



# Policy

<b>Title</b> Public Participation		<b>Number:</b> 0192-2026
<b>Reference:</b> Administrative Committee March 4, 2026  Corporate Services Committee March 12, 2026	<b>Adopted by City Council:</b> April 7, 2026	
	City Clerk	City Manager
<b>Supersedes:</b> Policy 0165		
<b>Prepared by:</b> Communication, Engagement and Marketing		

## STATEMENT

Public participation in the decision-making process provides decision-makers with information that assists them in making decisions that are well-informed and well-understood. The City of Medicine Hat recognizes the value of public participation and is committed to creating appropriate opportunities for the public to be involved.

### 1. AUTHORITY

- 1.1 Pursuant to Section 201 of the *Municipal Government Act* (Alberta), Council is responsible for developing and evaluating the policies of the City.
- 1.2 Pursuant to Section 207 of the *Municipal Government Act* (Alberta), the City Manager is responsible for ensuring that the policies of the City are implemented.
- 1.3 Pursuant to Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act* (Alberta), Council must establish and may amend a public participation policy.
- 1.4 A public participation policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace statutory public hearing requirements in the *Municipal Government Act* or any consultation requirements of other regulatory bodies.

### 2. APPLICABILITY

- 2.1 Subject to section 1.4, City employees and consultants managing projects on behalf of the City are expected to comply with this policy and the associated procedure.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Decision-making Process** means the process by which a decision is made, including identifying the problem/opportunity to be addressed and the decision to be made, gathering information and evaluating alternatives. This includes describing types of information (public input, technical requirements, and strategic/corporate objectives) that factor into decision-making.

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- 3.2 **Interest-holder:** any person, group, or organization with potential to be directly or indirectly impacted by the outcome of a decision.
- 3.3 **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)** means an international association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.
- 3.4 **Public** means any individual or group of individuals, organization or political entity, including individuals who work for or with the decision-making organization, that may, or perceive that they may, have an interest in or be directly or indirectly affected by the outcome of the decision.
- 3.5 **Public Participation** means any process that involves the Public in problem solving or decision-making and uses public input to inform decisions. This term is often used interchangeably with public engagement. For the purposes of this Policy, public participation is focused on decision making and does not include ongoing community/interest-holder relations, communication, customer service, or governance of advisory boards and committees.
- 3.6 **Public Participation Activities** means opportunities for the Public to receive information and/or provide input/feedback to the City including but not limited to in-person, digital, and written communication.
- 3.7 **Shape Your City** means the City’s online engagement hub that facilitates digital public engagement opportunities and information sharing about all public participation projects (<https://shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca/>).

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 City Council is elected to make decisions that set the direction for the municipality. Recognizing the value of Public Participation in the Decision-Making Process, the City adopts IAP2’s Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation, as follows:
  - (a) Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
  - (b) Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
  - (c) Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
  - (d) Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
  - (e) Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
  - (f) Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

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(g) Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

4.2 The City will develop and conduct Public Participation Activities where required by legislation and may conduct Public Participation Activities in the following circumstances:

(a) where administration determines that Public Participation will add value to the Decision-making Process due to external factors including, but not limited to:

- (i) perceived winners or losers,
- (ii) known concern or risk for an Interest-holder,
- (iii) known controversy,
- (iv) effect on the environment, or

(b) as otherwise directed by City Council.

4.3 The City will choose appropriate tools considering the diverse needs, abilities and viewpoints of the Public. The information needed to participate will be readily available, accurate, fact-based, and presented in plain language.

4.4 All public participation will be undertaken in accordance with the MGA, privacy legislation, and any other applicable legislation.

4.5 Respectful and constructive Public Participation is a shared responsibility of the City and the Public. Individuals who wish to be involved in Public Participation will increase the effectiveness of Public Participation Activities by:

- (a) signing up for e-news alerts.
- (b) frequently visiting the Shape Your City webpage.
- (c) becoming involved in Public Participation Activities.
- (d) reviewing reports to ensure feedback is accurately reflected.
- (e) seeking out information to learn more about projects.
- (f) engaging in a constructive and respectful manner aligned with the City's Public Participation Terms of Engagement as posted on the City's website.

4.6 This policy and the associated procedure shall be reviewed once every four years.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.1 Council

- (a) Receive, review and adopt this policy and any recommended amendments.
- (b) Promote and support Public Participation.

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- (c) Consider information obtained through Public Participation in the Decision-making Process.

5.2 City Manager

- (a) Implement this policy, which includes ensuring that appropriate procedures are established.
- (b) Report the outcome of Public Participation Activities to Council. Data may be themed and summarized; however, raw data will also be provided to Council after being appropriately anonymized and redacted in alignment with applicable privacy legislation and the City’s Public Participation Terms of Engagement as posted on the City website.



# Procedure

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City Clerk	City Manager	
<b>Prepared by:</b> Communications, Engagement and Marketing		

## 1. DEFINITIONS

All defined terms in Public Participation Policy 0192-2026 (“Policy 0192-2026”) apply to this procedure wherever used.

- 1.01 **Public Participation Framework** means a resource created and maintained by Communications, Engagement and Marketing describing how the City approaches and carries out Public Participation, including references to Policy 0192-2026 and this procedure.
- 1.02 **Public Participation Plan:** means a plan that follows the dimensions of meaningful engagement and indicators ensuring plans are purposeful, proactive, inclusive, and transformative which identifies the: public participation objectives, decision-making process to be followed, mechanisms/techniques to be employed, resources available and evaluation measures.
- 1.03 **Statutory Requirement** means anything that is required by federal, provincial or local statute, including but not limited to the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), federal or provincial law or regulation, City bylaw or policy.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 2.01 Administrative Committee

- (a) Consider information obtained through Public Participation in making recommendations to City Council.
- (b) Refer the findings of Public Participation Activities to City Council to support the Decision-making Process.
- (c) Approve this procedure to implement Policy 0192-2026.

### 2.02 City Manager/Managing Directors

- (a) Ensure resources are in place to support Policy 0192-2026 and its application through this procedure.
- (b) Direct the development of appropriate Public Participation Activities.
- (c) Consider information obtained through Public Participation in the Decision-making Process.

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2.03 Directors/Managers

- (a) Work with Communications, Engagement, and Marketing to determine which projects and initiatives require or would benefit from Public Participation.
- (b) Consider information obtained through Public Participation in the Decision-making Process
- (c) Maintain Interest-holder lists for use in department specific initiatives.

2.04 Project Leads

- (a) Create, implement and report on Public Participation Activities and Public Participation Plans that adhere to Policy principles and the Public Participation Framework.
- (b) Serve as the lead for Public Participation Activities with support from CEM.
- (c) Maintain responsibility for leading execution of the Public Participation Plan and the project as well as providing adequate information, touchpoints, and operational communication channels for internal information sharing and collaboration.

2.05 Communications, Engagement, and Marketing (CEM)

- (a) Provide advice and support to departments in the creation of Public Participation Plans that are based on the principles of Policy 0192-2026.
- (b) Create and maintain a Public Participation Framework for the City.
- (c) Maintain an Interest-holder list for use in broad corporate initiatives.
- (d) Monitor and evaluate Policy 0192-2026 and this procedure at least once every four years.

3. PROCEDURES

3.01 Employees and consultants managing projects on behalf of the City are expected to comply with Policy 0192-2026 and this procedure.

3.02 The City’s Public Participation Framework guides the development of public participation plans. The framework follows IAP2 standards and includes:

- (a) Guidelines for when to do public engagement.
- (b) Processes and standards for employees to follow when developing their public participation plans, including:
  - (i) Planning templates
  - (ii) Spectrum level assessment matrix
  - (iii) Event inclusivity checklist
  - (iv) Reporting templates (What We Heard, What We Decided, etc.)

- (c) Shape Your City project standards including engagement goals, timelines, and how engagement will influence the project. All information and public feedback are housed in one location.
- (d) A toolkit and specialist support for public participation and training resources.
- (e) A centre-led coordination process to optimize scheduling and identify opportunities to combine efforts.
- (f) Key indicators to measure effectiveness of engagement activities.
- (g) IAP2's Spectrum of Public Engagement, which is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process.
- (h) IAP2's Code of Ethics, which is a set of principles that guides practitioners in their practice of engagement, enhancing the integrity of the process.
- (i) The Engagement Planning and Assessment Tool, which is an assessment guide for decision makers to identify gaps and measure success, features four dimensions with 24 indicators and a scoring rubric.