



1823 - 2023

Mississippi
Mills

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



September 2023

INTRODUCTION



This strategy has been developed to demonstrate and articulate the Municipality of Mississippi Mills' current and on-going commitment to engaging the community in a meaningful and effective way. We take great care in listening to our community, allowing us to make informed decisions with input and contributions from the public that will enhance the municipality.

Overall, the strategy aims at developing a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered. It outlines our goals and guiding principles for community engagement, providing staff with tools and templates to ensure consistent and active participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of our programs and services.

GOALS

1. Support the Municipality's strategic goals through transparent, accountable, consistent and accessible community engagement.
2. Build engagement opportunities that inspire community stakeholders to help shape Mississippi Mills' future.
3. Make it easy for the community to participate and sustain an informed public.
4. Ensure participation in our Municipality reflects diversity and understanding of community perspectives.
5. Build staff capacity to lead community engagement processes.
6. Continue to build community stakeholder trust in the Municipality's decision-making process.

VISION

That:

- Mississippi Mills' residents are well informed about the functions, actions, and processes of the municipal government.
- The public contributes to the decisions of municipal government by weighing in on issues that impact them, understanding how and why decisions are made.
- Municipal government consults and engages with the public to understand their interests, issues, opinions, and perspectives, and factors that into plans and decisions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Engaging people in an authentic way contributes to robust solutions to challenging issues and encourages participation that supports democratic decision making

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Meaningful engagement values various perspectives and experiences

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS

As Mississippi Mills grows and evolves, we aspire to co-create and embrace new and better engagement processes, tools and tactics based on a sound approach to evaluating success

PROACTIVE, TIMELY & TRANSPARENT

People have enough time and notice to engage early in the process which enables considered input and impact on decision making, and clearly communicates how input will be assessed and used during engagement and reported on afterwards

INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE

Engagement planning and delivery is inclusive and accessible to best serve our Municipality by encouraging two-way conversations and strategies that reach diverse communities and ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued.

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC	TECHNIQUE EXAMPLES
INFORM	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Open houses • Website • Social media • Press release • Advertising
CONSULT	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings
INVOLVE	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how the public input influenced the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberative polling • Site visits
COLLABORATE	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into other decision so the maximum extent possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus building • Participatory decision making • Advisory committees • Task forces
EMPOWER	To place the final decision making in the hands of the public.	We will implement what is decided by the majority vote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballots • Delegated decision

★ IAP2 (www.iap2.org) is the International Association for Public Participation. It provides global standards of practice for public participation/community engagement.

PROCESS FOR ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

WHEN WILL THE MUNICIPALITY ENGAGE?

Where there are specific matters that affect the community and the public can meaningfully influence, the Municipality will engage the community directly to:

- Identify needs and aspirations of the community;
- Inform the creation of a new policy, program, project or service;
- Evaluate an existing policy, program, project or service;
- Fulfill a resolution by Council or a legislated requirement; and/or
- Respond to a community-led request.

WHEN WILL THE MUNICIPALITY NOT ENGAGE?

The Municipality may not engage in the following cases:

- It is a matter of immediate public safety;
- Change is legislated from other levels of government;
- Little to no community interest;
- The Municipality cannot do so in a meaningful way; and/or
- Public input has a low possibility of influencing the decision due to other factors at play.

STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT

When the Municipality does engage, it will follow an established process:

**STAGE 1:
DEFINE**

**STAGE 2:
CREATE**

**STAGE 3:
DELIVER**

**STAGE 4:
SHARE**

STAGE 1: DEFINE

In this initial phase, the Municipality will examine the scope of a decision to help confirm the level of engagement the public will have on a decision or project, time needed for an effective engagement process and the required budget and resources.

- *What decision needs to be made or issue to be examined by the Municipality?*
- *What is the rationale for this project/decision?*
- *What level of community input is necessary for the decision/project?*
- *What can the public influence and what is not negotiable?*
- *Who are the most impacted community members and stakeholders?*
- *What is the history of the issue/project?*
- *What is the timeline and required resources?*
- *What is the level of engagement?*

In this stage, it may become clear that engagement with the community is not necessary or a decision has already been made. In this case, a promotional marketing campaign may be best to explain these reasons.



STAGE 2: CREATE

The Municipality will initiate the community engagement strategy utilizing the tools available, to develop a project-specific engagement plan that aligns with the objectives set out in Stage 1. For example, developing a stakeholder list, identifying who is most effective, and who is interested.

This is the stage where techniques are selected, surveys built, digital channels identified, consultants hired, etc.

- *Determine the most suitable techniques for the level of engagement*
- *Identify timelines that align with community needs and project goals*
- *Use a combination of digital and face-to-face tools*
- *Consider pre-consultation with stakeholders to determine how they wish to be engaged and receive communications*
- *Connect with relevant community groups to assist with outreach*

STAGE 3: DELIVER

This is where engagement activities begin to roll out and the Municipality follows through on the engagement process created. Most important is to ensure the process is fair and objective and clear to all on the purpose and how to get involved.

- *Host engagement activities in the community and/or online*
- *Listen openly and genuinely*
- *Use outside or objective facilitators*
- *Provide clear and up-to-date project information*
- *Promote two-way dialogue*
- *Collect and analyze all community engagement data*
- *Refine goals, methods, communications and marketing as needed throughout the project*

STAGE 4: SHARE

The final step of any community engagement process is responding to the community on what the Municipality heard and how their input was used.

Reporting in a timely manner is crucial to achieving meaningful engagement. Even when participants are not all in agreement on a Municipal decision, reporting back to them is important to demonstrate to all who participated how public feedback was used, why or why not, and project next steps.

For more complex projects which extend over multiple years, regular progress updates should be given to the community to convey transparency, build trust and prepare the community for more engagement leading to final outcome.

STRATEGY BENEFITS

The Community Engagement Strategy is intended to be a living document, which can be continuously updated to address evolving needs.

Having such a strategy promotes a healthy and inclusive community and meets the needs of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. It also provides:

- A corporate vision for community engagement;
- A set of principles to guide engagement;
- A framework to determine the level of engagement;
- A common focus making it easier for residents to participate; and
- Consistently ensuring residents are informed of the outcome.



INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

Due to the distinct experience of historical trauma and the ongoing relationship with Canada, it is imperative that Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Inuit and Métis people – are engaged in a way that promotes Indigenous sovereignty and well-being. Nation-to-Nation engagement is engrained in significant teachings, such as the Three Figure Wampum Belt, which commemorates the sharing of this land with English, French and Indigenous Nations under the governance of Natural Law.

Advancing this Nation-to-Nation engagement is a key priority for the Municipality of Mississippi Mills. The following section outlines principles for engaging with Indigenous communities. The Municipality understands that these are guidelines and not definitive practices that will be appropriate in every situation. This is why it is imperative to continue building relationships with Indigenous communities and seek their advice on appropriate engagement.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

- *Ensure Indigenous Peoples are being engaged in a way that is inclusive, holistic, and promotes Indigenous sovereignty and well-being.*
- *Emphasize the importance of policy, planning and program development being co-created in recognition of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination.*

CULTURAL AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

- *Ensure that staff are properly trained to understand the historical and current colonial context and how these impact surrounding Indigenous communities. Cultural competency training will benefit Mississippi Mills' employees.*
- *Understanding Elders and traditional knowledge keepers are highly valued amongst communities for their wisdom. Through the engagement process, it is critical that consultation with Elders and traditional knowledge keepers maintains respectful and meaningful boundaries.*

CLEAR VISION AND DIRECTION

- *Ensure that the duration of engagement processes is aimed at relationship-building. Engagement is an ongoing, reciprocal, and cyclical process that involves continually holding up the principles of the involved parties.*
- *Understand the importance of mutually beneficial engagement. Benefits must not only consider the Municipality's values and priorities but also that of Indigenous communities impacted.*

COMMITMENT TO EFFECTING LONG LASTING CHANGE

- *The process of engagement should not do any harm and should benefit Indigenous communities.*



EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Municipality strives to ensure the meaningful and equitable inclusion of diverse voices in the community when planning engagement initiatives.

A principles-based approach can serve as a guide to maximize equity in decision-making processes.

Invite participation within an authentic and accountable engagement process

Authentic community engagement shouldn't have pre-determined conclusions or outcomes. The Municipality is genuinely interested in the public's input and must set realistic expectations to clarify the scope and degree of influence participants have on the final decision. Follow up with communication and outcomes to foster the public's trust.

Plan early and proactively

Create the plan outlining all timelines, budgets, design, outreach and communication. Address inequities or potential barriers to participation before the public is discouraged from participating.

Engage the internal diversity of the community

Members of the public who share one aspect of their identity or experience might hold different perspectives on an issue and face different barriers to participation. Apply an intersectional approach to hear from diverse community members.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Tailor engagement plans to the context

Plans should be targeted to suit a particular topic, objective, available resources and key audiences. Distribute resources equitably to meet the needs of those who face the biggest barriers to participation.

Commit to ongoing learning and improvement

Once a baseline understanding of inclusive, equitable and accessible engagement practices is established, ongoing evaluation and professional development should be undertaken.

Advance systemic equity

Power inequities and systems of discrimination (including racism, sexism, ableism, etc.) fundamentally limit participation and impact interaction with engagement processes. Work to advance diversity and equity in systems and leadership.

EQUITY TOOL

In its Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Framework, the City of London has created an Equity Tool, which acts as a strategic road map to examine the potential unintentional consequences of the Municipality's decisions on equity-deserving groups. Applied to each project or proposal, it not only encourages the Municipality to consider how to address those inequities but also evaluate and measure the impact we are making.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Community engagement can be more than a specific project or event but an opportunity for ongoing dialogue with the public about current issues, service disruptions, etc.

Many Municipalities are using online community building software, where members of the public sign up and create a profile in order to share information. Many of these

EXAMPLES:

County of Renfrew launched Zensity Engage in July 2023. The County hosts this software and offers it to lower tier Municipalities for use. The Town of Arnprior is currently using it to highlight four projects – Recreation and Parks Master Plan, Sign Bylaw Review and Waterfront Trail Design.

Described as a one-stop online platform to share, discuss and collaborate on creating sustainable solutions for critical issues, challenges and opportunities. It also has the ability to run surveys, produce reports and benchmarking.

Access E11 is another software tool for local governments to interact with citizens. Combines case work, CRM and engagement for citizen issue management and sharing of information. Used by the Town of Arnprior, Township of North Dundas, Augusta Township and others.



WAYS TO COMMUNICATE

- Municipality's social media channels : Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube
- Municipal website
- Posters, flyers, electronic message on digital sign at John Levi Community Centre
- Direct mail – newsletter, brochures, postcards
- Email invitations from staff and/or Council members

TIPS

- Use concept drawings, illustrations, videos to help spread the message
- Use the word “we” to convey how the issue will be solved collectively
- Find community champions and leaders to help with engagement
- Youth are more likely to participate if invited by their peers
- Send information in advance to allow public to read and understand
- Use plain language – avoid jargon, acronyms

NEXT STEPS



GLOSSARY

DIVERSITY

Diversity speaks to the unique qualities and characteristics we all possess. This includes, but is not limited to ethnicity, nationality, culture, ability, birth sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, age and socioeconomic status.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is about creating a culture that strives for equity and respects, accepts and values difference.

RESIDENTS

All people who reside in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills.

COMMUNITY

The entire Municipality of Mississippi Mills or anything that brings groups of people together.

STAKEHOLDERS

The organizations, public and private, and community groups who have a stake in the decision or related interest.

SOURCES

City of Mississauga Community Engagement Strategy

https://www.mississauga.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/21163613/CE_Strategy_Final_Updated_20190725.pdf

City of Guelph Community Engagement Policy

<https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/The-City-Of-Guelph-Community-Engagement-Policy.pdf>

IAP2 International Association for Public Participation Public Participation Spectrum

<https://www.iap2.org>

City of Coquitlam Community Engagement Framework

<https://www.coquitlam.ca/1177/Community-Engagement>

City of Edmonton Public Engagement

https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/public-engagement

City of Niagara Falls Community Engagement Strategy

<https://niagarafalls.ca/pdf/community-engagement/nfall-17-0005-engagement-strategy-final-final-s.pdf>

City of Golden Community Engagement Plan

https://www.cityofgolden.net/media/CommunityEngagementPlan_fillable.pdf