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**Date** September 13, 2024 **Report No.** 2024-565

**To** Chair and Members  
Public Consultation Task Force

**From** Brian Hutchings  
CAO

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### 1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item

Item For Consideration

**2.0 Topic** Expansion of Community Involvement Framework Update – City wide Engagement Campaign [Financial Impact: \$10,000]

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### 3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Staff Report, titled “Expansion of Community Involvement Framework Update – City-wide Engagement Campaign [Financial Impact: \$10,000] BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT the cost of the Community Involvement Framework - Engagement Campaign BE FUNDED through the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558) in the amount of \$10,000; and

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- C. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to develop and implement the Community Involvement Framework Engagement Campaign; and
- D. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to REPORT BACK to the Task Force with findings of the Engagement Campaign in February, 2025.

## 4.0 Background

Brantford City Council directed the establishment of a Public Consultation Task Force to develop a comprehensive protocol empowering the public to provide input during City considerations of the sale of significant City assets.

At their meeting held March 4, 2024, the Public Consultation Task Force directed THAT the following tasks regarding the completion of the Committee's mandate BE APPROVED:

- Design and execute a public consultation plan including public hearing formats (in person) and digital platforms;
- Explore technologies to effectively communicate and receive input to better inform residents what initiatives are occurring at City Hall beyond what staff are currently doing;
- Consider making use of information inserts in utility bills and comment cards to address concerns investigating the most effective way for each age demographic;
- Investigate ways to better utilize the information gathered from the public to inform Council decisions;
- Investigate ways to enhance public participation from those who don't normally participate;
- Utilize methodologies of gathering information including the use of professional polling data;
- Investigate public consultation thresholds including, but not limited to, a referendum on the next election ballot;
- Look into communications campaigns based on various demographics (age, language, ethnicities).

At their meeting held May 21, 2024, the Public Consultation Task Force directed THAT the following BE APPROVED and AMENDED as follows:

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THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to REPORT BACK to the Task Force with findings of the Engagement Campaign in February, 2025.

THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to investigate holding events at Lynden Park Mall, Civic Centre, Doug Snooks, Lions Arena, Ribfest, Branlyn Community Centre, Woodman Community Centre, TB Costain, Jaycee Park and the Brantford Public Library.

## 5.0 Analysis

### 5.1 Community Involvement Framework Review Process

In order to foster inclusive decision-making, transparency, and trust, municipalities must continually update and refine their community involvement frameworks. The primary focus of the review and update to the City's *Community Involvement Framework* (Appendix A), is to include a process to gather public feedback regarding the disposition of assets owned by the City. This update to the Framework will be designed to actively involve citizens in decision-making processes and outline a comprehensive engagement process specific to the disposition of City assets.

Staff recommend that the updated Community Engagement Framework employ a range of engagement methods tailored to the specific needs and preferences of different community segments. This will include surveys, workshops, focus groups, and public forums designed to gather input and encourage meaningful participation. To ensure the update to the Engagement Framework reflects how residents want to be informed and/or participate, the community should be consulted on their engagement preferences.

It is important to ensure that the updated Framework emphasizes collaboration and inclusivity by involving a diverse range of community representatives, including the Brantford Immigration Partnership, Brantford Accessibility Advisory Committee, Grand River Council on Aging, Brantford Youth Council and others.

### 5.2 Consultation Framework – Fall/Winter Engagement Campaign Recommendation

#### Objective

To engage residents of Brantford in updating the Community Involvement Framework, specifically focusing on protocols for engaging the community regarding the disposition of City assets.

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## Target Audience

Residents of Brantford across various demographics, including but not limited to age, language, and ethnicities.

In an effort to engage and involve as many residents as possible in updating the Community Involvement Framework to include a specific protocol for engaging the community regarding the disposition of City assets, staff recommend a multi-faceted approach including online and in person opportunities to provide input.

### 5.2.1 Engagement Campaign Elements

- [Let's Talk Brantford](#) Engagement Portal tools – Online Survey, Ideas

The survey will explore themes such as evaluating satisfaction with current ways informing residents of Council decisions and engagement opportunities as well as opinions regarding formats for public meetings and digital platforms, effective methods for reaching different age demographics, improving the utilization of public feedback in Council decisions, enhancing public participation from underrepresented groups, exploring the possibility of referendums on key City decisions.

- **Leveraging Community and City hosted programming, events, activities**

Upon further consideration and a review of attendance levels at City hosted public engagement meetings of this nature, it is recommended that leveraging existing established community events will be far more effective than hosting standalone events solely focused on discussing how residents want to be engaged regarding community assets. Communications and Community Engagement staff have observed that people are naturally more inclined to make an effort to engage when they feel strongly about a particular issue or decision being considered by City Council. Historical data on attendance levels at City-hosted public engagement meetings reveals that these types of meetings often see lower turnout, especially when the topic is perceived as abstract or procedural rather than directly impacting residents' quality of life.

In contrast, established community events already draw a diverse cross-section of residents who are engaged and interested in participating,

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providing a ready-made platform for outreach. By integrating engagement efforts into these established popular gatherings, the City can capitalize on existing enthusiasm and traffic, which boosts visibility and participation without demanding additional effort from residents. This approach also allows the City to connect with residents in environments where they are already active and invested, leading to more genuine and constructive feedback. A dedicated event focused solely on discussing engagement methods may struggle to attract interest, as it requires a significant time commitment for a topic that might not feel immediately relevant to attendees. Meeting residents where they are most engaged ensures broader reach and more meaningful responses.

It is recommended that Communications and Community Engagement staff collaborate with subject expert staff to host "public engagement booths" at a series of community and city events/programming activities. These booths will serve as interactive and accessible points for residents to provide feedback, ask questions and complete the online survey. By embedding these booths within established events and activities, the City can maximize interaction opportunities and gather valuable insights in a setting where residents are already motivated and present. Consistent with the Task Force's direction, staff recommend that "engagement booths" be set up at the following City locations at peak activity /programming visitor times throughout between October and January 2025:

- Civic Centre
- Doug Snooks Community Centre
- Lions Arena
- Branlyn Community Centre
- Woodman Community Centre
- TB Costain
- Jaycee Park
- Brantford Public Library
- Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre

While Lynden Park Mall was considered as a potential venue, it is felt that staff time and resources would be better utilized by focusing on events and activities that the City already hosts or has a closer association with. Attendees at these City-aligned events are more likely to participate in engaging on a City project in environments where they are already active and invested.

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### **City social media platforms – Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn**

To broaden reach beyond regular followers and commenters, a paid social media campaign is recommended across the City's social media platforms to promote participation in the survey and invite residents to participate by attending identified community and City events at the facilities outlined above when "engagement booths" will be in attendance.

**Local online forums – i.e. *What's Happening Brantford, Ask Anything/Everything Brantford, Ask Anything in Brantford***

### **Digital Advertising (Google Ads)**

Utilize Google Ads to target residents in Brantford who are actively seeking information on civic engagement, city decisions, and community involvement. Keywords such as "Brantford community engagement," "city assets consultation," and "public involvement in decision-making" will be used to reach the target audience.

### **Print Advertising**

3 print ads in The Brantford Expositor/Civic News section, highlighting the importance of community involvement in decision-making and providing information on how residents can participate in the engagement campaign.

### **Integrating the Brantford 2050 Vision Research Panel to Enhance Community Engagement Strategies**

Leveraging the research panel recruited for the current Brantford 2050 Vision Engagement campaign presents a unique opportunity to gain valuable insights into residents' preferences regarding engagement on City programs and services. The second phase of the 2050 Vision engagement campaign, which will run in parallel with the Community Involvement Framework review, includes the participation of a research panel composed of a diverse cross-section of Brantford residents. This panel, selected to represent the city's demographics, is already engaged in providing feedback on critical issues such as city budgeting and long-term planning.

By incorporating this existing panel into the Community Involvement Framework update, the City can efficiently gather targeted input on how

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different community segments prefer to be engaged. This will allow staff to tailor engagement strategies that reflect current resident needs and improve overall public participation. Moreover, it will reduce redundancy in outreach efforts and ensure that the City makes data-driven decisions when enhancing communication channels and involvement opportunities.

### **Timeline**

It is suggested that the campaign occur over fall/winter to enable sufficient time to generate awareness for all engagement opportunities, encourage participation, and gather feedback from key stakeholder groups and residents.

### **Suggested Campaign Period:**

- October 1, 2024 – January 1, 2025

### **Campaign Budget Allocation**

- Google Ads: \$2,000
- Social Media Boosts: \$2,500
- Print Advertising: \$3,500
- Engagement Event Booth & Materials: \$2,000

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

As per the recommended campaign elements outlined above, it is suggested that the Community Involvement Framework Engagement Campaign be promoted with paid media totaling an investment of \$10,000.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

The proposed multi-faceted approach, including online surveys, interactive engagement booths at high-traffic community events/facilities, and targeted digital and print advertising, ensures a comprehensive and adaptable strategy for capturing diverse resident feedback. The strategic use of established community gatherings will facilitate greater participation and provide residents with convenient and relevant opportunities to share their views on how they should be engaged on decisions related to community assets.

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Furthermore, by aligning this campaign with the ongoing Brantford 2050 Vision Engagement, the City will benefit from valuable, data-driven insights into resident preferences, allowing for further development of tailored communication and engagement strategies. This integrated approach will not only streamline efforts but also enhance the quality and relevance of public input received.

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Brian Hutchings  
CAO

Prepared By:

Maria Visocchi – Director  
Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service

Attachments (if applicable)

Copy to:

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required  yes  no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk  yes  no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?  yes  no