

## **Public Engagement Charter and Toolkit**

### **Background**

The topic of affordable housing and public engagement attracts considerable attention from neighbourhoods and nonprofit housing providers. While many affordable housing projects are welcomed by communities, many are opposed out of fear or uncertainty. Often residents, developers, and City staff hold different perspectives on who has the right to provide input into the process of change that affordable housing developments can bring to neighbourhoods.

Over the past several years, Administration has tried different pre-application public engagement processes to challenge misconceptions and foster community support for affordable housing developments. The public engagement concepts being employed stem from the City's "Finding Common Ground" research and consultation concepts that aim to provide a space for constructive dialogue and discussion between community interests, the City, and housing providers.

Most will agree that public engagement is an important element of the development process, including affordable housing. Finding Common Ground and other related initiatives have set a strong foundation for public engagement processes in Edmonton.

Despite the efforts made over the years on the part of Administration, Council, and nonprofit developers to develop effective processes of engagement there remain a number of unresolved questions and tensions. For example:

- What public engagement activities and models lead to successful affordable housing developments? Are there public engagement best practices that should be used for future projects?
- What is an appropriate scale and scope for public engagement for affordable housing projects? What are the key decisions that can be informed by stakeholder input?
- Should affordable housing be treated differently than other types of development? If so, when and why?
- What is the City of Edmonton's role in supporting and/or directing public engagement for affordable housing projects developed by external organizations?
- Can engagement processes be managed in a way that does not create unnecessary risk and costly time delays for developers?
- What are the expectations for public engagement between different stakeholder groups, including neighbourhood residents, housing providers, City Administration, and other community organizations?

### **The Public Engagement Charter**

The City's Public Engagement Services unit will work with Housing staff and others to develop a consistent and effective affordable housing public engagement approach that works to build trust between key stakeholders, the public, City Council and Administration.

Using best practices, findings and lessons learned from the affordable housing public engagement pilots (e.g. Keheewin, Ogilvie Ridge, Lendrum, Londonderry) and the "Finding Common Ground" research, this process will help create clarity and consistency in public engagement undertaken for affordable housing projects, and address some of the key challenges faced by these projects.

It will also create a shared understanding about:

- the value of public engagement;
- how a rights-based approach to affordable housing (like that being pursued by the Government of Canada's National Housing Strategy) impacts public engagement;
- what makes good public engagement; and,
- how we can work together to make it better.

The Public Engagement Charter will articulate what role the City of Edmonton may play in different affordable housing development scenarios (e.g. the City provides land or funding, the City is aware of the development but is only involved as a regulator, or where the City is not involved at all), what decisions (e.g. site selection, type of affordable housing) need to be made during the process of affordable housing development, who should provide input into those decisions (e.g. residents, developers, Administration, Council), and how much influence they should have on those decisions (e.g. Advise, Refine, Create, Decide).

In order to ensure integration across the City of Edmonton, the Charter development process will include Administration representatives from Communications, Marketing, Housing, Public Engagement, Intergovernmental Relations, and Planning Coordination.

Once Administration has completed a DRAFT Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter, Council members, external stakeholders, and interested community members will be invited to review the Charter and provide input.

The completed Affordable Housing Charter will then be used to guide the development of an Affordable Housing Public Engagement Toolkit.

## **The Public Engagement Toolkit**

The Public Engagement Toolkit will be co-created by Public Engagement Services and Housing with support from Communications and Marketing. It will be developed from a user-centred design perspective and will consider a range of end users including residents, community groups, City Council, Administration and developers. End users will be engaged in the design and development of the toolkit and it will be tested with a variety of audiences before being finalized.

The toolkit will follow the City of Edmonton's new approach to public engagement and other best practices and provide end users and audiences with step by step guides to develop, implement, and participate in effective public engagement plans based on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Charter

## **Timeline**

### Public Engagement Charter

- Third/Fourth Quarter, 2018:
  - Internal Charter development of draft charter
  - Affordable Housing Developers review and input to draft charter and input Community review and input to draft charter
  - Other orders of government and local housing organizations and interest group interviews
- First/Second Quarter, 2019:
  - Write and finalize charter based on above inputs

### Public Engagement Toolkit

- Second/Third Quarter, 2019: print versions available
- Third Quarter, 2019: online version available
- Third Quarter, 2019: Present Engagement Charter and Public Engagement Toolkit to City Council

## **Resourcing Requirements**

### Public Engagement Charter - Development

- No additional resources required

### Public Engagement Toolkit - Development

- No additional resources required.

### Public Engagement Charter and Toolkit - Implementation

It is recommended that the charter and toolkit are brought to life through the development of an Affordable Housing Public Engagement Program that oversees the creation and execution of Charter aligned Public Engagement Plans.

The Affordable Housing Public Engagement Program will be responsible for refining, maintaining, and increasing the clarity and consistency in public engagement processes developed through the Public Engagement Charter. The Program could also be responsible for maintaining and updating the toolkit and providing support to the various toolkit users (Administration, developers, residents, community groups).

We estimate that development and maintenance of the program would require two FTEs. We recommend that hiring of staff to develop and maintain the Program is undertaken in cooperation with Public Engagement Services.

