

To: Chief Administrative Officer **Date:** September 6, 2022
From: Mike Dickinson, Manager of Long Range Planning and Special Projects
Subject: **Neighbourhood Engagement Policy – LAN.66(C)**

Recommendation(s)

That Council approve the 'Neighbourhood Engagement Policy', LAN.66(C)

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with updated information on and a recommendation for approval of the proposed 'Neighbourhood Engagement Policy' (previously titled the Neighbourhood Approach Policy).

Background

This report provides Council with updated information regarding this communication policy.

This is a two-part policy where the '*Public Information Process*' (i.e., Pre-Notification to Owners/ Occupants) aims to increase public awareness about development applications by providing Mission residents and property owners with notification about development proposals at an early stage of the application process. The second component, '*Development application submission questions*', incorporates development application submission questions for applicants to encourage them to submit proposals that provide broad community benefits and mitigate development impacts.

This report and the appended policy illustrate a variety of communication options available to proponents of larger and or significant developments ahead of a formal application being made to the City. After the Public Information Process steps are completed when a development application is introduced to Council, the regular application process will continue.

Staff presented the 'Neighbourhood Approach Policy' to Council at its August 15, 2022 Regular Council meeting, at which time Council, under Resolution RC22-382 resolved:

'That consideration of the Neighbourhood Approach Policy – Land Use Policy LAN.66(C) be deferred to the September 6, 2022 Regular Council Meeting to incorporate the requested amendments as noted in the minutes.'

This report with the revised Policy responds to Council's direction including a new title for this Policy, being the 'Neighbourhood Engagement Policy, LAN.66(C)'. The updated Policy (Attachment A) better reflects the strategic objectives of this policy for enhancing communications with Mission residents about development applications, and providing Council with information about community responses to applications at the early stage of development application processing. Attachment B outlines the applicability and path proponents, and staff will take to ensure the objectives of the Policy are met.

Discussion and Analysis

At the August 15, 2022 Regular Council meeting, Council requested further details and amendments to the 'Neighbourhood Approach Policy' as follows:

- reframing the questions listed in Part II – Development Application Submission from "does this ..." to "how does this";
- clarifying on how the results of the public information process will be reported back to Council;
- adding a question regarding how the project will address the objectives in the City's Environmental Charter to Part II – Development Application Submission Questions;
- changing the language within the policy from "public information meeting" to "public information process" to better encompass the full range of public engagement communication channels;
- providing details regarding how upcoming public information opportunities will be communicated to Council; and
- amending the Date to be Reviewed be set at "annually".

Policy Updates

Staff revised the policy in response to Council's direction noted above (**Attachment A**) and provided it with a new title 'Neighbourhood Engagement Policy.' The Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Process is illustrated in the appended flow chart (**Attachment B**). The following highlights significant updates to this communications policy, as required by Council.

1. Public Information Process

This part of the policy provides early notification about development applications for Mission residents and property owners whose properties are located around a development application site. The mechanism for providing this notification is termed 'Pre-notification.' The Pre-notification mechanism provides applicants with a variety of means of communicating with residents and property owners. Council will be notified by staff about all pre-notification letters, surveys, public information meetings and other communication approaches prior to applicants initiating mail-out or electronic communications. Following the steps in the Public Information Process that concludes when an application is introduced to Council, the regular development application process will continue.

2. Communications Options

Within the Public Information Process, development applicants will be able to communicate with property owners and residents using a range of public engagement communication channels that include:

- Pre-notification letters that are sent out by applicants (with notification radius and mailing list provided by City staff). City staff will notify Council about the applicant's letter and project information before applicants mail the pre-notification letters.
- Public information survey. Applicants could mail a survey appended with a cover letter or provide a survey link to the applicant's website. City staff would provide the applicant with a notification radius and mailing list). City staff will also notify Council about the survey and cover letter before applicants mail the survey letter.

- Public information meeting. Applicants could host a public information meeting. Staff have the option of attending, while applicants will provide staff with a summary of the meeting. City staff would provide the applicant with a notification radius and mailing list. The public information meeting could also be advertised by the applicant in local newspapers, social media and the applicant's website. Staff will notify Council about the meeting prior to the applicant sending letters and other information out.
- Other communication approaches for applicants. Other approaches may be considered upon request from applicants. As with the above options, Council would be notified before mail-outs or advertising for a meeting.
- Development Services sends Pre-notification letters. An option for applicants is for City staff to send pre-notification letters. Staff would notify Council prior to mail-out.

3. Other Pre-notification Details and Process Sequence

Highlights of the Public Information Process include:

- Pre-notification mail-outs by applicants or City staff are to be sent to properties within the notification radius set out in the Fees and Procedures Bylaw (e.g., 150 m for urban areas and 500 m for rural areas of the City);
- Applicants shall pay for printing and mailing costs prior to pre-notification mail-out when mail-outs are administered by Development Services staff;
- Residents and property owners have three weeks from the date of a pre-notification letter to respond to an applicant or to City staff (in cases where municipal staff administer the communications process); and
- City staff will evaluate comments or questions from residents/property owners, and where necessary, work with applicants to make project adjustments.

4. Information Memo

The development planning staff member who manages an application will have the option to prepare an information memo to Council that will include responses from applicants and information about how an applicant may have revised a proposal based upon community comments or questions. The information memo would be a separate summary report to Council submitted prior to a Council Report dealing with initiating of a Zoning amendment bylaw reading or approval of a Development Permit. The intent of an Information Memo is to assist Council by providing summary information about proposals, particularly if there are remaining questions about potential community impacts from a proposed development.

Alternately, planning staff would incorporate a summary of community responses and applicant's responses (e.g., adjustments to a site plan, elevations, etc.) within a Council Report.

5. Policy Annual Review

Staff will provide Council with an annual report that provides information about the overall performance of the Neighbourhood Engagement Policy. The annual review could report on the number and location of proposals that had been reviewed in accordance with this policy, cases where community feedback has influenced project design, and how applicants have design projects in recognition of the policy's strategic questions.

Council Goals/Objectives

The Neighbourhood Engagement Policy is aligned with and supports Council's 2018 – 2022 Strategic Plan for part 5 'Engaged Community.'

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications on the City associated with this report. However, some internal administrative resources in the Planning Division will need to be utilized. This policy is proposed to be implemented in 2023 and given that Council could approve the request from Development Services for an additional administrative staff member as part of the budget process, adequate resources could be available to better support the implementation of this Policy commencing in the new year.

Communication

Staff from City departments including Engineering, Parks and Finance will be notified about this policy. Members of the Development Liaison Committee will receive a copy of this Policy.

Summary and Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Engagement Policy has been updated in accordance with Council's direction. This Policy aims to increase public awareness about development applications and provide opportunities for public engagement about development proposals during the early stage of application processing. It also requires applicants to respond to questions linked to Council's broad community objectives when preparing application submissions to illustrate how proposals will benefit the City.

The Neighbourhood Engagement Policy is recommended for Council's approval.

Report Prepared by: Mike Dickinson, Manager of Long Range Planning and Special Projects

Reviewed by: Dan Sommer, Director of Development Planning

Approved for Inclusion: Mike Younie, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment(s)

Attachment A: Neighbourhood Engagement Policy, LAN.66(C)

Attachment B: Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Process Flow Chart