



Burlington Community Engagement Charter - April 8, 2013

Introduction

The Burlington Community Engagement Charter is an agreement between and among Burlington City Council and the citizens of Burlington concerning citizen engagement with city government that establishes the commitments, responsibilities, and fundamental concepts of this relationship.

At the core of democratic government are two pillars that also form the basis of effective citizen engagement:

- That government belongs to the citizens within its political boundaries, and
- That the inhabitants of a city are “citizens” with the rights and responsibilities of citizenship based on justice, human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law.

Engaging people on issues that affect their lives and their city is a key component of democratic society. Public involvement encourages participation, actions and personal responsibility. The goal of community engagement is to lead to more informed and, therefore, better decision-making.

This Charter’s overarching objective is to enhance communications and access to information for citizens, and to facilitate and enable meaningful engagement.

This Charter is composed of five sections:

1. Common Terms and Definitions
2. Vision and Mission Statements
3. City Commitments
4. Citizen Rights and Responsibilities
5. Public Participation Spectrum.

1. Common Terms and Definitions

As used in this document, the following terms are defined to mean:

Citizen: For the purposes of this Charter, the word citizen refers to a resident of the City, entitled to its rights and services and with a responsibility to take an active part in community decision-making. The words citizen and resident can be used interchangeably.

Citizen engagement:	The right and responsibility of citizens to have an informed say in the decisions that affect their lives through a dialogue of mutual respect between government and citizen.
Community engagement:	The process by which citizens, organizations, and government work collaboratively. It includes information sharing, consultation, and active involvement in decision-making.
Decision-making:	The process followed by the City of Burlington's City Council to reach decisions on those items that are presented in staff reports.
Meaningful engagement:	Citizens and stakeholders have the opportunity to access information on the engagement topic that is timely, relevant, constructive and substantive. Their resulting input to decision-makers is expected to meet similar standards and is intended to ensure that a balance and range of public perspectives is available for consideration in the decision-making process.
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.
Standing Committee:	Committees comprised of members of City Council, established through the <i>Procedural By-Law</i> , with an ongoing mandate or purpose.

2. Charter Vision and Mission Statement

Vision:

Burlington aspires to become increasingly more engaged and connected with its community.

Mission:

To provide Burlington citizens, members of City Council and City staff a plain language, living policy document that guides and promotes active and meaningful citizen engagement in the City of Burlington's planning, policy-setting and decision-making processes.

3. City Commitments

To fulfill the vision and mission of the Burlington Community Engagement Charter, City Council makes the following commitments:

Accountability

The City of Burlington will be responsible to its citizens and stakeholders for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions or inactions.

Capacity Building

The City of Burlington will encourage the ability of its citizens and stakeholders to effectively participate in the development and implementation of engagement processes with respect to issues and decisions that affect their lives and their community.

Clear Language

The City of Burlington will use plain and clear language in documents and public communications that is more engaging and understandable for citizens than technical language and jargon.

City Feedback

The City of Burlington will inform citizens and stakeholders about how their input was considered and adopted or why it was not adopted in City projects, initiatives and policy development. Feedback will usually be provided in a summarized format rather than on an individual basis.

Delegation Process

The delegation process, which allows citizens to address Council and Standing Committees on issues, will be respectful and welcoming. Delegations can learn how their input affected decision-making by reading the minutes of Standing Committees and Council on the city's website or by requesting a written copy, or by viewing webcasts of discussions on the topic of their delegation. However, it is suggested that citizens first explore alternatives such as approaching City staff or their ward councillor to see if their issue can be resolved without escalation to a decision by Council.

Early and Widespread Notification

The City of Burlington will provide early and widespread notification to citizens and stakeholders about proposed developments, policies, initiatives and municipal projects. Widespread notification will not be given for purely localized issues such as neighbourhood traffic calming.

Inclusion and Accessibility

Every citizen has the right to participate in community engagement regarding issues of concern to them. Engaging and enabling the participation of all Burlington citizens is a goal of this Charter.

Openness and Access to Information

The City of Burlington will provide a variety of ways for citizens, city staff and members of City Council to access and share information and discuss ideas and options. The City of Burlington will provide open data and information to the public in recognized and useable formats, including routinely available information in on-line formats, print

material, and face-to-face opportunities to facilitate healthy discussion of city issues.

Resourcing

The City of Burlington will support the Engagement Charter by ensuring that its engagement processes are adequately resourced. Charter requirements will be met by City Council, city employees, volunteers, agents and contractors in their efforts on behalf of the City of Burlington.

Transparency

The city's decision-making processes will be open and clear to the public and the city will actively encourage and facilitate citizen and stakeholder participation in them.

4. Citizen Rights and Responsibilities/Participation

Citizen Rights: Citizen Engagement is grounded on the premises that citizens have the right to have an informed say in decisions that affect their lives, the right to access information from their local government, and the right to transparent and open government that provides them opportunities for engagement.

Citizen Responsibilities/Participation: Along with rights come responsibilities. Citizens who choose to do so can meet their responsibilities by being aware of community issues, exploring options with respect to those issues, meeting with City staff and Members of Council when necessary, and discussing issues with fellow citizens.

Mutual Respect: Successful community engagement requires mutual respect of all participants including citizens, staff, and members of council.

Respect is 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; and
- Following meeting "guidelines for engagement".

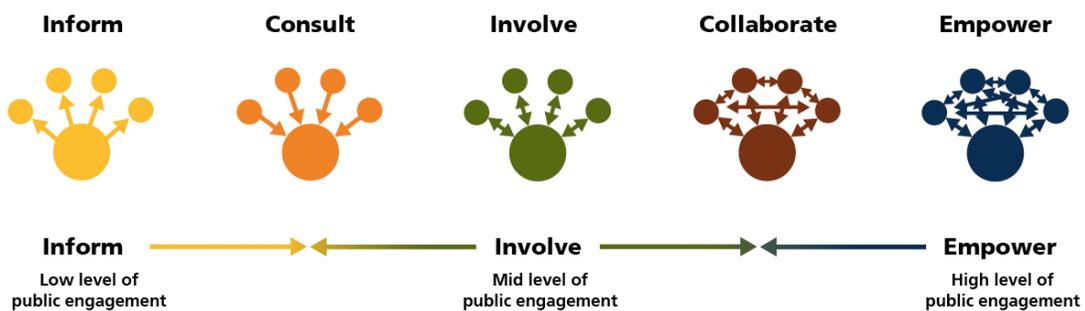
Successful citizen engagement requires meaningful interaction and dialogue between citizens and their local government resulting in a constructive relationship among the parties.

Burlington citizens elect a mayor and ward representative whose role is defined in the Municipal Act. Council must represent the public and consider the well-being and interest of the municipality."

5. Public Participation Spectrum

The International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum of participation is a recognized global standard for identifying the different levels of participation. Five levels of engagement, referenced from the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum, will be used in City of Burlington community engagement activities.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum shows the possible types of engagement with stakeholders and communities. The spectrum also shows the increasing level of public impact progressing through the spectrum beginning with 'inform' through to 'empower'. A complete description of the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation appears in the appendix to this charter.



APPENDIX TO CHARTER: IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives 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:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns 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 direct 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 Tools:	Example Tools:	Example Tools:	Example Tools:	Example Tools:
<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 ♦ deliberate 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 decisions.