

# NORTH SHORE

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**JUNE  
2020**

## INTRODUCTION

The intent of the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan Community Engagement Strategy is to identify the guiding principles for engagement, objectives, and tactics/tools to raise awareness and invite meaningful community participation in the review and update of the 2008 North Shore Neighbourhood Plan. The engagement process will include facilitated discussions with residents and stakeholders about their future vision, issues, opportunities, and key priorities to address on the North Shore.

Currently, the Community Engagement Strategy is a draft, and a final version will be completed in the fall based on community input. Feedback will be gathered via an online survey and at project launch events to be held in September. Seeking public input is crucial as the engagement strategy must cater to the specific needs and preferences of the audiences that it is designed for.

Community input gathered during the engagement process will help inform the vision, goals, objectives, land use policies, and implementation strategy to address future planning needs on the North Shore. Community engagement will be early and ongoing—seeking input at key intervals, and reporting back on what was heard to “close the loop” with participants. As such, the engagement strategy is based on collaboration, transparency, and action. With this commitment, the revised and updated North Shore Neighbourhood Plan will remain alive as an action plan to achieve the community’s goals, objectives and vision for the North Shore.

Since the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan was last updated in 2008, the City has experienced several changes, including population growth and demand for new development. In 2018, Council adopted a revised Official Community Plan (KAMPLAN), which sets the direction for growth and development for the entire city. The review and update of the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan will not only address new changes and land use needs on the North Shore, but also ensure that the new plan is aligned with the goals and vision of KAMPLAN.

The planning process for the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan consists of three phases. Phase 1 consists of conducting background research about the plan area, including demographic, employment, transportation, and land use information. Phase 2 involves the creation of a community vision, and identification of key issues, opportunities, and priorities to address in the plan. Phase 3 will consist of developing policy directions, development guidelines, a draft, and a final plan to be completed by the end of 2021.



*Figure 1: North Shore Neighbourhood Plan Project Time Line*

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT**

Engagement of the public and stakeholders in neighbourhood planning, policy, and urban design involves more than sharing information or reporting out on the activities of planners and policymakers. Instead, engagement is a process founded on collaboration, where people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives are actively involved in identifying issues, opportunities, and priorities to address. This process begins by identifying a collective community vision through engagement, which represents the future desired state of where the community wants to be.

Best practice for engagement stresses early, ongoing, and meaningful engagement in the process rather than token involvement. While broad and “light” forms of engagement (such as surveys, online discussion forums, and newsletters) are effective for reaching a broad audience, more substantive “deep dive” opportunities are necessary.

Most importantly, once a diverse and substantial portion of the population has been meaningfully engaged, the input provided must be summarized and considered in the development of new policies. While the public and stakeholders do not “hold the pen” on their own, because the research and technical knowledge of staff also substantively influence policy development, the input gained and ideas shared must be shown to have influenced the evolution of new policy. As a result, an important component of the engagement strategy is “closing the loop” with participants to show how input influenced policy development. Closing the loop leads to increased trust with local government and more support for evolving policies.

The City of Kamloops has already committed to this kind of meaningful engagement. The engagement strategy will reflect the following principles of engagement as adopted as Council policy in January of 2014:

### **1. Careful Planning and Preparation**

Through adequate and inclusive planning, the City will ensure that the design, organization, and process serve both a clearly-defined purpose and the needs of the participants. A variety of both traditional and innovative tactics will be employed to solicit meaningful input.

### **2. Inclusion and Demographic Diversity**

The City will equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and legitimacy. Geographic, technological, social, financial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic factors will be considered in the design of the participatory process.

### **3. Collaboration and Shared Purpose**

The City will support and encourage participants, government, community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.

### **4. Openness and Learning**

The City will help all involved listen to each other, explore ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, and learn and apply information in ways that generate new options. Plain language will be used and clarity of information will be stressed.

### **5. Transparency and Trust**

The City will be clear and open about the process and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.

### **6. Impact and Action**

The City will ensure each participatory effort has potential to make a difference and that participants are made aware of that potential. Adequate time will be allocated to engagement

# City of Kamloops

activities to ensure a level playing field of understanding exists to ground dialogue and decision-making.

In addition to these 6 principles, this project will employ a 7<sup>th</sup> that has proven essential to effective and useful engagement. This is the principle of **“going to the people”** with information and opportunities to participate in project activities. This replaces a tradition of local government expecting members of the public and stakeholders to “come to us” and attend events held at City Hall on schedules that do not suit some of the desired audiences.

Living up to these principles requires advance thought, strategic deployment of resources, and creative tactics. The payoff will be increased credibility for the project, along with new ideas, and greater support for the revised plan for the North Shore and for policies and projects that help implement the plan over time.

## ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BC Provincial Health Officer has ordered a ban on all public gatherings in excess of 50 people and developed guidelines regarding physical distancing to avoid further spread of the novel coronavirus. This has an impact on the City’s engagement activities and specifically traditional forms of public engagement, such as open houses and other in-person gatherings. In light of this, the City will use digital/online engagement activities such as online surveys, video conferencing, and the Let’s Talk Kamloops website to engage and ensure the health and safety of Kamloops residents. In addition, the City is exploring ways to host smaller gatherings while maintaining physical distancing in a safe, controlled environment.

## ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES (WHO TO ENGAGE AND WHY THEM)

This section clearly identifies who the engagement effort will try to reach and provides a rationale for the various audiences identified. The following “general engagement objectives” will guide the project:

1. Ensure **extensive and broad awareness** of the project, its timeline, and activities, among citizens from a wide variety of perspectives and from a wide geographic range. This will ensure that all citizens feel the process was open to them and that their input was genuinely sought and valued.
2. Connect the project to a **wide range of stakeholder groups** and their members to show openness to a wide variety of perspectives and to efficiently reach a wide range of individuals. This will draw in individuals who we would not reach otherwise (a list of key stakeholders will be developed during Phase 1 of the project).
3. Ensure that all participants receive some basic baseline information about the North Shore Plan area (including issues and opportunities) so they can provide **informed and constructive input** that influences the evolving policy and decision-making.
4. **“Close the loop”** through community engagement summary reports and reporting back to those involved in the process (i.e., e-mail newsletters, online, etc.). All community engagement summary reports, which provide a snapshot of what input was received and how it is influencing policy development, will be announced publicly and posted on the City’s website. The success of the engagement process is contingent upon closing the loop, because this communicates that as a community we’re making progress on the project and it helps to focus attention and input on the key questions in each phase of the process.

5. Show local government **accountability and transparency** by demonstrating how the input received has been used and has influenced the evolving policy. This relates to reporting back to participants by “closing the loop.”
6. Identify and engage **“hard-to-reach”** audiences such as working families, renters, new immigrants, members of cultural communities, First Nations, and clients of social service agencies. This will enable a wider and more representative set of opinions and ideas to be gathered.
7. Focus on providing creative opportunities for wide and diverse **youth/student input**, as their interest and ideas are essential to forward-looking projects like this. Creative ways to get involved will also encourage younger members of our community to participate, since few of them usually participate in such undertakings. Additionally, featuring their ideas and their networks in project communications will help develop youth leadership for the future.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES (HOW WE WILL ENGAGE)**

According to the International Association for Public Participation, public participation or engagement means involving those who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process. It promotes sustainable decisions by providing participants with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way, and it communicates to participants how their input affects the decision.

There are numerous and varied tools, formats and activities that can be used to support and execute public participation (e.g., public meetings, surveys, open houses, focus groups, workshops and discussion guides, polling, citizen’s advisory committees, social media, online discussion forums) whether these are in-person or digital.

However, the key is to build from initial awareness-raising (you cannot engage people if they do not know about the project) through light education (where you frame the issues, challenges and opportunities) and on to meaningful participation (where there are well-timed and substantive opportunities to provide useful input). This progression is known as the “staircase of engagement,” and it is incorporated into the activities recommended for this project and spelled out below.

Additionally, the tactics and activities mentioned below vary between “light touch” and “deep dive” formats, recognizing that while some people are passionate and ready to spend hours working through policy issues and opportunities, many of the general public will only participate in a limited way and should be offered opportunities to do so.

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The tactics used to solicit meaningful input throughout the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan review and update process must support the following values of public participation:

## 1. To Inform

Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the topic, issues, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

## 2. To Consult

Obtain public input and feedback on issues, alternatives and/or decisions.

## 3. To Involve

Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

## 4. To Collaborate

Partner with the public to solicit input and ideas on critical issues and opportunities, land use scenarios, and other policy responses.

Finally, to “close the loop” with participants, a summary of inputs and how those inputs are influencing policy decisions will be circulated after each phase of engagement. As illustrated below, stakeholder and public input, technical input (from staff), advisory group input, and direction from Council will all inform the development of the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan.

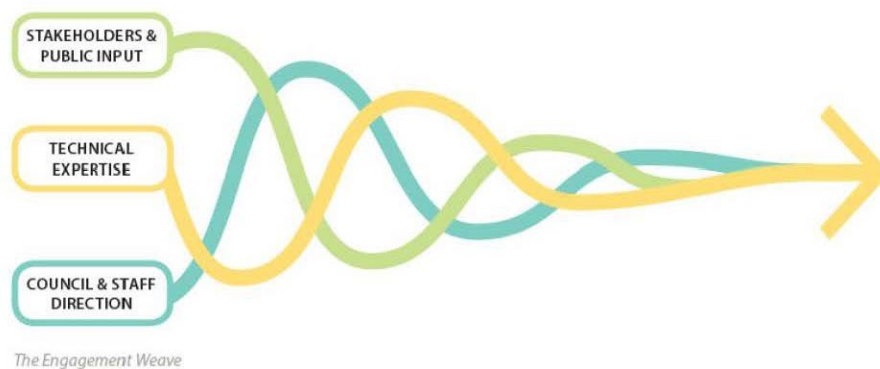


Figure 2: The Engagement Weave

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following project schedule provides an overview of the North Shore Neighbourhood Plan planning process and engagement activities divided into three phases. The proposed (Let's Talk) engagement activities are for illustrative purposes and will be finalized based on stakeholder and public feedback following the project launch events in September.

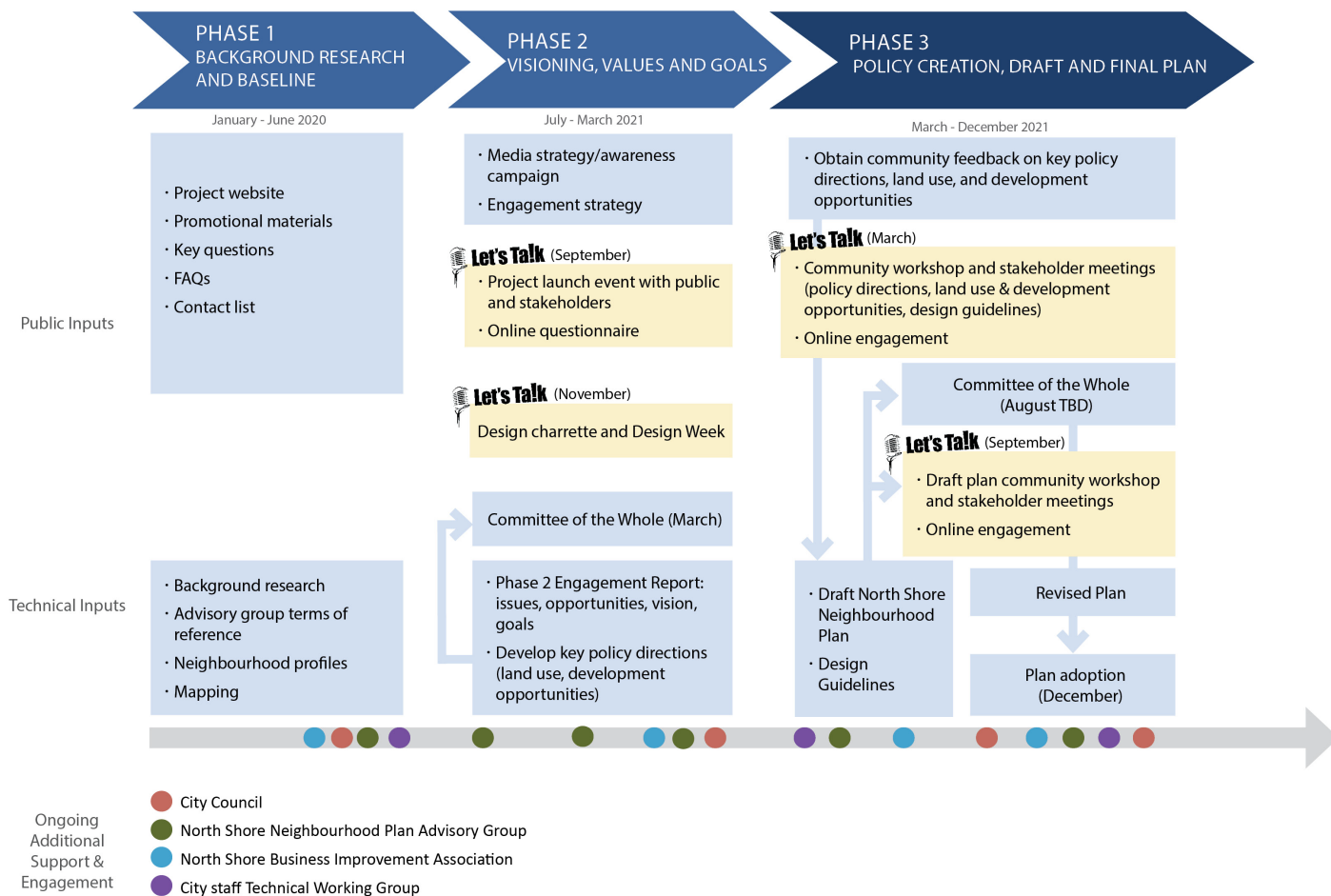


Figure 3: North Shore Neighbourhood Plan Project Process Map



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