lack of time to conduct engagement
- Difficulty connecting with a diversity of participants (community demographics)
- Undue petitioning from some external voices
- Inconsistent approaches to engagement (undefined methodology)

### Key External Challenges

- Barriers to participating (time, cost, language, social, cultural, physical)
- Feel unheard and not listened to
- Overwhelmed by number of engagement activities (engagement fatigue)
- Unaware of engagement results or how input is used (inconsistent reporting)
- 'Louder' voices dominating but not representing overall sentiment

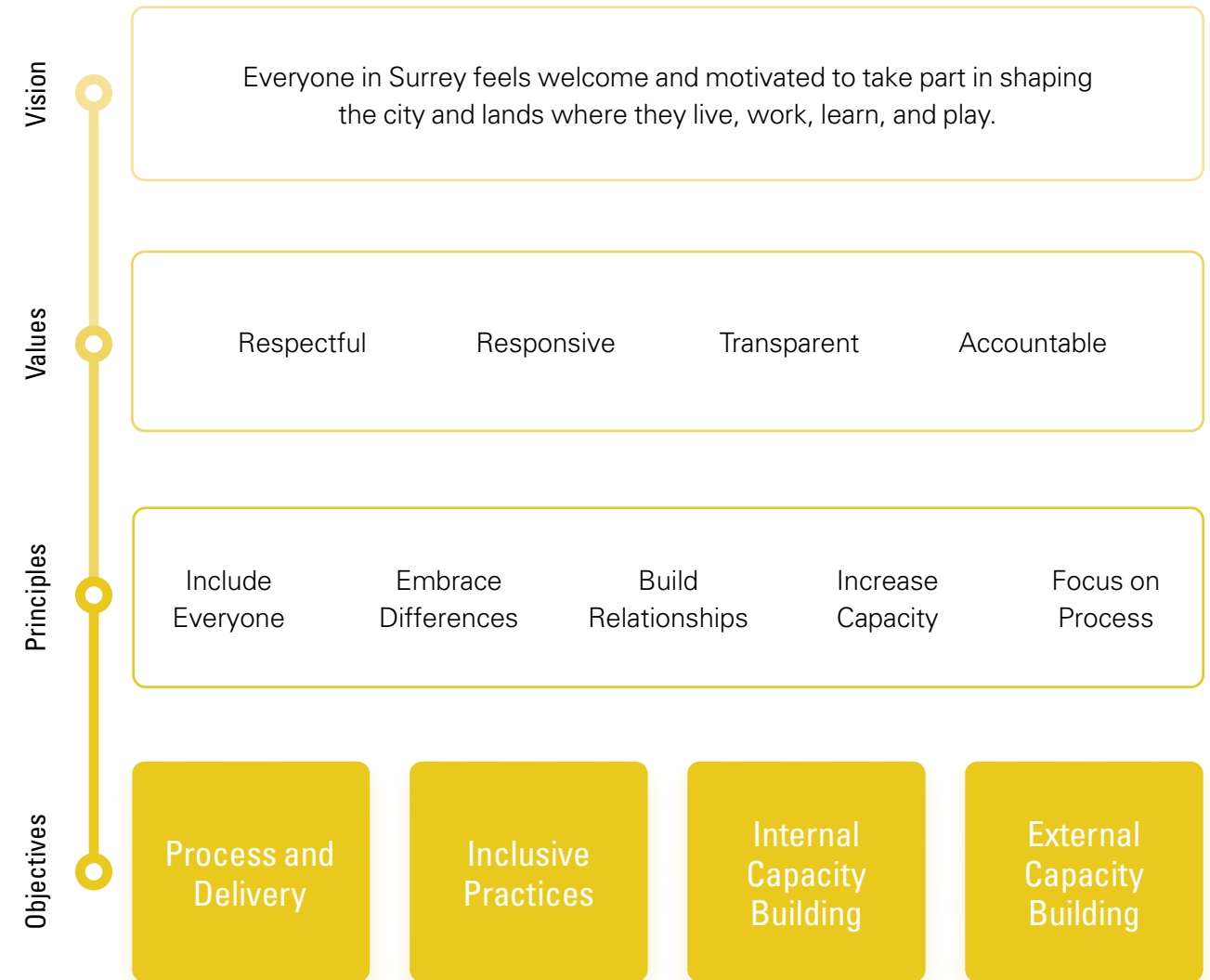


# Strategy

The Public Engagement Strategy provides the foundation for community engagement in Surrey. It identifies the City's vision, values, principles, and outcomes for engagement. It provides a coordinated framework and identifies clear actions the City can take to foster a respectful, responsive, transparent, and accountable approach to engagement.

The strategy has a companion document, Surrey's Public Engagement Toolkit. The Toolkit provides a clear process to plan, design, and deliver engagement initiatives. The Toolkit also gives guidance on how to reach residents underrepresented in typical engagement.

## ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



Building on the vision, values and principles, four organizational objectives have been identified. These objectives coordinate strategic actions that will help implement the Strategy. In addition to these, the Toolkit provides guidance on the application and reach of engagement initiatives.



## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

With Council's endorsement of this Strategy, an interdepartmental community engagement working group will be established. The working group will support the implementation of the Strategy's objectives and actions:

### **Objective 1:** Process and Delivery

- Roll out the Strategy and Toolkit citywide. Build staff awareness and provide ongoing support.
- Identify staff uptake and implementation measures (related to the Strategy and Toolkit) that can be tied to Surrey Excels initiatives.
- In coordination with the Web Team, establish a centralized online engagement hub on Surrey.ca.
- Support staff as they incorporate the engagement plan template into their planning activities.
- In coordination with the Marketing Division, develop a consistent format and process for co-developing communication plans with staff.
- In coordination with the Marketing Division, continue to build a photo library (people, spaces, and places in Surrey) that is accessible to staff for engagement purposes.
- Continue to build out and standardize the process (and measures) for evaluating and reporting engagement results.
- Develop a list of venues available for hosting engagement events. Include information such as, location, capacity, universal washrooms, proximity to transit and accessibility features.

### **Objective 2:** Inclusive Practices

- In coordination with the Human Resources Division, support the development of a Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Provide staff training as outlined in the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Consider including a First Nations land acknowledgement at public engagement events (open houses, workshops, etc.).
- Develop protocol for including Indigenous Peoples land acknowledgement within formal plan documents and strategies.
- Refine standardized survey demographic questions.
- Reference, apply, and extend the City's guidelines for using translation services for targeted communication materials and responses. Where applicable, strive to have interpreter staff available at events that are fluent in predominant languages of anticipated audiences.

### **Objective 3:** Internal Capacity Building

- Support department specific staff (IAP2) training for engagement, facilitation, survey development and data analysis.
- Develop and implement 'lunch and learns' or orientation sessions to share engagement successes and lessons learned from key projects with City staff.
- Support external peer learning opportunities for staff. Foster learning and innovation sharing with other municipalities, industries, and post-secondary institutions.
- Support staff initiatives to share best practices and learnings (e.g., article writing and conference presentations).

### **Objective 4:** External Capacity Building

- Provide information and training (courses, workshops, brochures, videos) on civic engagement, volunteering, and City governance.
- Develop city-wide process for training and working with project ambassadors/champions/liasons.
- Develop a process for checking in with the community after the completion of projects, implementation of policies, and introduction of new programming.
- Establish guidelines to encourage a collaborative working relationships with Community Associations.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

**This Strategy presents a new approach to engagement in the City. Success of the Strategy hinges on building staff awareness and sustaining City-wide support.**

---

The actions in the Strategy identify key initiatives that the City can put in place over time. One of these actions is the establishment of an interdepartmental community engagement working group. The working group will be responsible for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the Strategy and for the adoption and uptake of the companion Toolkit document.

The working group will include staff who supported the Task Force and were involved in the Strategy's development. Additional staff from other departments will be added as needed, particularly from groups involved in key engagement work. Implementation work will involve internal training and education on the new framework and approach. The working group will also track progress towards the specific actions outlined in the Strategy.

## ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The Strategy's companion document is the Public Engagement Toolkit. The Toolkit is a practical guide outlining how to plan, design, deliver and evaluate engagement. It is intended for City staff use on a day-to-day basis as a reference document. The Toolkit also gives guidance on how to reach residents often underrepresented in traditional engagement. These include urban Indigenous people, immigrants and refugees, people on low income and renters, people with disabilities and youth.

**This document is a living document and should be updated regularly.**





MAYOR

**Doug McCallum**

**CITY OF SURREY COUNCIL**



COUNCILLOR  
**LINDA ANNIS**



COUNCILLOR  
**DOUG ELFORD**



COUNCILLOR  
**LAURA GUERRA**



COUNCILLOR  
**JACK HUNDIAL**



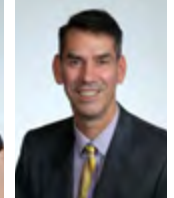
COUNCILLOR  
**BRENDA LOCKE**



COUNCILLOR  
**MANDEEP NAGRA**



COUNCILLOR  
**ALLISON PATTON**



COUNCILLOR  
**STEVEN PETTIGREW**