

# City Council Policy on Open City Initiative

Development and Public Engagement - Policy C581

## Recommendation:

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

That City Policy C581 - Open City Policy, as set out in Attachment 1 of the March 24, 2015, Corporate Services report CR\_1444, be approved.

## Report Summary

**This report provides Executive Committee with information regarding the creation of a City Policy on Open City and the process that was undertaken in collecting formative and summative feedback regarding this Policy.**

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 2, 2015, Agenda Review Committee meeting, the Corporate Services report CR\_1444 was postponed to the March 24, 2015, Executive Committee meeting.

At the June 17, 2014, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report through Executive Committee with a draft Council Policy incorporating the results of the public consultation process and the goals and objectives of the Open City Initiative.

## Report

### **Background**

Edmonton is aspiring to fulfill its role as a preeminent global city: Innovative, inclusive and engaged. Building such a city takes foresight, planning and active participation by its citizens. The Open City Initiative outlines the principles, key goals and objectives that provide context and direction as to how the City of Edmonton will become a more connected and transparent organization.

### **Development of the Open City Policy**

Beginning in January 2014, the City of Edmonton undertook a revision of its open government practices with an approach that had a uniquely municipal focus. The Open City Initiative was developed based on international best practices, the established open government practices at the City, and informal input from the community.

Corporate Services presented the Open City Initiative to Executive Committee on June 17, 2014. As a result of this presentation, Executive Committee requested the creation of, and public engagement on, a Council Policy on Open City, to be presented back to Committee in Q1 of 2015.

In the formative stages of the Open City Policy, the City of Edmonton undertook a variety of public engagement activities to gather input, including a number of collaborations with other individuals or organizations working to further the values of the open government movement.

Since June 2014, a variety of activities have taken place in order to aid the creation and socialization of the proposed Open City Policy. These activities have included:

1. Open Gov 2.0 Federal Consultations - August 27, 2014. In collaboration with the Government of Canada and the Province of Alberta, the City of Edmonton sought input on the Open City Policy through a forum with regional stakeholders on priorities for advancing Open Government. This event was attended by the President of the Federal Treasury Board and provided an opportunity for Edmonton to reinforce its broader role in the Open Government community, not only developing local municipal initiatives but contributing to the expansion of these initiatives in public practice.
2. Richard Pietro's Across Canada Open Government Tour - September 3, 2014. The City of Edmonton hosted a forum for active local engagement groups (e.g. the Wayfinding Project) and local business to come together and discuss the impacts of transparency and engagement in building the local community. Administration had the opportunity to talk about Open City beyond the basic impacts of Open Data, and hear from Edmontonians how they typically have experienced government interactions.
3. Right to Know, Edmonton Forum - September 25th, 2014. Right to Know is an annual national event. Each year, municipalities hold integrated satellite events that open up discussion between local community leaders and public organizations to drive transparency and engagement opportunities. Representatives of Open City presented on the Open City Initiative, the City of Edmonton's progress and vision for open data, and the key role of information management in structuring and pushing out information into the public domain.
4. Open Government Community of Practice - October 7, 2014. The City of Edmonton presented to the Open Government Community of Practice on the growth and creation of the Open City Initiative, the foundational role of open data in Edmonton and the culture shift that has grown throughout. This community of practice includes administrative leaders from municipalities across Canada who meet to exchange knowledge and experience for the betterment of the wider open government community. The community provided feedback and perspectives related to the Goals, Objectives and Actions included in the Open City Initiative.
5. Startup Week, Edmonton - October 20, 2014. The City of Edmonton participated in a panel hosted by Startup Edmonton discussing "How Big Companies are Thinking Like Startups Too". This was an opportunity for the City to interact with startup and business community in Edmonton and share City plans to break down barriers and interact much

more closely with those groups, supporting them as they grow and inviting them to do business with their local government.

The ideas and themes generated throughout the above forums confirmed that the Principles, Goals and Objectives outlined in the Open City Initiative reflected the sentiment and priorities of the wider open government community. Specifically, participants endorsed the direction to:

- > release more accessible data;
- > engage the public in decision making;
- > leverage technology innovations in diversifying how the City provides services; and,
- > improve accessibility to City information and services through networks and tools.

Taking into account the discussion and feedback from these consultation events, the City drafted an Open City Policy which encompassed the principles of Open City. The draft Policy was shared with over 1800 Edmontonians in an October 2014 survey from the Edmonton Insight Community. The survey asked detailed questions regarding policy language and each stream of the Open City Initiative, and respondents' feedback was used to further refine the Open City Policy.

Alterations to the policy focused primarily on simplifying language (e.g., "private where appropriate" in place of the lesser understood "private by design"), and emphasizing the priority of those elements indicated to be most important to respondents. The five most frequently occurring suggestions were incorporated in the re-drafted Open City Policy as represented below:

**Emphasis on citizen and community involvement in decision-making:**

This is addressed through the addition of the action statement that the City will "Create opportunities for Edmontonians to interact with the City to impact the design, development, and delivery of public programs, services and policies".

**Embrace openness in all City employees' and elected officials' actions:**

This is addressed in the procedural statement which expresses that "The City Manager will have the responsibility to design and implement relevant Open City strategies, roadmaps, and directives as required".

**Clarify how privacy will be protected:**

This is addressed through the action statement that the City will "adhere to relevant policy, legislation and leading practices related to the privacy and security of personal information".

**Specify how the City will ensure all practices and processes will adhere to Open City Principles:**

This is addressed in the procedural statement which expresses that "The City Manager

will have the responsibility to design and implement relevant Open City strategies, roadmaps, and directives as required”.

**Use understandable language:**

This is addressed throughout the Policy document to ensure a broadened understanding of the concept. For example, the phrase “private by design” was replaced with the words "private where appropriate" in order to avoid using common government terminology which is inaccessible to constituents.

These five points are examples of how public input from this process further refined the draft Open City Policy that is presented for approval in Attachment 1. The City believes that this Policy reflects both the direction initially sought by Council and the feedback provided by the public. The Open City Policy will provide the City of Edmonton with the clarity of direction required to advance the objectives of the Open City Initiative supporting an innovative, inclusive and engaged city.

**Policy**

This recommendation complies with the City of Edmonton's Public Involvement Policy C513.

**Corporate Outcomes**

This report contributes to the corporate outcome *"Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play"* as an open city creates opportunity for diverse input and participation, inviting citizens to play a larger role in shaping their community and enabling social and economic growth.

An open city is a connected city. Philosophically, an open city is connected and responsive to the goals and objectives of an informed and engaged public, who in turn are partners consulted in setting the goals and objectives of the city.

**Justification of Recommendation**

Approval of this policy will provide Council direction to Administration on the application of the Open City principles across the corporation.

**Attachments**

1. Open City Policy
2. Open\_City\_Initiative
3. Open City Policy Consultation - What we Heard

**Others Reviewing this Report**

L. Cochrane, General Manager, Community Services  
T. Burge, Acting Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer

R. G. Klassen, General Manager, Sustainable Management  
D. Wandzura, General Manager, Transportation Services