

Examples of public engagement - additional costs, opportunity costs, benefits

Example of inflationary costs related to project delays - 23 Avenue and Gateway Boulevard Interchange

In the early 1980s, the area south of 23 Avenue and east of Gateway Boulevard was primarily zoned for industrial use. During the 1990s, a series of events took place that accelerated development in the area and placed pressure on the City to address the rapidly evolving transportation needs.

In September 2003, Council approved the concept plan for the 23 Avenue Project, with construction to be completed by the end of 2006.

The Edmonton economy was growing rapidly during this construction phase, with significant inflation to the cost of labour and materials experienced every month. Project delays and costs caused costs to increase.

Construction began on the two bridges that would take 23 Avenue traffic over Gateway Boulevard and Calgary Trail (as well as the railway tracks), and allow for the free flow of traffic beneath. All structures were opened to traffic in September 2010, with the final paving on Gateway Boulevard and Calgary Trail completed in 2011.

Additional consultation was added to the project to address issues experienced by nearby landowners who faced changes to access to their property, following a change in the project. The project was delayed by consultation with a landowner adjacent the project to resolve access, pipeline and land compensation matters. The extension of non-statutory hearings to support project changes increased the public engagement process by three months, resulting in a portion of overall cost escalation due to inflation experienced during the project delays.

Example of opportunity costs - Strathearn Heights Apartments Rezoning

The Strathearn Heights Apartments is a site with tremendous redevelopment potential in a thriving mature neighbourhood. Since 2008, it has been the subject of intense discussion regarding how it could be redeveloped to take advantage of the opportunity without negatively impacting area residents. Due to various circumstances such as approval of the LRT Valley Line and land acquisition by the developer, there have been multiple rezoning applications.

Traditional engagement methods - public meetings - were undertaken to support the rezoning efforts for the first application, resulting in an adversarial process. In 2013, the City invited adjacent landowners, community and business stakeholders to participate in an innovative public participation process by forming a community working group. Working collaboratively, the group added

value to the eventual rezoning application which had significant, broad-based support. It was eventually approved by Council, with participants speaking up at the Public Hearing, sharing their positive experience of the process and support of the application.

The process resulted in additional staff hours and community time. This example can be considered opportunity costs associated with initial engagement processes failing to lead to resolution in a more timely manner. Had a collaborative approach been taken from the outset, it is likely that this rezoning process would have had more positive results earlier, with the community understanding the planning process and participating in the changes.

Example of benefit where public engagement gave the City an improved product - Clareview Community Recreation Centre

The Clareview Community Recreation Centre began as a part of the Medium Term Recreation Facility and Sports Field Plan. As that plan developed, extensive consultation and public opinion research was undertaken to identify what activities should be included in the future Clareview Recreation Centre. Following this strategy stage, as Clareview moved into concept planning, focus groups with user representatives were held to create the functional program detailing activities in the centre. Using this strong, well-researched foundation, preliminary designs were presented to the public in two stages over a number of months.

The first stage focused on providing background information and initial ideas about what the facility could look like, such as facility massing and the proposed recreation centre elements. The second phase reviewed the feedback that was received in phase 1 and how it had been incorporated into the final design. Those involved with the project reflect that the success of the project had to do with strong foundational information as well as clear and timely communication with community and stakeholders.

Feedback from user groups indicate satisfaction with the customized design of the facility to support a range of recreational programs as well as amenities to serve as a community hub. Providing robust opportunities for partners to participate and remain engaged through the planning of the facility allowed for a better product and the addition of harmonious space for the Edmonton Public Library, Edmonton Catholic Schools' Cardinal Collins High School Academic Centre, and the Clareview Multicultural Centre. The progression from the approval of the Medium Term Plan to start of construction (about 4 years), was seen by community members as relatively rapid due to their continued involvement in all of the project stages.

Example of lack of initial public engagement slowing a project and necessitating additional expenditure - Scona Road Realignment

City Council approved funding for the Scona Road project, which included roadway realignment and widening to improve safety of merging and cornering, roadway surface reconstruction, and installation of a noise wall between traffic and housing along the road.

Public engagement relating to these elements of the project was very limited, mainly focused on providing information about the noise wall component.

Additional funding was provided to implement an adjacent project, to rehabilitate 99 Street from 82 Avenue to Saskatchewan Drive. With a goal to minimize traffic disruption and complete all reconstruction of 99 Street and Scona Road in the same season, public engagement relating to 99 Street reconstruction was not conducted. Although this accelerated the project, the lost opportunity to consult with residents and businesses along 99 Street was unable to incorporate streetscape ideas into the reconstruction. Subsequent consultation was required to incorporate "complete Streets" principles in this roadway project.

.