



Corporate Approach to Public Engagement (CAPE)

OCTOBER 2013

In early 2010, CLT directed the administration to take action to implement an integrated service approach to citizen engagement related to service delivery. The stated deliverable was a corporate strategic approach to citizen engagement, which became known as CAPE, and the desired outcome “a consistent corporate process for delivering public engagement for every City project, program and service”. CLT had identified a need for improvement in delivering public involvement arising from:

- A lack of clarity and consistency in the use of language and process,
- Poor corporate tracking and reporting of public involvement activities,
- A lack of access to public involvement expertise and support for staff, and
- Misalignment between citizens’ expectations and how public involvement was being done.

CLT also indicated that any approach must:

- Recognize that one size can’t fit all,
- Address a gap in managing engagement for city-shaping initiatives, and
- Emphasize that engagement is an investment, which must be prioritized, tracked, reported and measured.

Sponsors – The CAPE project was co-sponsored by the Office of Public Involvement (which had recently been placed under Corporate Communications) and the Office of Great Neighbourhoods within the department of Community Services. The project team also included representatives from Corporate Communications, the Public Involvement Coordinator in Transportation Planning, and staff from other departments who had a knowledge of and/or interest in public involvement. Furthermore, extensive consultations were held with



internal stakeholders, including interviews with members of CLT.

Principles and desired outcomes – One of the first tasks under CAPE was to agree on fundamental principles and desired outcomes that would drive the initiative.

The summarized principles identified were:

- We are One City and will coordinate our activities.
- We recognize that citizens have knowledge, insight and value to add to the City.
- We are consistent in how we engage with citizens.
- We honour our commitments to citizens and Council.
- We tell people what we have heard and what we have done or will do with their input.
- We are sensitive to stakeholder timelines and ensure that processes are accessible.
- We are clear about the purpose and expectations of our public engagement efforts.
- We strive for openness and transparency in how we develop and deliver public engagement.
- We acknowledge that effective engagement takes time and resources.



The desired outcomes identified were:

- Better decisions.
- More meaningful participation.
- Greater understanding of how the City works.
- Improved Council understanding and support for public engagement processes.
- Better relationships so processes and activities align better with communities and stakeholders.
- Stronger communities through greater opportunities for engagement and less volunteer fatigue.
- More working together – less of an us-versus-them approach or perception.
- Edmonton continues to be a leader in public engagement.

Governance structure – Another task was to devise an overall governance structure to implement CAPE. As initially conceived, the core of this structure would be a “Public Engagement Working Group” or “Coordinating Committee”, championed by a revamped Office of Public Engagement. Overall accountability would flow from CLT through the existing Great Neighbourhoods Leadership Team and Transforming Edmonton Committee to the Coordinating Committee. Under the Working Group, engagement activities would be organized into “Community Based”, “Business Area Based” and “Transformative” or “City Shaping”.

The Office of Public Engagement – A key aspect of CAPE was a renewed focus on and support for a revamped Office of Public Engagement. It was envisioned that this office would take on an important coordinating, advising and leadership role in championing public engagement across the organization. Its primary responsibilities would include:

- Chairing and administering the Public Engagement Working Group or Coordinating Committee and providing support for the overall governance structure.
- Developing an annual strategic plan and performance report.
- Aligning public engagement with other corporate planning and initiatives.

- Leading the public engagement activities for city-shaping and multi-department projects.
- Leading a corporate approach to civic engagement.
- Providing coordination and advisory support to departments for their public engagement activities.
- Providing a written assessment and recommendations for all public engagement plans estimated to cost more than \$75,000.
- Revising and developing tools to support the delivery of public engagement.
- Providing a corporate-wide public engagement training program.
- Educating the public about the purpose, scope and benefits of public engagement.
- Working with the Centre for Public Involvement (CPI).

Coordination and advisory support for all surveys across the organization was also subsequently added to this mandate.

Public engagement framework – One of the final tasks under CAPE was to develop a Public Engagement Framework, to support a corporate approach to public engagement. Such a framework is critical as it forms the foundation for how the City will think about public engagement moving forward, which will influence how public engagement is communicated, coordinated, rolled out through training and reported on. This framework was not intended to replace the Public Involvement Policy and Procedure, Continuum of Public Involvement, Public Involvement Roadmap or *Involving Edmonton* workbook. Rather, it was designed to act as a resource for staff to plan and implement their engagement activities in the CAPE environment, building on and using existing policies and frameworks. Its core is a one-page graphic with the purpose of helping staff assess the type of engagement that might be most appropriate for a particular activity or set of activities.

In September 2012, CLT approved the CAPE framework and the process began for hiring a new Manager for the Office of Public Engagement. This Manager has been in place since the end of December 2012.