



Comprehensive Community Engagement Plan

JUNE 24, 2026

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Introduction

In 2024, the City Council adopted the Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan as a framework for our community's vision and priorities. The community identified six strategic pillars that reflect Essex Junction's preferred future: Housing and Density, Public Services and Facilities, Economic Development, Transportation and Connectivity, Environment, and Community Engagement. The plan also identifies 18 key actions that build on these pillars. The plan ranks the six pillars and 18 action items by importance and order of implementation over the next five years.

This plan focuses specifically on the Community Engagement and Decision Making pillar. This pillar aims to foster a sense of community and identity by creating an environment of connection and meaningful community dialogue. Ranked fourth in priority, this pillar includes three main actions: Promote Community Vitality, Enhance Community Connectivity, and Create a Comprehensive Community Engagement Plan. This is the first edition of that plan.

The Comprehensive Community Engagement Plan is organized into three main components, each building on the previous element to offer a complete engagement roadmap:

1. Community Engagement Framework: explains what engagement is, the purpose of community engagement, how the City engages with the community, and the roles and responsibilities of the City and community.
2. Community Engagement Goals and Actions: include actions to be taken by the City staff to improve engagement over the next five years.
3. Community Engagement Toolkit: a guide to support City staff in engaging with the community. It provides procedures, tools, and resources for providing meaningful community engagement.

Community Engagement Framework

The City's Community Engagement Framework outlines the City's approach, strategies, and engagement roles. It is built on the idea that everyone has the right to be informed, consulted, and involved. With this Framework, the City hopes to build trust, conduct effective engagement, and foster good governance.

What is Community Engagement?

The City defines Community Engagement as working together with groups of people who share a location, interest, or situation to address issues that affect their well-being.

What is Not Community Engagement?

Engagement does not take away the final decision-making power from the Council, City Manager, or staff. Instead, it helps them make better, more informed, and lasting decisions.

Engagement is different from communication. Communication is typically one-way, where information is simply shared. Engagement is two-way: with information shared, and you are

invited to give feedback or collaborate. That feedback is then used to help make decisions or shape strategies.

How the City Engages with the Community

The City of Essex Junction has adopted the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement to help guide the engagement process. Depending on the scale and scope of the project, program or initiative, community engagement can occur along this spectrum and at various stages in the lifecycle of the project. Smaller projects may only require the inform level of participation, where more complex projects may include increased levels of participation at a variety of key points throughout the project.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	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.

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WHEN THE CITY WILL ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

The City is committed to building relationships and encouraging ongoing participation, not just when a specific project needs input. These efforts lay the groundwork for deeper and more meaningful engagement.

When specific matters arise that affect stakeholders and allow meaningful influence, the City will engage you as early in the process as possible, not after all the decisions have been made. Some examples of project types include city planning, transportation and construction,

recreation programming and planning, climate and emergency preparedness, etc. In these situations, you can expect the City to engage you to:

- Identify your needs and aspirations.
- Inform the creation of new projects, programs, or services.
- Evaluate an existing project, program, or service.
- Fulfill a legislated requirement.
- Respond to a community-led request.

The City is mindful of engagement fatigue. To help with this, we will build on past engagement, coordinate between projects, and consider other community activities to avoid conflicts during busy periods. We'll also give you plenty of time to respond.

WHEN THE CITY WON'T ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

There will be certain topics we don't ask you about, like matters of immediate public safety, when change is legislated by other levels of government, or when change simply isn't possible.

The City may decide not to engage if an issue is technical and not a good fit for public input, there is little or no public interest, or if meaningful engagement is not possible. Sometimes, we may only consult with a small group of people who are most affected.

WHAT WILL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

Creating meaningful engagement takes time, effort, and resources. We use a step-by-step approach to make engagement effective. Sometimes we follow these steps in order, sometimes we will only do some of these steps, and other times we move between them as needed.

Stage 1: **Define**

With the help of the Community Engagement Toolkit, we will establish the scope of the decision and determine if community engagement makes sense.

You can expect us to do some of these things during this stage:

- Communicate the goal of the project in plain language.
- Define what decisions are being made, what kind of input is needed from the community, and how it will influence the project.
- Assess the effects the project will have on you and why the project is important.
- Assess what opportunities exist for meaningful engagement given timelines, resources, and community interest.
- Assess what community data and insights already exist and may be relevant to the decision.
- Determine if engagement is appropriate.
- Set engagement objectives.
- Identify who we need to engage and any common or likely barriers to their participation.
- Identify community leaders and partner organizations.

Stage 2: **Design**

We will develop project engagement plans that align with the engagement objectives set in stage 1.

You can expect us to do some of these things during this stage:

- Determine the most effective ways to reach and engage you.
- Identify timelines that align with your needs and project goals.
- Outline what success looks like.
- Coordinate engagement across projects when it makes sense.
- Review engagement data from other projects to inform the design of new engagement opportunities.
- Make space for trust and relationship-building with individuals from historically underrepresented groups, both within and outside projects.
- Ask you how, when, and where you would like to have conversations with us.

Stage 3: **Deliver**

We will deliver community engagement as outlined in stage 2.

You can expect us to do some of these items during this stage:

- Promote community engagement throughout the project using a variety of channels.
- Plan engagement opportunities you can do on your own time, as well as those that bring people together (in-person and/or virtually).
- Host engagement at many locations, including schools, parks, libraries, businesses, events, and through digital channels.
- Engage in social listening on digital platforms.
- Join other community groups' events and community conversations.
- Host engagement opportunities in accessible venues, in central community areas, and, when possible, in virtual formats.
- Provide asynchronous participation opportunities, such as surveys and online portals, when possible, for those who cannot participate in real-time involvement.
- Use visuals, diagrams, posters, videos, and images to communicate (in addition to words).
- Create interactive engagement exhibits (physical and digital), use pop-up placemaking strategies, or gamify engagement.
- Create opportunities for you to bring your own projects to life.
- Collect and carefully analyze all community engagement data.
- Refine community engagement goals, methods, communications, and marketing as needed throughout a project.
- Engage with you at different phases of a project.

- Be open to changing our communications or engagement approaches if they aren't working.
- Evaluate communications and community engagement.

Stage 4: **Share**

We will share data and insights from community engagement.

You can expect us to do some of these things during this stage:

- Share data and insights with you in plain language.
- Tell you how community engagement, along with other key considerations, informed a recommendation or decision.
- Communicate why a decision or request for input is framed the way it is and how it may affect you.
- Share how a decision is connected to past decisions or approved policy and how it may inform future ones.
- Tell you if, when, and why community feedback did not inform a decision.
- Tell you about the successes and challenges associated with the community engagement opportunity.
- Ask what we might have missed or not heard when sharing community engagement findings.
- Be clear with reports or presentations about what we heard, who we heard from, and how that shaped a recommendation or decision.
- Focus more on the quality and diversity of our engagement than on the number of people we spoke with.
- Provide plain-language, summary versions of final reports and project outputs.
- Share data and insights via the same engagement channels participants used to learn about the project or engage, to cultivate trust, and as a best practice.

Who is Responsible for Community Engagement?

CITY STAFF

City staff play a pivotal role in advancing the City's Community Engagement Framework. Their responsibilities include:

- Approaching community engagement and making decisions with an understanding that each decision and change has an impact on people in our community.
- Working with administration to ensure appropriate resources and systems are in place to deliver meaningful community engagement.

- Liaising with consultants to ensure consultant-led community engagement aligns with the City's community engagement framework.
- Helping determine when community engagement is appropriate.
- Taking action to identify and remove barriers to equitable participation.
- Engaging the community with respect.
- Communicating how community engagement has shaped decision-making.
- Balancing community engagement with other intergovernmental, social and cultural, technical, financial, and environmental considerations when making recommendations and decisions.
- Evaluating community engagement efforts and aspires to continuous improvement.
- Engaging in relevant professional development related to community engagement.
- Maintaining a repository of community engagement resources, tools, and supports for staff.
- Evaluating and updating the City's Community Engagement Framework.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

As community members, you hold important community engagement responsibilities, including:

- Recognizing that the City strives to listen to many voices and takes all input into consideration (sometimes this means a decision aligns with your input, while other times it may not).
- Remembering that community engagement is one part of good decision-making and must be balanced with other considerations, including intergovernmental, social and cultural, technical, financial, and environmental.
- Requesting alternative ways of participating if required.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, let us know if you or someone else experiences barriers to participation that have not been addressed.
- Interacting with staff, Councilors, and other engagement participants with respect.
- Listening and looking to understand other viewpoints and perspectives.
- Providing input and feedback within project timelines.
- Encouraging others to participate.
- Telling us how we're doing.

CITY COUNCIL

As key leaders in Essex Junction, the City Council's support is important for successful community engagement. Their role is to:

- Ask about the Community Engagement Framework and its application to City projects.
- Interact with City staff, the community, and engagement participants with respect.
- Let City staff know when you become aware of barriers to equitable participation.

- Encourage community participation in engagement opportunities.
- Connect City staff with relevant community members, organizations, and businesses.
- Review information gathered through community engagement and balance it with intergovernmental, socio-cultural, technical, financial, and environmental considerations when making decisions.
- Ask about and support realistic timelines and appropriate resources required to deliver meaningful community engagement.

Community Engagement Goals and Actions

Decisions made at the City shape our residents' daily lives. They influence how they live, get around, connect with each other, take part in the local economy, and what gets built. The community needs meaningful opportunities to weigh in on these critical decisions.

Our community engagement goals and actions guide us in this work. They keep us aligned with our engagement framework and help us track our progress.

City Council's Goal for Engagement:

- The City Council will implement the Community Engagement Plan with a focus on
 - Identifying public events and interacting with people at these events
 - Creating tools and opportunities to engage with underrepresented communities (including renters, people who speak a range of languages, etc.)
 - Improving feedback loops so people know how their participation impacted decision-making

City's Priorities for Engaging with the Community:

- An early and ongoing dialogue with the community.
- More meaningful engagement.
- More consistency in the way we engage with the community.
- A concerted effort to be more inclusive, extend the reach of our engagement activities, and reduce barriers to participation.
- Consideration of engagement outcomes and provision of feedback.

GOAL 1: BUILD INTERNAL CAPACITY BY DEVELOPING STAFF SKILLS AND RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT.

- Who: Staff and external partners regularly involved in community engagement, including boards, committees, and consultants representing the City.
- Outcomes: Build a staff culture that values community engagement as a key part of our work, and encourage everyone to see the community as a valuable resource.
- Actions:
 - Use the Community Engagement Toolkit to make sure our engagement activities are consistent. This helps staff follow best practices and use the same approach for all projects that involve the community.
 - Offer training and support to staff, especially those new to community engagement, so they can build their skills and feel confident working with the community.
 - Pursue additional training and development opportunities for staff to enhance their ability to design, implement, and evaluate engagement activities.

- Create and update a Community Network Map to help staff easily identify stakeholders and partners for effective outreach.

GOAL 2: DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT BY ADOPTING INNOVATIVE METHODS TO ENGAGE AND REACH MORE COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

- Who: Staff and external partners regularly involved in community engagement, including boards, committees, and consultants representing the City.
- Outcomes: Involve our community in ways that are meaningful, cooperative, and represent everyone. Make sure our interactions are real, timely, accurate, and open. Build strong, positive relationships with the community.
- Actions:
 - Explore digital engagement platforms and additional forms of communication (video) to increase convenience, accessibility, and participation rates among diverse community members.
 - Create a Municipal Language Access Plan, translate important information into other languages, and make sure our communications are clear and easy to understand so everyone can participate.
 - Set up a Yearly Engagement Calendar to organize our planning, spread out activities, and help keep participation high.
 - Work with the City Council and staff to define what successful community engagement looks like, so progress can be measured and shared with the community.
 - Establish relationships and work with local community liaisons to engage with underrepresented communities.
 - Develop a Community Engagement Committee to regularly review engagement processes, recommend improvements, and support engagement efforts to enhance community involvement.
 - Review event locations, digital files, web pages, and other resources to make sure they are accessible, and remove any barriers so everyone can take part.
 - Consider how the City can cover participants' costs while engaging in activities (e.g., stipends, parking, transit fare, refreshments, child and/or eldercare) to reduce financial barriers and encourage broader involvement.

GOAL 3: DEMONSTRATE HOW COMMUNITY FEEDBACK HAS INFLUENCED DECISION-MAKING.

- Who: Staff and external partners regularly involved in community engagement, including boards, committees, and consultants representing the City.
- Outcomes: The community knows when their feedback will be used, and the City reports back to show how input has shaped decisions or will be used in the future.

- Actions:
 - Share the Community Engagement Plan with residents so they know what to expect and can prepare to participate effectively.
 - Create a way to report engagement results to the community so residents can see how their input influenced decisions.

Community Engagement Toolkit

Most City projects require some level of public information or engagement. Even small projects should share basic information with the community. Use the Community Engagement Toolkit to help develop your project's engagement plan. Fill out as much information as you can, but only complete the sections that apply to your project.

What To Do:

1. Download the Community Engagement Toolkit.
2. Fill out the questions that correlate to each step.
3. Set up a meeting with the Communications Director to go through your completed toolkit.
4. Revise your plan with any necessary changes.
5. Move forward with your project.

Step 1: Define the Project

The team responsible for the project should start by meeting to define the project, decide who will be involved, and set a timeline.

DEFINE YOUR ISSUE/PROJECT

What is your project called?

What specific problem, goal, or issue are you addressing?

How does your project connect to the strategic plan?

What decision is being made? Has a decision already been made?

Who is the decision-maker?

What input or type of input would be most meaningful and from whom?

What are the biggest issues expected to come up?

What does a successful outcome look like?

STEP 2: Identify Stakeholders

Now, identify who will be most interested in or affected by the project. Also, check how your project fits with the City's current plans.

Before telling the public about your project, identify the stakeholders who need or want to hear about it.

IDENTIFYING YOUR STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

“Stakeholders” are most easily defined as anyone who could be affected by the project. While the broader public should always be informed and included in a project, stakeholder groups are distinct groups of people, neighborhoods, businesses, and organizations affected by the project and should be specifically engaged. These groups usually spend more time and effort contributing to the project.

Who are potential stakeholders?

Think about including people from all backgrounds, such as different races, nationalities, genders, languages, and income levels. Your list of stakeholders may grow as the project moves forward and more people show interest. Stay flexible and ready to involve new stakeholders at any time. Answer the following questions to help you identify the potential stakeholders for your project. A sample list of stakeholders is available after these questions.

Who will be impacted positively or negatively? • Who will be directly impacted? • Who will be indirectly impacted? • Consider geography – who lives, works, plays, or commutes in the project area? • What are the potential impacts? ○ Financial ○ Transportation ○ Environment ○ Inconvenience ○ Change to routine ○ What else?	
Who NEEDS to know about this? • Is there a legal requirement? • Which groups/individuals are directly impacted versus groups indirectly impacted? • What stakeholders will be hard to reach/engage, and how will you overcome that?	
Who can or will contribute to this conversation? • Who are the experts? • Are there outside groups who can speak to the project/topic?	

• What other government agencies have done similar projects, and what can we learn from them?	
Who could stop this project? • What is the potential for backlash on a project, and who could potentially be negatively impacted? • Remember, it is just as important to hear/understand the oppositional views so they can be addressed.	
Who might be hard to reach? • Identify hard-to-reach stakeholders, such as youth, older adults, and people with limited English, low incomes, or disabilities. Work with organizations that support these groups to find the best ways to reach and engage them.	
Who are the internal stakeholders? • Internal stakeholders can be other City departments, City Council, City employees, and boards and committees that could be impacted, included, or asked questions. • The City has experts in many fields. If you consider internal stakeholders early and regularly, you can spot issues before they become problems. • Involve other City departments during your planning phase.	

A sample list of potential stakeholders may include:

- Business leaders
- Civic organizations
- Community organizations
- Faith-based communities
- Individuals with disabilities
- Older adults
- Youth and young adults
- Homeowners and/or renters
- Partner organizations
- ESL community
- Populations traditionally underrepresented
- City staff

- City committees or boards

Here is a sample list of organizations that may be interested in being involved in your project, depending on the topic.

- Essex Westford School District
- Non-profit organizations (Lions Club, Rotary, etc.)
- Sports leagues and recreation programs
- Senior center
- Politicians who represent Essex Junction
- Regional groups, we have representation on (CSWD, CWD, Tree Farm, Town Meeting TV, WVPD, CCCUD, CCRPC.
- Champlain Valley Expo
- GlobalFoundries

REVIEWING EXISTING CITY PLANS

The City and its partners have involved the community in many past planning projects. There may be useful data and feedback available for your project. Check how your project connects to existing City plans, and ask the project manager or department for information from earlier outreach. Below are some current plans and reports with community outreach data. CCRPC also has a database of regional and state reports with engagement efforts. You can view this database here: (URL).

- Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Master Plan (2025)
- City Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan (2024)
- Governance Committee Final Report (2025)

Step 3: Determine Level of Engagement

Once you have a project summary and your stakeholders determined, decide how much community engagement your project needs.

The chart below is a way to start thinking about the right level of engagement. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is a trusted resource for best practices. The table here is adapted from the IAP2 guide used by the City Council.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Questions to Consider	Do you want to inform people about a project, or help them understand a problem or opportunity? Do you need more information	Do you want to get public feedback about a project, program or decision? Do you want to stimulate public debate about the issue?	Do you want to work directly with stakeholders throughout the decision-making process, drawing on their knowledge	Do you want to create long-term partnerships among stakeholders (participants and community groups) that will implement the solutions they create?	Do you want the public to take leadership for implementing actions that address the purpose?

	from stakeholders to make a decision?		and expertise to make recommendations?		
Participation Goal	One way Communication to provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has already happened.	Two way Communication designed to obtain feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform our decision making.	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to our decision making.	Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions for joint decision making.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the community.
The City will	We will share information about a decision or direction.	We will explore options, gain feedback and an understanding of your concerns and preferences.	We will involve you in the process so your ideas, concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed or the final decision.	We will collaborate with you so your advice, innovation and recommendations are included in the final decision that we make together.	We will provide you with the mechanism to decide and then implement what you decide.
Role of Community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Decide

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Can we stand behind the level of engagement we use?

Can the public really affect the project's outcome, or is the project past the point where feedback would be useful? Re-think the process if public input cannot be used in decision-making.

INTERNAL PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

After you have reviewed the IAP2 Guide, use this assessment to determine your level of engagement. Place a check mark in the appropriate boxes. Then, follow the instructions below to score your assessment. Use the scale to determine your level of engagement.

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
What is the legally required level of engagement?					
To what extent do you believe the public could help improve the outcome of this project?					
At what level do you perceive public interest in this project?					
What is the potential for the public to influence the decision-making process?					
What level of media interest do you anticipate?					
What is the likelihood that decision makers will fully consider public input?					
What level of resources are likely to be needed to support engagement?					
What is the anticipated level of controversy?					
Scoring					
1. Total the number of checks in each column.					
2. Multiply the total of checks in each column by the weighting number in each column.	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5
4. Add the column scores together and enter that number here.					
5. Divide the total score by the number of questions (/8).					
This is the average score:					

Scale:

1 - 2 = Very low to low; Spectrum recommendation: at least Inform

2 - 3 = Low to moderate; Spectrum recommendation: at least Consult

3 - 4 = Moderate to high; Spectrum recommendation: probably Involve

4 - 5 = High to very high; Spectrum recommendation: minimum Involve, consider Collaborate or Empower

BASED ON THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT, ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

Inform. What are the key things you want stakeholders to understand? What do they need to know to make this effort successful? What information is missing? Be as specific and comprehensive as possible.

Consult. What specific types of information do you want from your participants? Is it simply input into a pre-developed proposal or is it general perceptions and values related to the issue(s) you are seeking to address? Be specific.

Involve. If you are expecting stakeholders to help make decisions, what specifically do they have purview over? How will their input be incorporated into the process or outcomes? How will you describe your engagement's intentions in this regard?

Collaborate. What specific contributions and partnerships do you want from your stakeholders? What can they realistically contribute? What authority are you willing to relinquish if necessary?

Empower. What specifically do you expect stakeholders to do on their own?

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DEVELOP YOUR ENGAGEMENT TEAM

At this stage, form an engagement team to plan and carry out your engagement process. You can include external organizations and City committees as part of this team. This team would have the following responsibilities:

Responsibility	Who
Selecting tools and designing the process for citizen participation	
Identifying and recruiting participants	
Publicizing the effort	
Developing background information	
Designing benchmarks and criteria for evaluation	
Reporting the outcomes of the process	
Making recommendations based on the outcomes	

Step 4: Provide Background Information and Timeline

The public needs background information to give useful feedback. Make sure information is available to anyone who wants it, including printed copies for those who don't use the internet. Choose materials that best explain the project and think about where people will see them. For example, what you post online may be different from what you share at a community meeting.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS MAY INCLUDE:

- Documents
- Memos
- Videos/Photos
- Council meetings (minutes/video)
- Maps
- Links to City web pages with information on a given topic
- Posters
- What else?

CREATING A TIMELINE

The simplest way to make a timeline is to start from your final decision date and work backward. Use the worksheet questions to help build your timeline. Once it's ready, share it with the public so they know how much time they have to give feedback.

Don't let time constraints limit your engagement process. Adjust your target dates if needed to make sure you can complete the process properly.

START WITH THE FINAL TARGET DATES AND WORK BACKWARD TO CREATE A TIMELINE:

	Date
Final decision.	
Public feedback presented to decision-makers for consideration.	
Public feedback gathered and organized.	
Public engagement event(s).	
Public education of project.	
Notification to public about upcoming project.	

Step 5: Engage the Community

People get information in different ways, so there's no single solution for public engagement. Usually, you'll need to use several tools. Try to reach as many people as possible, but make sure everyone knows where to find the most up-to-date information. Often, this will be the City's website.

CITY TOOL BOX:

These are tools the City has available for you to use in any combination. When picking tools, think about what you want to learn, how you'll use the information, and how you'll report it. It's helpful to have several ways to share and collect information to reach more people.

Look over these tools and talk with the Communications Director about which ones to use for your engagement process, when to use them, and what help you need from the Communications Director.

Tool	Description	Engagement Level	Will Use this Tool
City Website News	News release and graphics sent out to news subscribers.	Inform	
City Webpage	A project webpage on the built or linked to the City's website.	Inform	
Social Media	- Facebook - Front Porch Forum	Inform	

	• NextDoor		
Community Newsletter Online	Newsletter sent electronically through email to subscribers on the first Friday of the month.	Inform	
Community Newsletter AD	Printed ad in the Essex Reporter on the first Friday of the month.	Inform	
Junction City News	Town Meeting TV show monthly fourth Monday of the month.	Inform	
Postcards	Mailed to all residents in Essex Junction or a specific group of people.	Inform	
Water Bill Inserts	A flyer that goes out with water bills (four times per year).	Inform	
News Release to Broader Media	TV stations, regional/state newspapers.	Inform	
Email to specific stakeholders	• Legislature • Business Owners • Committees • Employees	Inform	
Printed Public Information Materials	• Factsheet • Flyers • Brochures • Maps • Graphics • Posters	Inform and Consult	
Information Kiosks	A station where project information is available. Can be staffed or not.	Inform, Consult, Involve,	
One-on-one interviews	Interviews with an individual to gather input in the project or decision.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	
Charrettes	Intensive session where participants design project features.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	
Focus Groups	Forum to gather input from experts from various target audiences.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	
Current City Committees	A group of experts or representative stakeholders in Essex Junction appointed by the Council to advise on a project or policy recommendation.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower	
Task Forces or Short-Term Committee	A group of experts or representative stakeholders selected to develop a specific product or policy recommendation.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower	
Open Houses	An open house encourages people to tour information at their own pace. There is typically no formal presentation and people can come and go at any time during the meeting.	Consult, Involve,	

Public Meetings/ Informational Meetings (in person or online)	An organized large-group meeting usually used to make a presentation and give the public an opportunity to ask questions and give comments at the end.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	
Workshops	An informal public meeting that may include presentations and exhibits but ends with interactive working groups.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	
Tours	Tours of the project site or building for key stakeholders and the public.	Inform, Consult	
Community Events	Hold a table at an event already taking place in the community.	Inform, Consult	
Comment Forms	Comments can be collected at public events, either on cards or posters	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	
Surveys/Polls (online or paper)	Most commonly used tool. Questionnaire to quantify a decision, perspectives, or collect information. Usually online methods but could be mailed to residents.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate	

Step 6: Evaluate Feedback and Process

“We asked, you said, we did.”

If your level of engagement is Inform you can move to the second evaluation method and this will be your last step. For all other levels of engagement, you’ll need to do two types of evaluations.

EVALUATION METHOD ONE

First, collect and review the data you get from the public.

How will we gather data? Decide ahead of time how you’ll collect data, such as using spreadsheets, Word documents, or charts. Choose a method that fits how decision-makers will use the data. For example, does the Council need to see every direct quote, or is a summary better?

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How will the data be used?

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How will we measure and report feedback?

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Additional things to consider:

- Collect data as you go, instead of waiting until the end. This keeps records accurate and makes it easier to answer questions about the feedback quickly.
- Consider what types of questions you will ask the public, and what the public may ask of you.
- You'll get both positive and negative feedback, so plan how you'll present both sides.

EVALUATION METHOD TWO

The second evaluation happens after the project is finished. Think about how you can improve the process for better public engagement in the future. Just using certain tools doesn't guarantee good results. Answering these questions will help future projects.

What worked?	
What didn't work?	
What could've been done differently?	
What went better than expected?	

The project manager should collect and organize all public feedback. Store the information so staff and the Communications Director can easily access it. Also, make a summary of the feedback and how it was used available to the community.

Step 7: Follow Through with the Public

After you've collected and reviewed public feedback, summarize how people's opinions and ideas were considered and explain why decisions were made. Share this information with the public using the same tools you used to collect feedback. Explain why you chose one option over others and why you decided to move forward.

When the public takes the time and effort to give us their feedback, we need to make sure we let them know how valuable they are and how much we appreciate their effort. Put in the time to let our community know they have been heard.

POST-PARTICIPATION EVALUATION

How will you measure if you've been successful? What constitutes success for both the project team and participants? What do you need to do to carry out this evaluation?				
Evaluation Steps	What Worked?	What Didn't Work?	What Could Have Been Done Differently?	What Went Better Than Expected?
Technique used				
How info was gathered				
How data was used				
How did you follow through with the public?				

Appendix A: Additional Engagement Resources/Ideas

Below are a list of potential engagement resources or ideas to consider for future implementation to the Community Engagement Plan.

Citizens' Assemblies

Civic assemblies—often referred to as Citizens' Assemblies—are deliberative democracy forums that use a democratic lottery to select a broadly representative sample of everyday people. These assemblies are designed to bring citizens into the heart of decision-making to tackle complex public problems and help write policy proposals.

Key Takeaways from ICMA Reimagined Conference in May 2026:

- The specific question (“remit”) matters more than the broad issue—start focused.
- Sortition (civic lottery) helps achieve diversity in participation better than other methods, though it’s not perfect.
- Assemblies can handle difficult issues (examples cited internationally), but:
 - They are resource-intensive and expensive
 - Participants are often paid and engaged over multiple days

EXAMPLES:

Inside a Kentucky City’s Unusual Experiment in Citizen-Led Governance - In Lexington, 36 randomly-selected residents took part in one of the country’s first civic assemblies to recommend changes to the city’s governing charter: https://nextcity.org/features/inside-a-kentucky-citys-unusual-experiment-in-citizen-led-governance?utm_source=Next+City+Newsletter&utm_campaign=70b4a34e53-DailyNL_2026_01_09_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fcee5bf7a0-70b4a34e53-470656123

Dayton, OH is another example where they established a Citizen Assembly to work on a new public hospital (though on pause as of May 2026).

RESOURCES:

FIDE (Federation for Innovation in Democracy) - <https://www.fidemocracy.org/partnership-for-local-citizens-assemblies>

National Civic League: <https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/>

[Charter Review Commission using a "civic lottery" to identify commission members](#) (Decatur GA)

[Conversation Corps](#) to train community members to hold civic dialogues about important community issues (Austin TX)

[Healthy Democracy process](#) to review the city's civic health (Franklin TN). By the way, Vermont recently completed a [civic health index](#) that could be a useful resource.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Dayton, OH is also a good example of Neighborhood Assemblies. Dayton has 7 Priority Boards (PBs) tied to 66 neighborhood associations, operating since 1975. They were re-vamped recently as they became somewhat insular. These are City funded and staffed; they have a Community Engagement division (8 staff).

Community Councils and Co-Creation

Concept of Municipal Federalism from University of Indiana Public Policy Institute, David Swindell Director and Professor

Overcoming lack of citizen participation requires changing institutional arrangements and incentives.

Possible ideas:

PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE 2026 TIG, Dallas TX

What IS Municipal Federalism?

Neighborhoods opt in and decide what they want

- Real **provision** authority as an incentive
 - Zoning variances and land use decisions
 - Code enforcement
 - Neighborhood park planning and maintenance
 - Secondary and tertiary street flow control
 - Curb and sidewalk maintenance prioritization
 - Participatory budgeting
 - Community development

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH DRIVEN PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING:

Boston - Youth Lead the Change. They have T-shirts that say "I've been managing millions since I was a teenager." Use \$1 million from Capital budget to be allocated through this youth led participatory budgeting process. Age 14-25. Office of Youth Engagement. The youth develop the

ideas and ultimately vote, etc. Allows kids the opportunity to vote on something real even before they are allowed to vote in elections.

LA - Invest in Youth Coalition. Similar program as above.

Kiva Process

The Kiva Process is a method for facilitating inclusive group dialogue and decision making.

Resources: <https://leadershipforumcommunity.org/resource/kiva-a-process-for-inclusive-dialogue/>

<https://villagegreennj.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/KIVA-Info-2.pdf>