

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

Hamilton's Engagement Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THE PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER	3
ENGAGING THE PUBLIC	5
THE ROLE OF RESIDENTS	7
HAMILTON'S ENGAGEMENT CHARTER VISION, MISSION AND CORE PRINCIPLES	9
APPENDIX 1: International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation	17
APPENDIX 2: Glossary.....	18
APPENDIX 3: References.....	20
APPENDIX 4: Members of Hamilton's Engagement Committee.....	21



A child is climbing a large, complex metal playground structure. The structure consists of many interconnected metal poles and beams, forming a lattice-like pattern. The child is positioned near the top of the structure, reaching up towards a spherical metal ball. The background shows a grassy area and some trees, suggesting an outdoor park setting. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey rectangle containing text.

Hamilton's Engagement Committee is recommending that Hamilton City Council:

- A. Make a commitment to engage all of the people of Hamilton in the decisions that impact quality of life by endorsing this Charter's engagement vision, mission, and principles.**
- B. Direct staff to develop a City of Hamilton Engagement Policy based on the vision, mission and principles of this Charter to be implemented by all City staff.**



INTRODUCTION

A Message from Hamilton's Engagement Committee

Hamilton's Engagement Committee (HEC) is a volunteer committee of local residents established by the City of Hamilton in the spring of 2014.

HEC is comprised of over forty members (see Appendix 4) who were selected through an open call process and asked to partner with City staff to give advice about how to actively involve the residents of Hamilton in City Council decisions that impact quality of life.

This Engagement Charter is the result of that call from the City and outlines the key elements to involve residents in decisions made at the City of Hamilton.

HEC members are a diverse group of residents from different age groups, cultural backgrounds, neighbourhoods, and include your friends, neighbours, colleagues, co-workers, and constituents.

Members are united by their passion for Hamilton.

The active involvement of residents in a democracy is vital to Hamilton's growth and success. This community wants a stronger voice in how City government works and a say in decisions that impact quality of life.

Better ways for local government and residents to listen and learn from each other need to be developed. Everyone has a responsibility to work together to make that happen.

This engagement charter is only the first step in creating better ways for residents to engage in decisions that affect their life and their community.



“

Engagement is about involving people in the decisions that affect them.

”

– HEC Member



PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

An engagement charter is a promise. It sets the ground rules for local government on how the City should actively involve its residents in issues that affect their lives.

This is fundamental to living in a democratic society.

Trust and confidence in local government increases when residents are engaged in the decisions that affect them.

Many cities have policies for public engagement. Today, several are taking it a step further by creating engagement experiences that better meets the needs of residents.

A rapidly evolving, diverse community like Hamilton needs an active and engaged population. A variety of engagement tools and strategies will promote greater public engagement and make it easy for residents to participate in civic activities.

Many opportunities need to be created for mutual discussion, problem solving and future planning for Hamilton's growth and success now and in the future.

This Engagement Charter outlines the key points to:

- improve participation in civic activities
- improve interaction and participation between residents, stakeholders, elected representatives, City staff
- create opportunities for making the City of Hamilton and its residents more accessible and accountable to each other

“

Everyone's participation matters.

– HEC Member

”

“

Everyone wants their voice to be heard.

– HEC Member

”



ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

When residents, stakeholders and government are actively involved in co-creating their community, it strengthens civic pride and commitment to making Hamilton a city of choice where people can live, work, play, and learn together.

Engaging Hamilton's residents:

- allows for responsible decision-making through a range of perspectives, experience, and knowledge
- involves sharing ideas in ways that support learning and the creation of sustainable solutions

When making decisions that impact Hamilton, no one person has all of the answers. There is no single way of engagement that will meet the needs of everyone.

Achieving the greatest results through engagement requires:

- different ways of engaging people to tap into the innovation, creativity and wisdom that exists in our city
- access to the right information at the right time
- understanding the decision making process
- understanding how input from residents influences end results



“

Let your pride in your city
prompt you to take action.

”

– HEC Member



THE ROLE OF RESIDENTS

All residents have a responsibility to participate in civic activities that influence quality of life decisions made by those elected to local government.

Residents can be actively involved by responding to opportunities to:

- learn how city government works and being aware of issues
- take steps to be informed on the issues that impact the growth and sustainability of programs and services
- listen with an open mind
- share knowledge and information with friends, family, co-workers, City staff, and elected representatives
- make suggestions for improvements and positive change



“

Involved communities are
empowered communities.
Empowered communities are
strong communities.

– HEC Member

”

“

An open and accessible
government unlocks opportunity.

– HEC Member

”



HAMILTON'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

Vision, Mission and Core Principles

The Vision, Mission and Core Principles in this Charter will:

- a. Confirm for residents, City Council and City staff, the principles of public engagement that will foster and cultivate a city that is:
 - informed
 - involved
 - accountable
 - transparent
 - inclusive
 - engaged
- b. Inform and guide the future development of an **Engagement Policy for the City of Hamilton**. This engagement policy will impact City planning processes going forward. This policy must be implemented by all City staff in order to be effective and successful.
- c. Inform the development of engagement tools to involve the residents of Hamilton. This will be done in a variety of ongoing and future consultation opportunities with residents.



Vision Statement

Our Vision is our dream: **A city where everyone is valued and engaged.**

Mission Statement

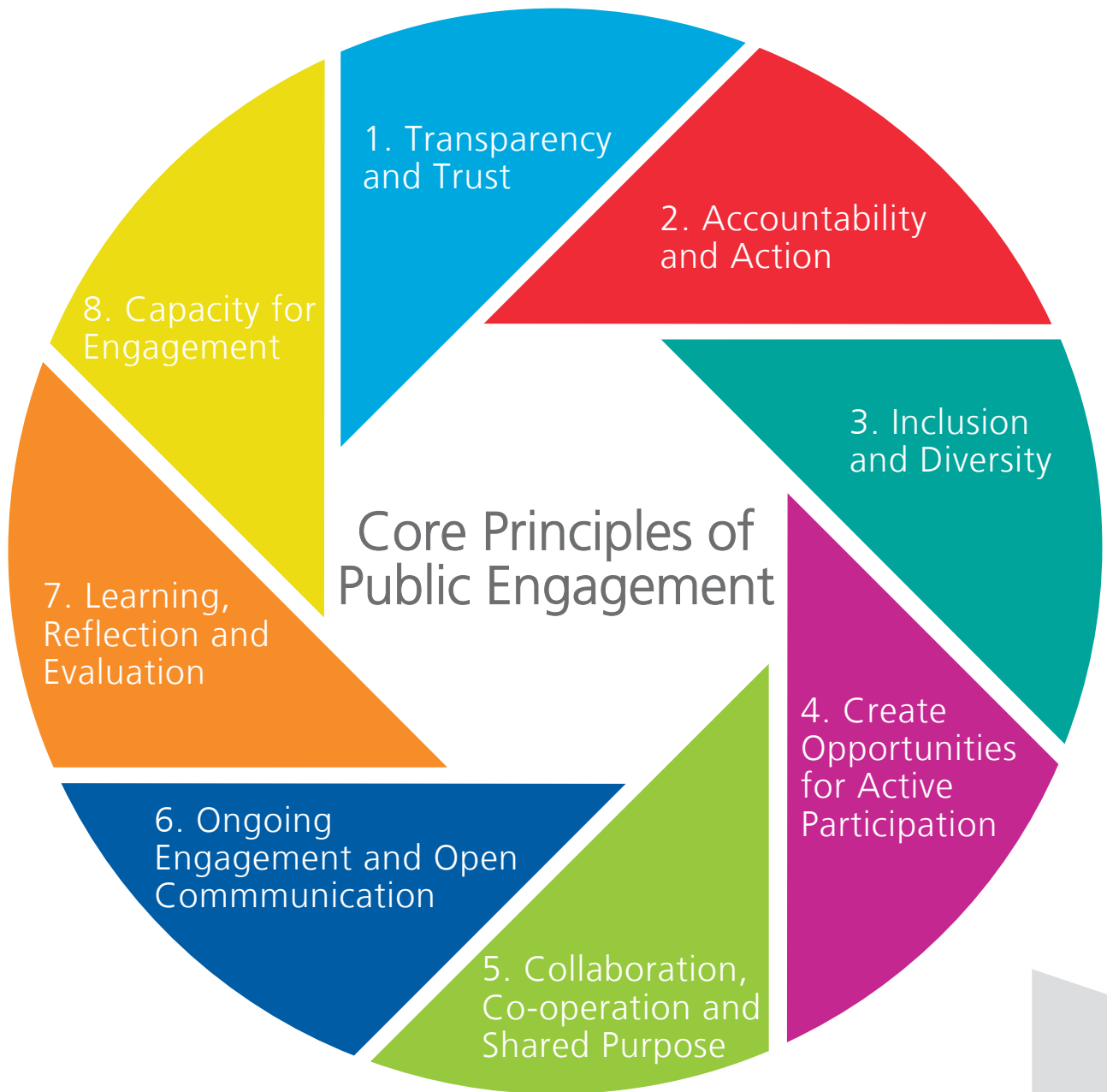
Our Mission describes what engagement between the people of Hamilton and the City of Hamilton will do: **Empower all residents of Hamilton to be actively involved in shaping an engaged and inclusive community.**

Core Principles

The Charter includes the principles and beliefs that should happen in public engagement. These principles set the tone and direction for successful engagement.

While final decisions rest with City Council, open and responsible engagement of residents is based on a belief that those affected by a decision have:

- important contributions to make
- opportunities to influence the final decisions that impact quality of life





When more people are included in making decisions, it improves everyone's understanding of issues, both by those who are making decisions and by the people affected by decisions.

– HEC member



Principle # 1: Transparency and Trust

Being transparent means that:

- decisions are made after wide-spread consultation and discussions with residents
- residents have access to public records
- residents have access to information in a variety of ways so they can be involved in decision making and outcomes
- elected officials and City staff clearly describe and publicly share how and why decisions are made

Trust becomes stronger when residents are given opportunities early and throughout, to be actively involved in their city on an ongoing basis.



Principle # 2: Accountability and Action

Effective engagement occurs when residents, elected representatives, City staff:

- are responsible for their actions, decisions and roles
- have a mutual understanding that everyone has an important role
- actively participate in discussions that result in positive action
- see that their feedback and input is used and has helped direct the decisions made



Transparent processes encourage people to be involved in making decisions about issues that affect them.



– HEC member



Principle # 3: Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion and diversity is supported and strengthened by:

- creating opportunities for residents from different backgrounds to work together through the use of appropriate engagement methods and tools
- recognizing and eliminating barriers to ensure participation is inclusive, diverse and balanced

Collaboration that is inclusive and diverse will enable the successful achievement of goals.



Principle # 4: Create Opportunities for Active Participation

Active participation in decision making happens by:

- providing opportunities for ideas to be openly shared
- seeking, supporting and encouraging all residents to share their ideas
- asking, listening and responding to one another
- including Hamilton's institutions, agencies, service providers, businesses and organizations from across the various private and public service sectors, in the discussions



We all have an equal responsibility –
we are all in this together.

– HEC member



Principle # 5: Collaboration, Co-operation and Shared Purpose

Lasting and positive change happens by:

- supporting and strengthening collaboration amongst all stakeholders
- creating a shared sense of purpose and future direction
- treating all stakeholders as equal partners



Principle # 6: Ongoing Engagement and Open Communication

Clear, consistent and effective communication occurs by:

- providing opportunities for residents to give feedback using different methods and tools
- encouraging and valuing residents' ideas
- recognizing that resident input is a community asset
- providing timely and relevant information so residents can give input in a meaningful way
- sharing the outcomes of community engagement discussions



People are Hamilton's
greatest assets.

– HEC Member



Principle # 7: Learning, Reflection and Evaluation

Learning, reflection and evaluation are valued components of public engagement when:

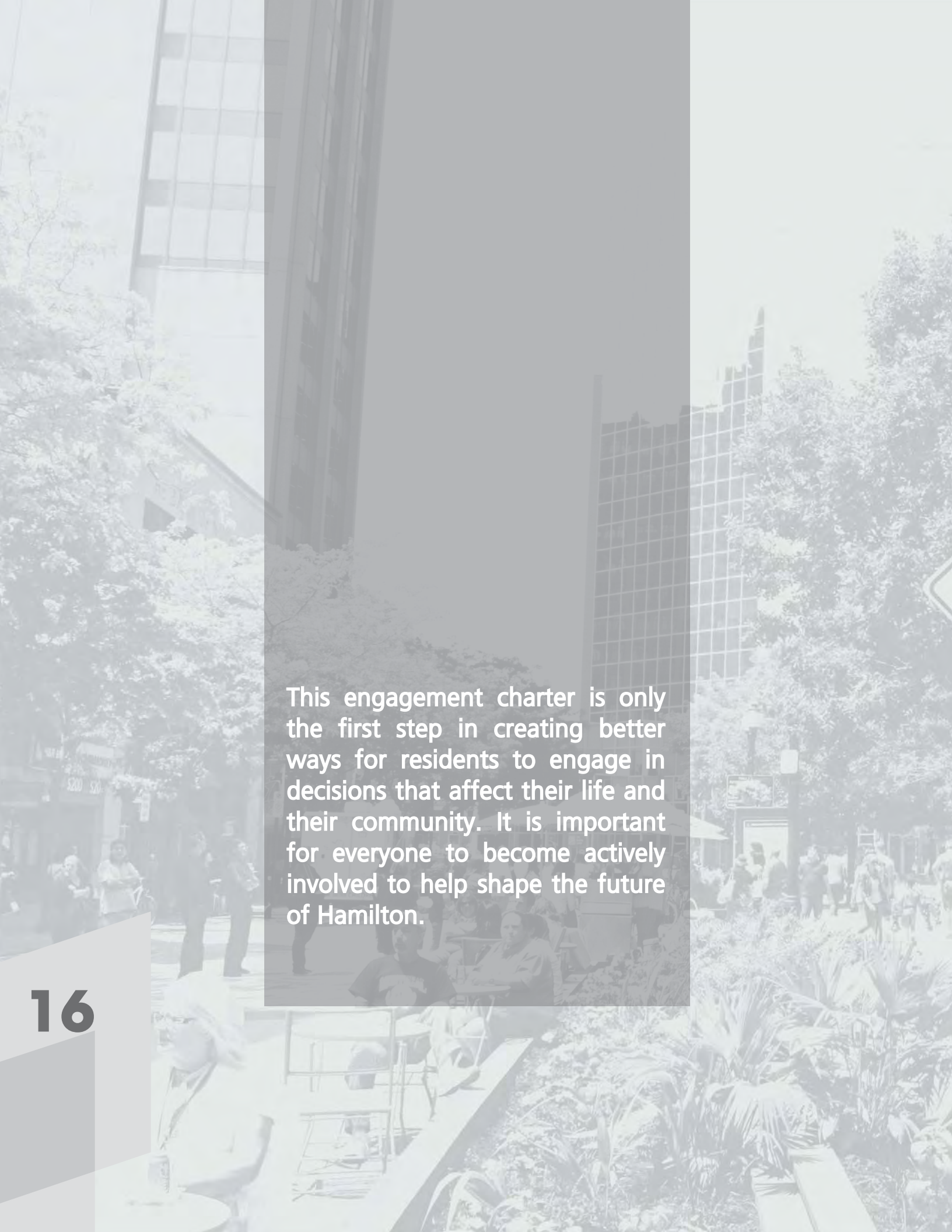
- opportunities for reflective discussion and feedback are created
- learning is applied to create new options
- outcomes are carefully reviewed and regularly evaluated to determine how well the City of Hamilton is engaging with residents and stakeholders



Principle # 8: Capacity for Engagement

City of Hamilton and community capacity to sustain quality public engagement increases when:

- information and engagement opportunities enable all people to share their ideas and participate in proactive conversations
- information is accessible to residents and meet their information needs
- residents have access to a variety of resources that enable them to fully participate



This engagement charter is only the first step in creating better ways for residents to engage in decisions that affect their life and their community. It is important for everyone to become actively involved to help shape the future of Hamilton.

APPENDIX 1:

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation, 2007

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



International Association
for Public Participation

Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fact sheets ▪ Web sites ▪ Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public comment ▪ Focus groups ▪ Surveys ▪ Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops ▪ Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen advisory committees ▪ Consensus-building ▪ Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen juries ▪ Ballots ▪ Delegated decision

APPENDIX 2:

Glossary

Accountability: A commitment to being timely and cost-effective when engaging the public, and to ensure that results and outcomes are consistent with expectations, (for example, demonstrating responsibility to citizens and stakeholders for decisions made, policies implemented, actions or inactions).

Advise: To offer an opinion or suggestion, to recommend, to offer counsel.

Charter: An agreement between and among the City and the community, concerning public engagement with local government that establishes the commitments, responsibilities, and fundamental concepts of this relationship.

Communicate/Inform: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.

Community: Individuals or groups who have an interest in Council's decision-making and who are affected by Council's decisions.

Consult: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions. The appropriate level of engagement when input, views or feedback is sought to better inform a decision-making process, or to help inform the direction of a proposed plan or project.

Collaborate/Co-create: To partner with the public in each aspect of decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. The appropriate level of engagement when decision-making powers are mutually shared with various levels of government, community groups, stakeholders or the public. Support and encourage participants, government, community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.

Collaborative Leadership: An innovative way of building partnerships to solve civic problems too big for anyone to solve alone. Leadership that brings together diverse stake holders to problem solve.

Decision Making: The process followed by City Council to reach decisions on items and recommendations presented in staff reports.

Empower: To place the final decision-making power in the hands of the public, when the community and stakeholders are provided with the skills, information, authority and resources in order to make the final decision.

Engagement: The act of involving the community in the decision making process.

Guidance: to offer instruction, advice or direction.

Inclusion: Every citizen has the right to participate in community engagement regarding issues of concern to them. Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

Involve: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. This level of engagement is selected when the community is included early in the planning process to ensure all concerns and aspirations are both heard and understood.

Mutual respect: Exemplified by listening with an open mind; showing consideration and value for another person's point of view; valuing the role each person plays in engagement processes.

Public: Individuals, residents, not for profits, community, and private/corporate organizations.

Resident: Individual who lives in the City of Hamilton and is entitled to its rights and services, including a right to take an active part in community decision-making.

Stakeholder: An individual, organization, or group that has an interest in an issue, will be or is likely to be affected, or has the ability to affect a decision or outcome. Organizations include non-governmental organizations, government, institutions and businesses.

Transparency: Decision-making processes that are open and clear to the public and participation by the community that is actively encouraged and facilitated. A demonstration of openness when engaging the community so that participants are clear about the reasons they are being involved, the objectives and scope of the project, and what their roles and responsibilities are. Be clear and open about the process, and provide public records of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.

APPENDIX 3:

References

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National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation *Resource Guide on Public Engagement* 2010

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