

Participative Engagement for Effectual Outcomes

*Municipal Engineering Foundation of Victoria
2017 Study Tour
USA & Canada*

*Emma Dalton
General Manager Infrastructure Services
Shire of Campaspe
e.dalton@campaspe.vic.gov.au*



**Municipal
Engineering
Foundation Victoria**

1. FOREWORD

This report has been made possible through the Municipal Engineering Foundation Victoria, which provides opportunities for engineers in Local Government to enhance their skills through research on study topics under a scholarship.

I wish to express my appreciation to:

The Municipal Engineering Foundation Victoria and its trustees.

Geoff Glynn, Matthew Varcoe and Frank Vassilacos who proved to be excellent travel companions.

Merv Paton for his support leading up to the tour.

The CEO and Campaspe Shire Council for their encouragement and support.

The organisations and individuals who generously provided their time and their expertise during the tour:

- One Stop Portland
- City of Portland
- TriMet
- City of Hillsboro
- Chicago Department of Transport
- Village of Glenview
- Village of Midlothian
- City of Toronto
- Toronto Water
- City of Hamilton
- City of Orlando
- City of Kissimmee
- City of Denver
- City of Golden
- Jefferson County.



Study group; Frank Vassilacos, Geoff Glynn, Matthew Varcoe, Emma Dalton.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	FOREWORD	2
2.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
3.	INTRODUCTION	5
4.	LIVEABILITY	6
4.1	Case Study 1	6
4.2	Case Study 2	7
4.3	Case Study 3	7
4.4	Findings	8
4.5	Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities	8
5.	LEADERSHIP	9
5.1	Case Study 1	9
5.2	Case Study 2	10
5.3	Case Study 3	10
5.4	Case Study 4	11
5.5	Findings	11
5.6	Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities	11
6.	CAPACITY BUILDING	13
6.1	Case Study 1	14
6.2	Case Study 2	14
6.3	Case Study 3	15
6.4	Findings	16
6.5	Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities	16
7.	PARTNERSHIPS	17
7.1	Case Study 1	17
7.2	Case Study 2	18
7.3	Case Study 3	19
7.4	Findings	19
7.5	Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities	19
8.	COMMUNICATION	20
8.1	Case Study 1	20
8.2	Findings	21
8.3	Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities	22
9.	CONCLUSION	23
9.1	Final suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities	23

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Engaging with the community has always been a key function of local government, widely regarded as the level of government 'closest to the people'. Councils have policies for engagement and have been performing consultation for many years in order to develop council plans, strategies, master plans and community plans. Yet many communities are becoming increasingly disconnected from their local council, demonstrated by low participation rates in governance processes, candidate pools and feedback.

There is currently no legislation in Victoria that describes how local government must engage with communities.

In 2016 the Victorian State Government announced a review of the Local Government Act 1989 to bring about a number of reforms. One key objective is to improve the transparency, responsiveness and collaborative capacity of councils, and to reinforce participatory democracy as a guiding tenet of council practice. It seeks to provide for stronger citizen engagement in shaping councils' direction, improve transparency and accountability and embed a continuous improvement culture in councils. This aspect will become increasingly important if councils' seek an exemption to rate capping, as The Act requires community participation in the development of councils' plans and budgets, and in councils' application for an exemption to the rate cap. The review of the Act is underway at the time of writing this report.

In May 2017, the Victorian Auditor-General completed a report titled *Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector* which examined the effectiveness of community engagement and participation at the local government level at six Victorian councils, based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model of public participation. The report found that whilst policies and frameworks may be in place, the quality of implementation varied considerably between individual organisations.

The United States of America have standardised requirements through the National Environment Policy Act 1969 (NEPA) that apply to most agencies to undertake an assessment of proposed actions including environmental, social and economic impacts. The purpose of this process is to mandate citizen involvement and drive participative decision making with the community where there will likely be changes to these environments. In return, the community know what to expect in terms of engagement, and are more likely to get involved.

Stakeholder engagement is fundamental to good decision making. It enables decision makers to understand the vision and provide the leadership that communities need to achieve their aspirations.

This report explores participative engagement processes and what the community need from their local government representatives, through the lens of five consistent elements that emerged over the course of the study tour:

- Liveability
- Leadership
- Capacity Building
- Partnerships
- Communication

3. INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, there has been an increasing awareness around the requirement for Local Government Authorities (LGA's) and municipal engineers to manage and sustainably maintain community infrastructure.

Asset Management education delivered through bodies such as the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Institute to Public Works Engineering Australia, has assisted LGA's develop robust processes and asset management strategies. Notwithstanding, in an environment where rates are capped and Government Grants are dependent on election cycles, there is an ever increasing uncertainty about the long term financial sustainability of LGA's, in particular rural councils who have large asset bases and low population density.

Traditional local government policy making, based on a one size fits all approach, is becoming increasingly unpalatable for communities. The individual needs of communities in terms of liveability, demographics, economic drivers or their ability to access alternative services is a new component in the future of asset management.

I selected this study topic as I believed that asset management policy decisions for the future will require meaningful participative engagement with communities through place based discussions, and that engineers need to be part of these conversations with community to ensure they are conscious of the impact of their decisions.

The United States of America have requirements through the National Environment Policy Act 1969 (NEPA) that apply to most agencies to undertake an assessment of proposed actions, including environmental, social and economic impacts. The Federal Highway Administration Regulations (FHWA) requires that each state has approved procedures to carry out public involvement/public hearing processes, mandating that any federally funded transportation projects are subjected to a consultation process.

The purpose of this process is to enable citizen involvement and better informed decision making. In return, the community know what to expect in terms of engagement, and are reportedly more likely to get involved.

Through the course of the study tour the group visited cities and counties across the states of Oregon, Illinois, Ontario (Canada), Florida and Colorado with populations ranging from 60,000 to 2.7million. Whilst my study topic arose within a Victorian rural council setting, many of the challenges we face are shared with large cities:

- Pressure on infrastructure due to growth
- Increased property values causing segmentation of communities
- Housing affordability driving population into areas without services to support them
- Increasing community expectations.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the principles for effectual engagement remain the same for large cities as small country towns – because it's about the people.

Traditional methods to determine asset requirements have been based on technical information – condition, life, and utilisation - not the communities needs or desires. Our communities need us to work with them more collaboratively through a place based approach to understand their vision and to ensure that 'their place' is viable into the future.

4. LIVEABILITY

Evidence suggests that if you ask residents of any city or town why they choose to live where they do, they will more than likely mention employment, transport, education, health, community, connectivity and safety. Residents are becoming increasingly expectant of neighbourhoods that are ‘liveable’ – places where people want to live or visit. Places to be proud of and have ownership of.

The term liveable has broad definitions, but consistently features dialogue about complete streets and neighbourhoods, where walking, bicycling or public transport are the first choices for most trips, where public spaces are accessible, beautiful and functional, and where housing is available and affordable.

"Liveability means our communities remain places where people want to visit and live, and that our natural environment is healthy, accessible and well-managed for current and future generations." - *Economic Building Blocks for Victoria 2016*.

Place-based planning is a way to shape the future of our neighbourhoods by concentrating on the look, feel, form and character of distinct areas within a community instead of focusing only on conventional categories of use. Planning for place is about planning for people, not assets.

Across each of the cities visited over the course of the study tour, the physical initiatives being delivered to achieve liveability were remarkably consistent.

- Complete Streets - enabling safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- Green Infrastructure - large and small scale networks of parks, open spaces and rain gardens which help mitigate flooding impacts caused by impervious surfaces.

4.1 Case Study 1

The **Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020** (figure 1) was developed to build on 10 years of place based work with residents, businesses and agencies.



Figure 1: Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020

The themes around what makes neighbourhoods strong are consistent with many Victorian Local Government Council Plan objectives – built environment, economic opportunities, healthy lives, social development and participation in civic decision making.

The strategy recognises the importance of empowering people, communities and organisations to create a supportive sub-climate for neighbourhood well-being.

The strategy acknowledges that “there is ‘no ‘one size fits all’ recipe for strengthening neighbourhoods. The right mix of initiatives and investments will vary from place to place, depending on local history, local priorities and local conditions”. Of the 140 distinct neighbourhood areas within City of Toronto, 31 are identified as being in need of additional support from the City.

What sets the Toronto approach apart is that the City have empowered residents and stakeholders to own their Neighbourhood Action Plans (figure 2) by assembling a diverse, engaged and committed Resident Advisory Committee from the 31 Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and have committed to reporting on and celebrating their achievements.



Figure 2: Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 Implementation Update

4.2 Case Study 2

The City of Portland has long been regarded as an early adopter of the complete streets movement. Their Transportation System Plan is integrated into the **2040 Growth Concept** to reinforce a transportation system that makes it more convenient for people to walk, cycle, use transit, and drive less to meet their daily needs.

Portland recognised early that simply adding more freeway lanes would have the same impact as ‘being overweight and buying a bigger belt’. They have been progressively working towards a model to reduce the reliance of motorised vehicles through investment in complete streets initiatives and public transport. The \$135million Tilikum Crossing built in 2015 is the first bridge to be built over the Willamette River in Portland since 1973, and the first of its kind in the USA. It’s unique difference – the 524 metre long cable-stay bridge carries only pedestrians, cyclists, trains, buses and streetcars (trams).

4.3 Case Study 3

City of **Denver’s Mobility Action Plan** (July 2017). This multi-modal strategy to address transportation and mobility recognises the need to undertake capital improvement to enhance their network of sidewalk, street, pedestrian, bike and transit. The plan aims to:

1. Reduce single-occupant vehicle commuters to 50 percent, and increase the percentage of bike/pedestrian commuters to 15 percent and transit commuters to 15 percent.
2. Reduce to zero the annual number of traffic fatalities, serious injuries and major crashes by fully implementing the city’s Vision Zero program.
3. Protect our climate, improve public health and increase Denver’s ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050.
4. Eliminate barriers and increase access to smart technologies and mobility services for everyone, including low-income residents, underserved neighbourhoods and people with disabilities.
5. Improve and streamline funding, project implementation, the city’s organisational structure and public involvement in decision-making.

Denver says “the time to act is now. We must be smart and we must be bold. Denver’s Mobility Action Plan will support the transportation choices people want to make and move more people, more efficiently and more safely. It will increase mobility options, improve safety, address climate change, improve public health, and create more accessibility”.

4.4 Findings

Not all liveability projects need millions of dollars to deliver good outcomes, pilot projects can be implemented with paint and temporary materials such as bollards and flower pots (*figure 3*) which allow flexibility to make adjustments to the design if necessary. Pilot projects also allow a period of ‘try before you buy’ for the community for concepts that haven’t been tried before.

The critical step to effectively achieving the liveability and place expectations is to understand the community’s vision. Each of the cities visited that are achieving successful community supported outcomes have solid policy and strategy in place which has been developed through extensive community consultation processes that capture the vision, hopes and fears of their communities.

4.5 Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities

- Define the distinct ‘places’ that exist within the municipal area.
- Develop a community engagement policy and framework to define how council will capture the ideas and vision of the community.
- Undertake ‘place based’ visioning exercises with the identified community groups.
- Confirm what you heard with the community and empower them to participate in prioritising objectives to develop a forward plan.
- Demonstrate commitment to community engagement through meeting and reporting on targets and objectives.
- Report on, and celebrate successes.



Figure 3: Separate Cycling Lane divided with temporary materials and paint markings

5. LEADERSHIP

Throughout the study tour, there were numerous examples where visionary, innovative, big picture leadership led to the significant enhancement, liveability and connectivity of those cities.

The success stories point to a formula where:

- Strategic objectives have been developed in collaboration with community
- The organisation, the community and the local partnerships (business, industry, health, justice, education) understand those objectives and why they are important
- The organisation has strategies and plans in place to achieve the objectives.

Strategic and collaborative leadership is core to achieving outcomes that meet the needs of the community.

A lack of visionary leadership in key roles, even with the best strategies and plans documented, will ultimately result in an organisation without long term vision or purpose. Without a catalyst leader to foster advancement, quality staff will become increasingly difficult to retain, the objectives of the plans and strategies are unlikely to be achieved and relationships with the community will erode, leading to even greater disconnection.

In an increasingly financially constrained environment, particularly in regional areas, strong leadership is more important now than ever. Local government needs strategic leaders who can positively influence the long term prosperity of municipalities. This involves working with all stakeholders (community, business, industry, health, justice, education) to understand, develop and deliver a long-term plan to achieve prosperous outcomes - a place where people desire to live.

Tough decisions need to be made and tough conversations need to take place without eroding any goodwill that has been invested. Leaders need to challenge themselves to find innovative ways to respond to a changing financial environment, through strategic and regular reflection on the parameters within their control:

- What level of service is required?
- What is the cost of providing the service?
- What is the best use of resources to deliver the service?
- Is the service being delivered as sustainably and efficiently as possible?
- Which partners can we leverage off / work with to achieve more effective outcomes?
- What changes should we anticipate in readiness for the future (social, economic, environmental, legislative)?

And most importantly at all of those reflection points, what conversations need to be held with stakeholders (internal service managers, service users, community, partners, competitors, other municipalities, state or federal government) to ensure that answers are well informed and any identified opportunities don't detrimentally impact other areas of the organisation.

Leaders who demonstrate that they deliver timely, quality, cost effective and efficient services that meet the needs of the community build confidence in staff, community and partners as strategic place shapers.

5.1 Case Study 1

A striking comparison of the importance of timely and visionary leadership were the waterfront precincts in both Portland and Chicago. In 1974, Governor Tom McCall led vision to remove a freeway along the Willamette River to create a 36 acre Waterfront Park in downtown Portland. The park provides a pleasant, off street thoroughfare away from vehicular traffic and is as an active transport route for commuters as well as recreational fitness, skateboarding, fountain play, boat watching and is home to a number of markets and festivals and has been voted as one of America's ten greatest public spaces. McCall is remembered for his

commitment to conserve and preserve natural assets, clean up waterways, green the city through the placement of linear parks and protect the liveability of Portland.



Tom McCall Waterfront Park, Portland



Lake Side Drive, Chicago

In contrast, Chicago (and Toronto) have maintained the expressways which now form a barrier to accessing their lake front area and reinforce the need for vehicles to access those areas.

5.2 Case Study 2

Portland is also well known for its urban growth boundary established in 1975. Whilst this has drawn criticism in response to increased land prices within the boundary and decreased land prices outside of the boundary, it has had the desired impact of decreasing urban sprawl, increasing urban density, the ability to provide urban areas with quality infrastructure and as a side benefit creates a quick escape from the city to explore the forests, gorges and wine country.

5.3 Case Study 3

Chicago have been investing in a protected on-street bike network (figure 4) through their Chicago Complete Streets project, which currently covers 225 miles and aims to reach a continuous network of 645 miles. Mayor Emanuel's 2011 campaign promise was to build 100 miles of bike lanes by the end of his first term and to make Chicago 'a world class cycling city'. He achieved this objective, albeit at the 11th hour with road crews working overtime to complete the last of the line marking.

Protected bike lanes provide a buffer between vehicles and riders (buffers can range from line marking to traffic cones to relocated parking lanes) which has proven to increase use of bicycles, increase mode share, decrease fatalities and decrease injuries. Bicycle counts to measure active transport uptake have shown increases of 30% on the previous year in Chicago.

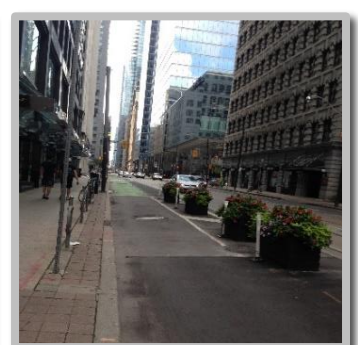


Figure 4: Protected bike lanes - Chicago

5.4 Case Study 4

Denver has embarked on a number of significant projects to improve liveability including upgrading an old industrial area along the main thoroughfare to the city from the airport (Brighton Boulevard Project), redevelopment of Union Station precinct and numerous multi modal street initiatives.

Denver’s 2017 Mobility Action Plan recognises that:

‘Reinventing our roadways into complete streets that move more people, more safely and more efficiently will require major new investments in the system. This Mobility Action Plan requires a minimum \$2 billion commitment between now and 2030. With about \$1.65 billion in funding already identified, we must close a \$350 million gap’ but also acknowledges that:

‘The reasons to transform are frustratingly obvious. Rapid population growth and increased congestion are making it harder to move around our city. Too many people are getting hurt or killed in crashes. Transportation is the largest source of air pollution and a leading source of greenhouse gas emissions. Our infrastructure is deteriorating, we lack mobility options, and finding the funding to keep up—let alone get ahead—is becoming more and more difficult.

Our people deserve a safe, reliable and affordable system of complete and connected networks that offer people more options to get around town in the ways that meet their day-to-day needs and support the choices people want to make’.



Figure 5: Denver’s Mobility Action Plan

5.5 Findings

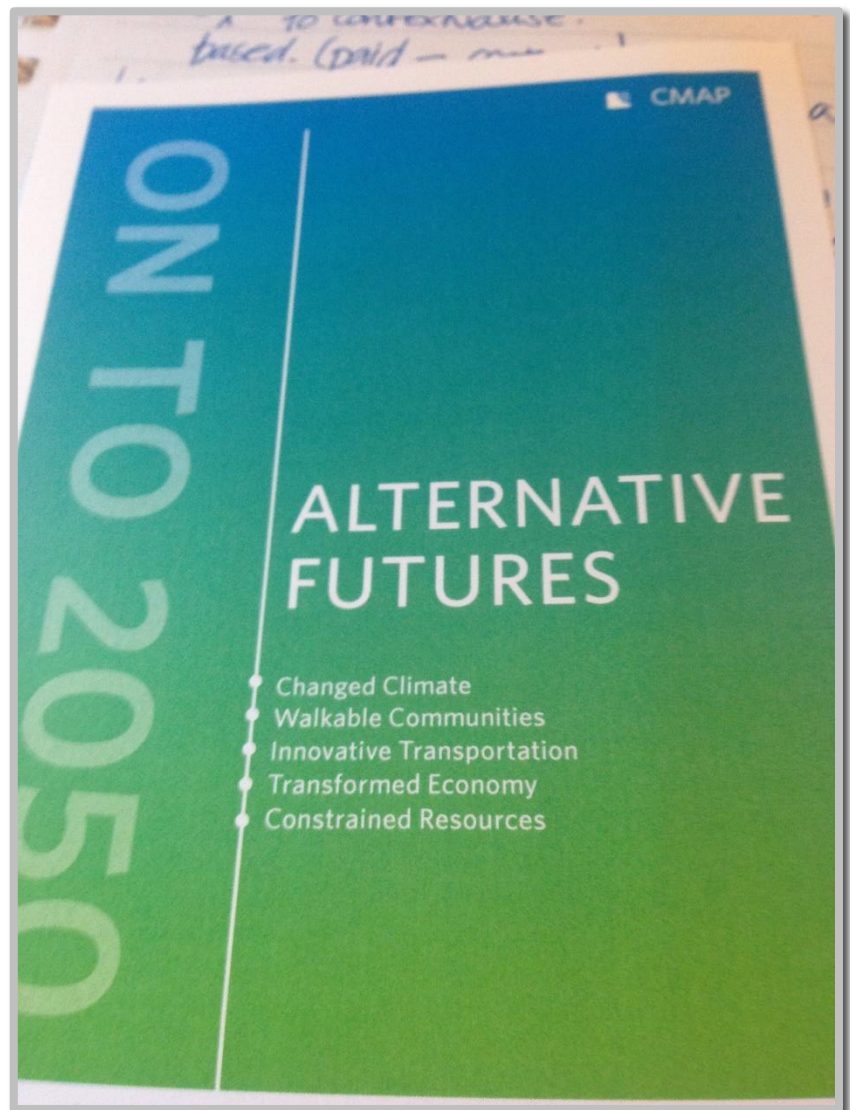
It is imperative that municipalities invest in their existing people and establish visionary leadership as a valued skill in order to achieve tomorrow that is better than today. Visionary leaders will energise and inspire their staff, they are able to clearly communicate what the future holds and proactively anticipate opportunities and obstacles.

Visionary leaders work with the end in mind. Their decisions may not always be vote-winning at the time, but they know where they are headed and why they are going there. They provide strong direction, clear communication and join the dots between today’s decisions and tomorrow’s experience. Being receptive to whole of community feedback is the key to create a shared and comprehensive strategic vision.

5.6 Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities

- Ensure that the vision of the community is embedded in strategic documents and corporate values and well communicated, both internally and externally.
- Executive Teams assess strategic and innovative ways to respond to the changing environment in pursuit of the vision.

- Managers analyse and report on service parameters and the ability to manage expectations and deliver agreed outcomes.
- Teams have robust and diverse skill sets to work effectively across departments to ensure that identified opportunities don't detrimentally impact other areas of the organisation.
- Invest in staff training and development to gain enhanced skills in community engagement, strategic planning, policy development, performance measuring and reporting.
- Utilise values based recruitment to ensure that newcomers have the right skills and values to support effective team work and deliver excellent community outcomes.
- Observe international trends from world leading municipalities and Placemaking leaders.



6. CAPACITY BUILDING

For a long time, communities were seemingly satisfied with municipal managers making strategic decisions about community services and assets based on technical aspects of condition, purpose, location and utilisation. The term 'engagement' in the past has often been used to describe what is probably more accurately 'inform'.

IAP2 is an international association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community engagement. As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process.

The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard and is referred to by the Victorian Auditor-Generals office (VAGO) in their *Public Participation in Government Decision-making Better Practice Guide*.



Communities have an increasing expectation and desire to be involved in municipal decision making. If we are to connect effectively with our community, then not only must we provide the opportunity but we must make participation accessible, meaningful, participative and appropriate.

Throughout the study tour we heard of a number of examples where community members were given an opportunity to take on a leadership role on behalf of their community as an outcome of the engagement process. Opportunities, in the form of steering committees or working groups, enabled those people to gain a greater understanding of governance, strategy, policy and budgeting processes and built up relationships within their local government environment. For some, this provided an opportunity to gain practical experience and led to part time employment. Tapping into these resources has led to improved relationships, recruitment of difficult to fill community liaison positions, increased community confidence and better and timelier outcomes.

Progressive cities are recognising that community leaders are potential ambassadors for municipalities, they demonstrate strong ownership of their 'place', will help raise community awareness and understanding, they ask good questions and they help the business improve.

6.1 Case Study 1

The City of Portland is a leader in the space of capacity building. Through their Office of Neighbourhood Involvement, they facilitate programs such as:

- Diversity and Civic Leadership program - focused on strengthening the City's engagement, liveability, organisational capacity, and self-empowerment for Portland's minority communities (people of colour, immigrant and refugee communities). The annual program facilitates 30 grass roots leaders being introduced to strategic planning, policy discussion and design development and implementation of projects that broaden diverse participation. The City want authentic relationships and conversations and recognise that policy & strategy makers need to represent all populations.
- New Portlander program - aimed at integrating migrants and refugees into Portland life. Their research shows that people who participate in the program liaise with the city 3 to 4 times as frequently as long term residents.
- New Portlanders Policy Commission - advises the City on policies and practices to articulate immigrant and refugee needs for City services.

The City of Portland recognises and embraces the capacity within the community. Strong commitment to capacity building opens the doors for conversations and helps the City to understand community needs and desires, builds credibility and assists with strategic policy development.

6.2 Case Study 2

The City of Denver advocate that Community working groups are a good way to 'vet' what goes out to the community at large. They have invested two decades into community-led visioning and planning to understand the needs of their residents. Their working groups consist of businesses, schools, PTA, and community members who are willing to participate and use their networks to gain momentum and assist with presenting concepts to the community. *"Our community are smart, powerful, they show up, they have a strong marketing focus and are an effective lobby group that can assist in achieving outcomes greater than officers can alone"* – Councilman Albus Brooks.

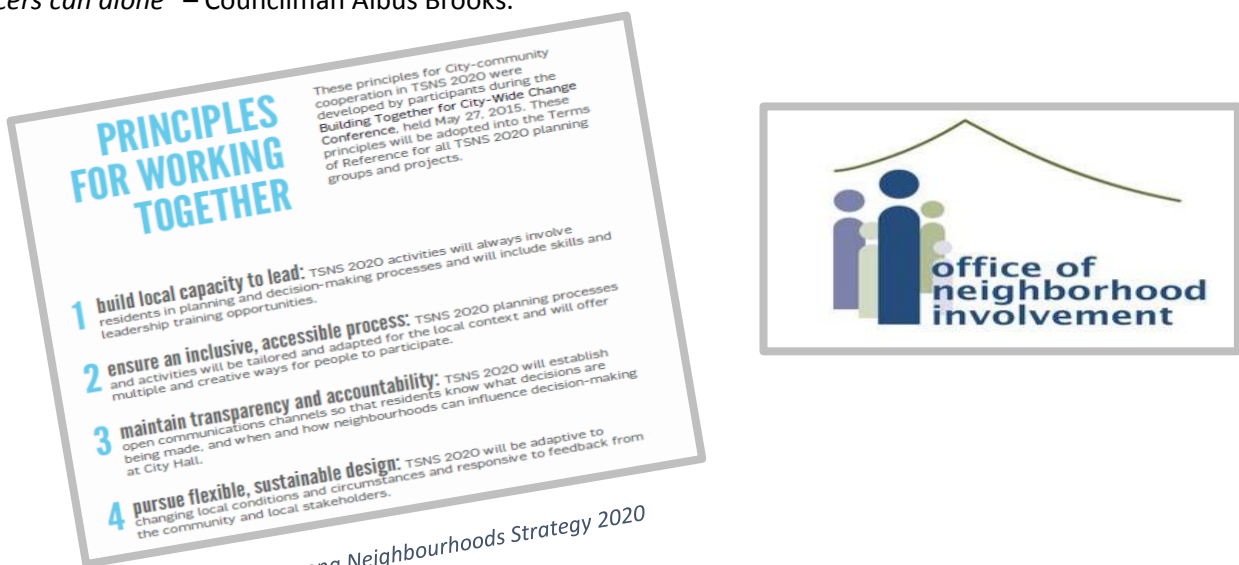


Figure 6: Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020

6.3 Case Study 3

In the village of Midlothian, Illinois, properties were being repeatedly flooded. Not unlike trends being observed in Australia, the flooding events were becoming more frequent and more severe. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago had been working on a solution but the implementation of on ground works were estimated to be three or four years away.

In 2014 a group of residents worked with their municipal councillors to form the 'Floodlothian' group and started working with Centre for Neighbourhood Technology's RainReady Community program. Since that time, one member of the team has honed her skills in grant submission writing, another has concentrated on educating herself on the technical details and developing contacts in government to increase exposure to the issue after recognising that 'there is no one agency that has enough money to fix all the problems'.

The group have secured more than \$1.3million in external funds, became the first municipality to adopt a RainReady Plan (a blueprint for reducing flood risk), and have undertaken numerous community projects with the support of the municipality and industry to install (and maintain) rain gardens.

The municipality has initiated changes to their policy position, with requirements of officers to assess any impact on stormwater management before any decisions are made. They are also committed to a complete street project in their main street to integrate flood relief, economic revitalisation, tree plantings, bike lanes and improved pedestrian accessibility.



6.4 Findings

A commitment to genuine participative community engagement can substantially improve the triple bottom line on any council project. The technical aspect for most municipal engineers is the easy part. The mind shift required is the willingness to change ‘the way we have always done it’.

Councils need to identify and tap into the wealth of expertise and experience that exists within their communities. Depending on the project, opportunities of people to be involved or employed to deliver outcomes can be beneficial to the community in more than a financial sense.

Municipalities need to commit to building the capacity of their technical staff to undertake effective engagement. It is essential that officers with responsibility for the ownership or maintenance of assets are part of the conversation to ensure that they understand the vision of the community and the impacts of their policy recommendations.

6.5 Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities

- Embed Council’s community engagement policy and framework throughout the organisation and communicate it both internally and externally.
- Invest in stakeholder engagement training for existing staff (such as IAP2).
- Provide opportunities for community leaders to genuinely participate in the delivery of community identified outcomes.
- Identify community leaders with skills to cultivate participation and strengthen partnerships.
- Provide growth and development opportunities for community leaders.

7. PARTNERSHIPS

An interesting side aspect of capacity building was that in most of the cities visited, partnerships frequently extended to industry, business, health, philanthropic organisations, transport providers, educators, service clubs, academics and civic leaders. Those cities actively embracing thought leaders within the community, capturing innovation, leveraging of public private partnerships are achieving outcomes for their community that they couldn't on their own.

7.1 Case Study 1

The City of Hillsboro, Oregon, have a strong history of partnering – in fact they refer to partnering as 'standard operating procedure'. Hillsboro's 2035 Community Plan includes a number of initiatives which have joint responsibilities with their partners. Meetings with these stakeholders are held quarterly to discuss progress and performance against objectives.

Orenco Station (*figure 7*) is a neighbourhood of Hillsboro, designed as a pedestrian-friendly, high-density community built in between a light rail line and the main headquarters of the company Intel. It is a case study for transit-oriented development, a 'bedroom' neighbourhood that has won awards for both planning and liveability.

Built on land formerly owned by the Oregon Nursery Company, the land was vacant until development began in 1997. The developers of the 135 Acre site created a team of architects, landscape architects, engineers, and experts in retail and homebuilding, and worked closely with the City to achieve the outcomes that the City required. City of Hillsboro planners developed a new zoning ordinance for the site to incorporate a number of innovations, including "skinny" streets, maximum street setbacks and side yard easements. In the commercial area, buildings are required to line the streets, with parking in the rear, and mixed uses are allowed and in some cases required. The development was staged as reverse infill so that the residential areas were developed before the commercial areas.

The outcome is a neighbourhood with excellent employment opportunities (not only is it located adjacent to Intel, it is also only two train stops from Nike HQ), has over 1,800 homes, is walkable, bikeable, has retail and office space, a supermarket, restaurants and cafes with excellent public transport to Portland. Not surprisingly home vacancy rates are low and property values are very strong.



Figure 7: Orenco Station





7.2 Case Study 2

The Bentway Project (*figure 7*) in Toronto is a project to create 1.75 km of open space underneath the Gardiner Expressway. The project is a partnership between the City of Toronto and the Judy and Wilmot Matthews Foundation, who made a \$25million contribution to start the project. The space will become a venue for music events, civic events, markets, art, education and recreation (including an ice skating rink). The space will be managed by a not for profit who will coordinate events and programming.

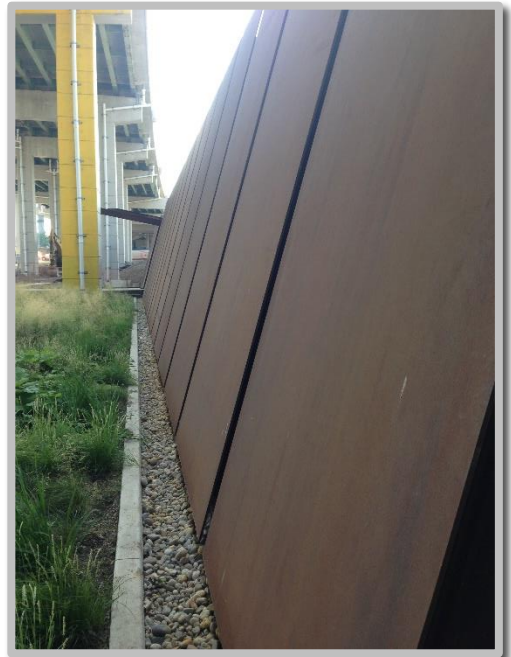
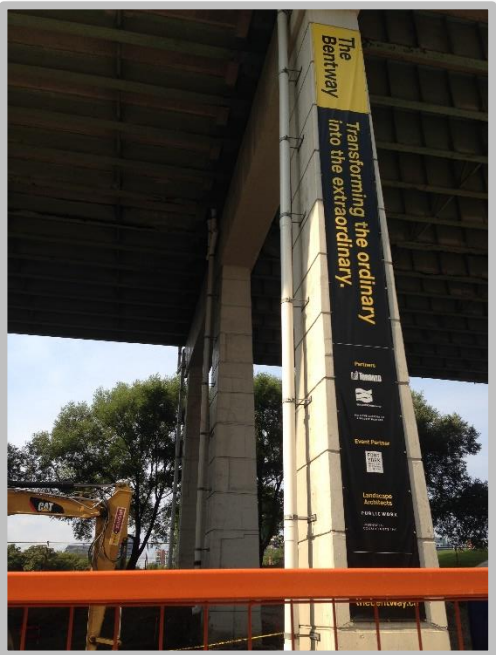


Figure 7: The Bentway Project

7.3 Case Study 3

The City of Denver have embraced some innovative partnership opportunities for outreach, consultation and capacity building. One example is where they worked with 2 high schools on the topic of urban planning, then had the students assist them with conducting a survey within their community. The students got credit for their work and exposed them to a possible career path, and the survey results collected captured the feedback from their non-native English speaking family members and neighbours that would be unlikely to attend a public meeting or fill out an online survey.

Denver representatives offered that “partnerships can make projects longer but has capacity to deliver outstanding outcomes that the community own and want, it also makes the implementation phase much better – the community are better advised, they have greater confidence that what they want will be built, we get less questions, less possibility of delays and less requirement for changes after implementation. It can also be the difference between having a project and not having a project”.

7.4 Findings

In an increasingly financially constrained environment, councils need to be open to building strategic partnerships with entities that they may not have in the past. These might be entities with specific interests (such as a philanthropic group with an interest in the Arts), business interest (facilitating land exchanges) or more general interests such as encouraging health and wellbeing initiatives across the community.

Councils need to invest in building and strengthening relationships with industry, business, health, philanthropic organisations, transport providers, educators, service clubs, academics and civic leaders, to realise the full potential of those partnerships.

Councils can build community confidence though initiating, establishing and reporting on collaborative partnerships, for example partnering with district schools, kindergartens and health providers to have shared responsibility for specific health and wellbeing outcomes.

7.5 Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities

- Proactively identify opportunities that are attractive to partnership arrangements.
- Ensure that potential partners are engaged in the development of the Council Plan so that they understand the strategic vision of the organisation.
- Incorporate partnership identification into project planning framework.
- Develop partnerships, set clear objectives, meet regularly, report on achievements and successes.

8. COMMUNICATION

Informed decision making that meets the needs of the community must take into account the views and ideas of the community. Through this process, planned outcomes can be responsive to requirements and provide for the level of participation and inclusiveness that the community desire. Views should reflect the views of those who live in, do business, visit or work in the municipality.

As stated in the introduction, the USA have requirements through the NEPA that apply to most federal agencies to undertake an assessment of proposed actions including environmental, social and economic impacts through public engagement. This requirement has resulted in organisations that are well resourced, willing and committed to meaningful engagement.

8.1 Case Study 1

An example of this in practice is the documented requirements and guidance for public involvement published by the Illinois Department of Transport. This document defines when public involvement programs takes place taking into account if the change is significant, if it changes the existing layout or function, if the project will have social, economic or environmental effects and if there is likely to be sufficient general public interest. The guidance notes provide advice on designing public involvement programs, correspondence templates and suggestions for pre planning and post activity actions.

The requirement for authorities to undertake public engagement extends to most organisations utilising federal funding, but has embedded to such an extent that communication and feedback tools cover the whole life cycle of projects.

Some innovative communication tools being utilised were:

- Visioning exercises to determine what the community ‘vision’ their ‘place’ will look like into the future
- Online opportunities for involvement in decision making such as portals, interactive kiosks, ‘drop a pin’ to identify areas of concern
- Use of a variety of formats such as images, graphics and audio on web sites to explain complex issues such as summarising feedback, decision making processes, risk management or financial performance on Council’s website
- Use of multiple mediums for project progress updates - forums, workshops, online, social media, interactive kiosks
- Use of drones, site cameras on websites and twitter to provide ‘real time’ updates
- ‘How did we do’ surveys at the completion of projects, or ‘thumbs up’ when we do well
- Simple feedback cards at customer service desks asking: what are you excited about, what are you happy about, what are you concerned about.

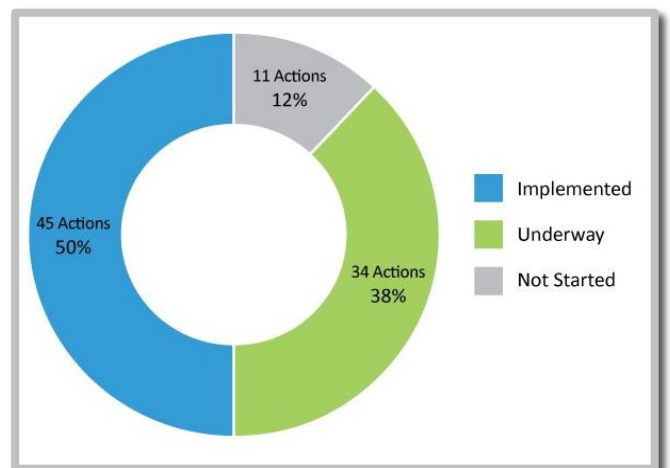


Figure 8: Hillsboro 2035 Community Plan

Some learnings shared were:

- Credibility is enhanced when decisions are made through an open and transparent processes, credibility is lost when decisions are made 'on behalf of' others without their input
- Simply 'convening' sessions (as opposed to engaging) will limit opportunities to harvest innovative ideas
- 'Go to them', don't hold meetings at town hall, consider their needs – if your target audience is parents of young children consider providing childcare at the venue, if the only suitable meeting time to get the right stakeholders is 7pm provide food
- Consultation doesn't always mean everyone gets their own way, sometimes at the end you need to trim, but let the community be informed and have control if the engineering parameters are satisfied
- Pilot projects can convert agitators into advocates by enabling them to see the plan in action and influence changes if necessary
- Keep stakeholders informed with regular updates - this is what we planned, this is what we've achieved, this is what we plan next quarter, overall project summary
- Make sure that all staff and council know about the project and the messaging – they can be great conduits for information.

8.2 Findings

Information is capital. It must be easy to find, meaningful, easy to read and easy to share. People want to be informed in a timely, accessible and concise way.

Open and transparent communication strategies build respect and trust within the community. Regular and visible communication of achievements, results and outcomes can be provided through low cost means such as websites, social media and existing newsletter publications. Partnership successes can be reported through each of the stakeholder organisations, so that achievements are communicated in a variety of ways and have maximum story telling impact.

Maintaining communication is critical for lasting engagement. This relates to general communications as well as project specific communication.

Project management plans should incorporate an engagement assessment tool to determine the level of participation and guide the extent of communication required. An example of such a tool is shown below, which has been developed based on the VAGO Public Participation in Government Decision-making Better Practice Guide.



8.3 Suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities

- Understand how your community prefer communications to be delivered.
- Invest in communication tools that meet community needs and ensure that meaningful and timely information is available.
- Develop standardised procedures for projects to determine the appropriate extent of consultation and type of communication required to meet community need.
- Plan for communications - define who it is aimed at, what they need to know, when they need to know it, how you plan to deliver it.



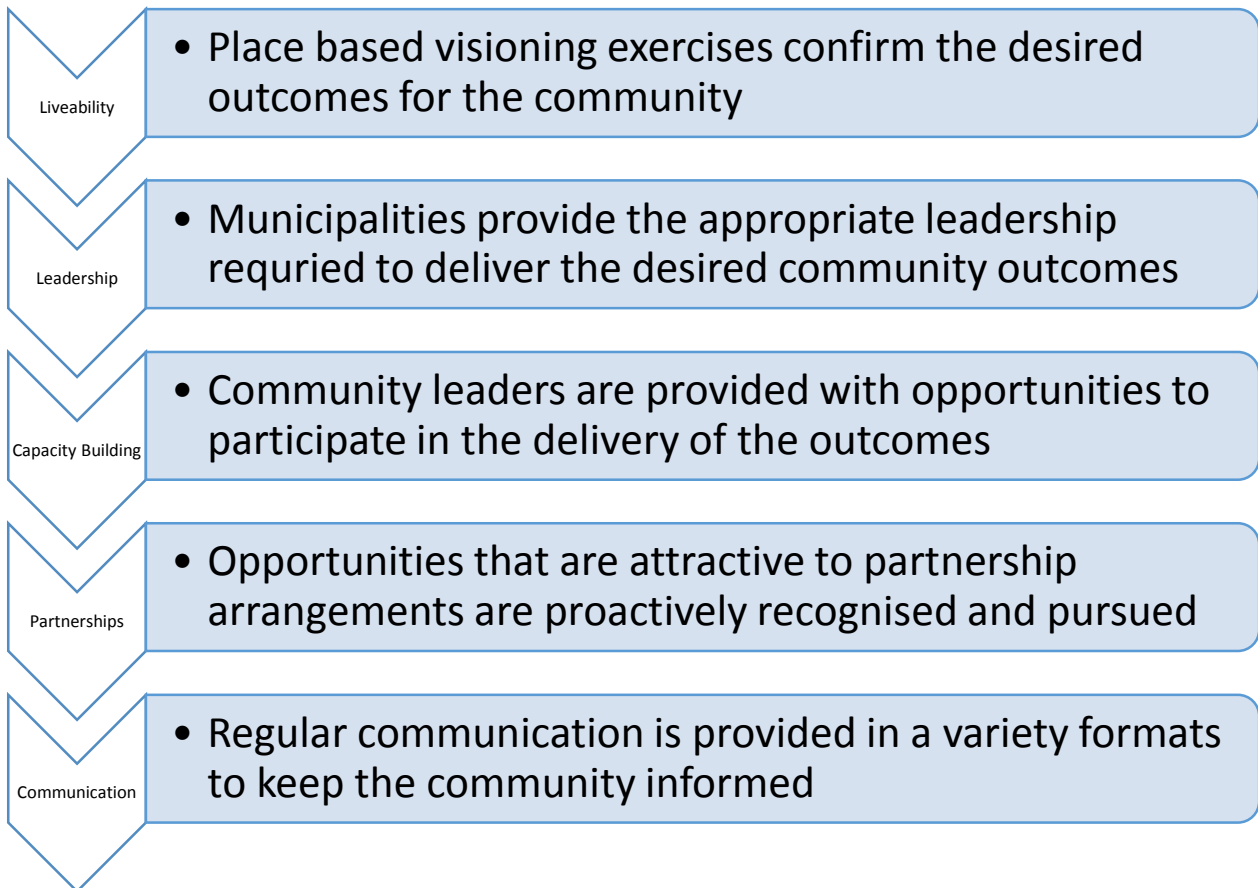
9. CONCLUSION

In order to improve the effectiveness of policy outcomes, councils need to have strategic and relevant discussions about what individual communities ‘vision’ for their future. Most councils cannot give communities everything they want, with many rural councils unable to maintain what they currently have.

It is also critical that communities understand the challenges that are facing council’s, the strategies and policies that are currently in place, and that they constructively engage to ensure that their expectations are clear, reasonable and that future policy and strategies will achieve the best outcomes for each community in the long term. A shared understanding creates certainty, trust, respect, ownership and pride.

Community engagement through place based conversations involves looking at, listening to, and engaging with community who live, work and play in a particular place and is regarded as the current best practice approach to understanding community needs and aspirations. Future policy, particularly in relation to sustainable asset management, must reflect place based planning principles as well as level of service and technical aspects.

Communities are smart, but they need all the relevant information to contribute to the conversation and provide informed feedback.



9.1 Final suggestions for Victorian Local Government Authorities

Organisational Culture

Embedding Council’s community engagement policy and framework throughout the organisation and linking these to corporate values will underpin the philosophy that planning for place is about planning for people, not assets. It will highlight council’s commitment to deliver community driven objectives and support employees to achieve innovative outcomes.

Staff Development

A standardised framework for engagement (such as IAP2), strategic planning and policy development for Service Managers across all councils would greatly assist in building community confidence in local government processes and provide a consistency across the industry. This would ensure that Service Managers deliver a sustainable level of service that meets community expectations.

Council Plan

Greater emphasis should be placed on engagement with community partners (such as industry, business, health, philanthropic organisations, transport providers, educators, service clubs, academics and civic leaders) during the development of the Council Plan and on a regular basis when monitoring implementation of the Plan. Consideration should be given to assigning deliverable outcomes to partners so that a collaborative relationship is formed (an example might be a collaboration between council and local health providers to achieve outcomes in the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan). This will support greater engagement and open opportunities to foster improved relationships and potential financial partnerships.

Project Management Plans

Project Management Plans should incorporate the identification of potential partners in the early stages of project planning. Plans should also include a comprehensive communications plan so that stakeholders are kept well informed of progress. These tactics will enable interested stakeholders to more readily be engaged and involved in projects.

Community Leaders

Investing in Community Leaders by providing opportunities for them to enhance their skills and take on participatory and collaborative roles within or on behalf of council could provide an alternate model of delivery for some projects.

Implementation of these suggestions will lead to better informed, more engaged citizens and reinstate certainty, trust and respect within the community. It also provides a format where councils can proactively and innovatively manage assets through means that may not ever have been achievable without community engagement.

