

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Policy Number:	ADM16
Administered By:	Chief Administrative Officer
Approved By:	Town Council
Effective Date:	September 11, 2023 R.196.2023
Version #:	2
References:	Alberta Municipalities AUMA/AAMDC Citizen Engagement Toolkit International Association of Public Participation IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Purpose:

This policy establishes the foundation for the Town of Fort Macleod's principles, responsibilities, expectations, and procedures for conducting public participation.

Legislation:

- a) This policy has been developed by Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA). This Policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace the circulation, notification, or statutory public hearing requirements of the MGA.
- b) Nor does it modify or replace the circulation and notification requirements for development permitting processes as contained in the Town's Land Use Bylaw.
- c) All activities undertaken per this policy shall comply with the Freedoms of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, associated regulations, and any amendments to it.
- d) This policy will be available for public viewing and accessible on the Town of Fort Macleod's website.
- e) This policy shall be reviewed once every four years at minimum, as requested by the *Municipal Government Act*.

Scope:

This Policy applies to all members of Town Council, Administrative staff, and Municipal Stakeholders regarding public participation.

Definitions:

CAO: This means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality or their delegate.

Town: The municipal corporation of the Town of Fort Macleod.

Public Participation: Includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information and provide input to the Town of Fort Macleod.

Municipal Stakeholder: The residents of the municipality, as well as other individuals, organizations, groups, businesses, or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Town of Fort Macleod. For this policy, the community has the same meaning as municipal stakeholders.

Public Participation: This means an interactive process between the Town, the public and stakeholders designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and solve problems to make better, more informed decisions.

Public Participation Plan: This means identifying which public participation tools will be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.

Responsibilities:

1) Town Council is responsible to:

- Consider public input obtained through public participation activities as part of their decision-making process.
- Promote and support public participation activities and provide, where appropriate, Council member representation.
- Establish consistent practices, processes, and timelines for statutory and non-statutory requirements for public participation.
- Ensure appropriate resources are available to allow for the ongoing implementation of consistent, comprehensive and representative public participation programs and services.
- Request information from the Chief Administrative Officer on the scope, timing, appropriate methods and resources required for public participation on a specific issue or item.

2) The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible to:

- Maintain coordinated and standardized public participation processes across the organization, considering the impact of decisions on the community and stakeholders and providing ongoing engagement opportunities.
- Develop necessary processes and tools to support the implementation of this policy.
- Communicate to the Council and the community, when appropriate, how public input was collected and used in administrative recommendations to the Council.
- Review and update this policy at least every four years or as provincial legislation requires.
- Make this policy available for public inspection and publish it on the Town's website.

3) Municipal Stakeholders are responsible to:

- Bring honest and respectful input.
- Stay abreast of public participation opportunities through the Town's website, local media, and other communication channels.

Public Participation Plans:

Public participation plans can vary in complexity, depending on the matter. It may involve a one-time opportunity or providing educational information to the public for fundamental issues. A detailed plan outlining timelines, steps, tools, and techniques may be developed for more complex matters.

Not all proposals, processes, or projects require a comprehensive participation process. The level of participation can vary based on the scale, scope, and potential impact on the community. If a decision has limited room for change or little opportunity for public influence, an extensive participation process may not be necessary or practical. However, if a proposal significantly impacts the community and allows meaningful input, the Town will undertake robust and inclusive participation processes.

Public participation plans are essential to ensure appropriate and effective engagement in the Town of Fort Macleod. These plans will be developed and implemented under specific circumstances, which include:

- Conducting statistically representative public participation activity at least every two years to obtain the community's overall perceptions of quality of life and satisfaction with programs and services.
- Gathering community input for Council priorities, strategic plans, and budgets.
- When Council has made a previous commitment for engagement, has engaged on a similar decision, or requests public participation.
- Developing Municipal Plans.

- Establishing new services and service levels.
- The decision is controversial because it will generate significant and diverse interests and opinions among Municipal stakeholders.

Public participation will not be implemented in the following circumstances:

- Emergency or extraordinary situations.
- Low-impact decisions.
- Cases where input cannot change or influence the decision-making process.
- When there are insufficient resources available.

The Alberta Municipalities Citizen Engagement Toolkit and International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation may be used as a guideline for preparing Public Participation Guidelines.

Determining The Level Of Participation:

The potential impact of a given proposal process The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation will be the guiding framework for the CAO (and Council) in determining the level of involvement and influence decided upon for proposals, processes and projects.

A Public Participation Plan may be drawn up to guide the level of Public Participation that best fits the situation's needs based on the IAP2 spectrum.

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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Public Participation Tools:

Tools, techniques and mechanisms that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities, including but not limited to;

a) In-Person Participation

Examples may include at-the-counter interactions, open houses, workshops, meetings, interviews, focus groups, door-knocking, and round tables.

b) Digital Participation

Examples of digital participation may include online surveys and polls, workbooks, chat groups, webinars, and message boards/forums.

c) Written Participation

Examples may include written submissions, emails, mail-in surveys, polls and workbooks.

d) Representative Participation

Examples of representative participation include being appointed to an advisory committee, board, commission, ad hoc group, or citizen jury.

Principles:

The Town of Fort Macleod is committed to engaging Municipal Stakeholders for effective decision-making. They prioritize the following principles:


Authentic: A primary purpose of the Public Participation process is to generate public views and ideas to help shape local government action or policy rather than persuade residents to accept a decision already made. The public's opinions, preferences and recommendations are documented and seriously considered by decision-makers.

Inclusive & Accessible: The Town endeavours to provide opportunities for public participation that consider the diversity of needs, abilities and viewpoints of the community members. Some members prefer information in digital format and through digital tools. The participatory process undertaken by the Town will try its best to consider all ways the community wishes to obtain information and communication.

Appropriate and Responsive: Public participation process utilizes one or more discussion formats that are responsive to the needs of identified participant groups and encourages full, authentic, effective and equitable participation consistent with process purposes. This may include relationships with existing community forums. Activities must be appropriate to the stated goals and reflective of the varied preferences and needs of the community members for receiving and sharing information.

Transparent and Accountable: The Town communicates clearly and openly about public participation opportunities and processes and provides factual and evidenced-based information. It shares the outcomes of public participation, including how the data was used in the decision-making process and makes decisions in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Evaluation and Continual Improvement: Public participation is a dynamic and evolving process that needs continual assessment and adjustment to improve and address the community's changing needs continuously.



CAO – Town of Fort Macleod