

CITY COUNCIL ORIENTATION: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

Recommendation

That the December 17, 2025, Office of the City Manager report OCM03264, be received for information.

Requested Action

Information only

ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle

ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals

CONNECTED

This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.

Healthy City

City Plan Values

BELONG

Corporate Business Plan

Serving Edmontonians

Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships

- C593D - Public Engagement Policy

Related Council Discussions

- April 2, 2025, Office of the City Manager report OCM02805, Public Engagement Policy Renewal

Executive Summary

- Orientation training on public participation is mandated in section 201.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- Edmonton is a relationship-based city and public engagement and public opinion research play an important role in building relationships with the community.
- The foundation of public engagement is supported by City Policy C593D - Public Engagement Policy, which was approved by Council in April 2025.
- Public engagement offers the opportunity for the City to deepen its understanding of the interests, values and perspectives of the public. The focus is on quality, inclusivity, and supporting informed decision-making, not achieving a specific participation number.

CITY COUNCIL ORIENTATION: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

- The Public Engagement Spectrum provides clarity on the level of influence in decision making residents and groups have while the 6 Step Public Engagement Process explains how.
- Public opinion research is a discipline that relies on solicited feedback, scientific design, and rigorous statistical methods to generate statistically reliable insights and support unbiased, data-driven decision making.
- The City of Edmonton is a member of the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC) and it is committed to ethical and high-quality research.
- Edmonton Insight Community (EIC) is City's online survey panel of 25,000 Edmontonians who represent diverse demographic groups.
- Survey results from EIC surveys have been proven to provide reliable estimates of Edmontonians perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, and are widely used to develop and improve programs and services, design social marketing campaigns to shift behaviours, and ultimately improve livability or contribute to revenue generation.

REPORT

Section 201.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*, mandates that a municipality must offer, and each councillor must attend, time-sensitive orientation training on public participation. This requirement will be met following Council receiving this report for information.

Edmonton is a relationship-based city. Public engagement and public opinion research play an important role in building relationships with the community. Through public engagement and research, residents are able to participate in the decisions made about City policies, programs and services.

While research and engagement information is critical for Council decisions, Administration recognizes it is not the only information that is considered. Other information such as financial, environmental and social data, technical information, as well as the overall policy and political landscape revealed by unsolicited input from social media or phone calls and emails help to develop a wider view. However, it is important to note that Administration does not include unsolicited input in its public engagement and research reporting, only information it has sought through formal processes.

Public opinion research as a discipline is a subset of market research. They share the same tools and statistically relevant methodologies to understand needs, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. The City of Edmonton defines public engagement as a process that creates opportunities for people to contribute to decision-making by City Council and Administration about the City's policies, programs, projects and services and communicates how public input is collected and used.

One of the ways Administration reports back is through reports to Council, specifically in the Community Insights section and through What We Heard and public opinion reports that are provided as attachments. These documents are also available on edmonton.ca for a variety of past program and service decisions.

CITY COUNCIL ORIENTATION: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

Public Engagement

The foundation of public engagement is supported by City Policy C593D - Public Engagement Policy. It is a Council Policy and is one of the few policies that the *Municipal Government Act* mandates the City must have and review every four years. In April 2025, the policy was updated and approved by Council. It acknowledges the City's current fiscal realities and continues to set the direction for public engagement, helping to create the conditions for the City to listen and learn from all residents. The Public Engagement Framework¹ operationalizes the Public Engagement Policy, describing the City's approach and commitment to public engagement. It includes the six step Public Engagement Process, (Identification, Strategy, Planning & Design, Implementation & Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting and Evaluation) which is used to deliver meaningful, consistent, and outcomes-driven public engagement at the City. In general, the Policy governs when and why engagement occurs, while the Framework guides the how.

One of the fundamental tenets of successful engagement is that the City works authentically to hear from all relevant voices, especially those that are often underheard, and to meet people where they are. Public engagement is not only limited to gathering feedback from the general public the City intentionally seeks input from diverse parties and community groups who may be impacted and affected differently and it is committed to proactively identifying barriers to participation and working to reduce them. Engagement is about quality, inclusivity, and supporting informed decision-making. It is not about achieving a specific participation number.

One way the City invites people into authentic and meaningful engagement opportunities is via the Public Engagement Spectrum. The spectrum identifies what role and level of influence the City is asking Edmontonians to play in the decision-making process, the purpose for engaging them, and the commitment in terms of what will be done with their input. Being clear about what the City is asking of people and what it is committed to doing builds relationships and trust.

There are many ways that Edmontonians can engage with the City. Engagement opportunities at the City are listed on edmonton.ca under the Public Engagement Calendar. Once Administration identifies from whom the City wants to solicit input, it designs creative ways to engage with them. No matter which tool is used for obtaining input, Administration always reports back what was heard from participants and how Administration used or did not use that information in decision making or crafting a recommendation to Council.

This year, the City received the 2025 International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Canada's Core Values Award for Organization of the Year. This award recognizes leaders in the profession of public engagement and Organization of the Year is given to those that apply IAP2's Core Values in all aspects of their organization and embed them into decision making that features public engagement.

Public Opinion Research

Public opinion research is a unique discipline, and a subset of market research, that uses statistically relevant methodologies and tools to understand needs, perceptions, attitudes, and

¹ City of Edmonton, "Public Engagement Framework." online:
<https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/PublicEngagementFramework.pdf?cb=1665633986>

CITY COUNCIL ORIENTATION: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

behaviours. It relies on solicited feedback, scientific design, as well as statistical methods that generate statistically reliable insights to support unbiased, data-driven decision-making.

Administration utilizes a wide range of public opinion research methodologies, including both quantitative and qualitative tools such as online, phone, mail-in, intercept surveys and focus group discussions, to support the City's research work.

The City of Edmonton is a member of the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC). This demonstrates the City's commitment to ethical and high-quality research that is aligned with industry-leading standards and the CRIC's Public Opinion Research Standards.

The combination of the scientific rigor, statistical relevant methodologies and the industry-leading standards ensures the City of Edmonton consistently delivers highly reliable public opinion and market research insights about Edmontonians needs, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, which is vitally important for unbiased, evidence-based decision-making.

The Edmonton Insight Community (EIC) is the online survey panel of approximately 25,000 Edmontonians who are residents of or who own property in Edmonton. Members represent many different demographic groups. The diversity enables the City to continuously have a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens when we design and implement surveys on the Edmonton Insight Community. At least twice a month, members are invited to complete online surveys on City policies, initiatives, programs, services, and issues. Every time a survey is sent to all members of the community, typically at least 2,000 responses are collected in less than 24 hours.

EIC surveys have been proven to provide reliable estimates of Edmontonians' opinions. EIC survey has been widely used by the Administration as an efficient and cost-effective tool to understand, monitor, or measure progress in Edmontonians' needs, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. Results from EIC surveys have been frequently used to develop and improve programs and services, design social marketing campaigns to shift behaviours, and ultimately improve livability or contribute to revenue generation.

Community Insight

This report explains the public engagement and public opinion research that facilitates Council decision making. The City did not solicit feedback from the public for the development of this report.

GBA+

The City applies a GBA+ to its public engagement and public opinion research activities and intentionally works to mitigate or remove barriers when soliciting input from diverse constituencies.

Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.