



2016 – 2019 CITY OF LONDON STRATEGIC MULTI-YEAR BUDGET

ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS BUSINESS CASE #10

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS:	LEADING IN PUBLIC SERVICE
SUB-PRIORITY:	OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT
STRATEGY:	MAKE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT A PRIORITY. MAKE THE PUBLIC A PARTNER WHO HAS ACCESS TO OUR INFORMATION AND HELPS MAKE DECISIONS WITH COUNCIL.
INITIATIVE:	ESTABLISH PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AS AN AREA OF FOCUS
INITIATIVE LEAD(S):	JOHN FLEMING
SERVICE(S):	PLANNING SERVICES
TOTAL 2016 – 2019 INVESTMENT REQUESTED (\$000'S):	\$340
TOTAL 2016 – 2019 NET BUDGET REQUESTED (\$000'S):	\$340

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE BASE BUDGET?

There is currently no base budget allocated to the implementation of this initiative.

WHAT NEW INVESTMENT IS REQUIRED FROM PROPERTY TAX?

TAX LEVY IMPACT (\$000'S):	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016-2019 TOTAL	2020-2025
Net Requested Tax Levy <small>(Cumulative)</small>	85	85	85	85	340	510
Net Incremental Tax Levy	85	0	0	0		
Annual Tax Levy Impact	0.02%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		

INITIATIVE DELIVERABLES

In response to multiple Council requests, Planning Staff presented a report to the Planning and Environment Committee on March 23, 2015 which outlined a number of significant improvements that could be made to public engagement practices within the planning process. The driving force behind improving public engagement is to make the planning process more accessible to the general public, thereby inviting *meaningful* participation and resulting in an open, accountable and responsive government.

Some changes to improving engagement have already begun. However, several of the changes presented in the report require additional resources for such things as improved notification signage for planning applications (larger, plain language, graphics), current information for each planning application posted and available on the City's website, proactive notification of new information and upcoming meetings relating to specific files for those that request such information, making new mediums of information available for obtaining planning-related information, and holding community level meetings at accessible locations with child-minding resources at these meetings as required. If funded through the multi-year budget, these changes are anticipated to commence in Q3 of 2016 as the appropriate staff are hired/trained, new sign contracts are awarded and the services of several internal and external partners are coordinated. \$25,000 of the recommended \$85,000 budget is for such things as new forms of signage, child-minding, community meeting venue rentals, etc.

This change is recommended to directly implement Council’s Strategic Plan for the City of London, specifically the strategy to providing an “Open, accountable, and responsive government”. Council’s Strategic Plan identifies a total five initiatives – three of which can be achieved by implementing the actions outlined in this business case. Those 3 initiatives include:

- *Make community engagement a priority. Make the public a partner who has access to our information and helps make decisions with Council*
- *Implement Plain Language writing in all City documents, reports, agendas, websites, signs, and notifications.*
- *Improve the City of London website so people can find what they want, when they want it, and how they want it.*

CUMULATIVE OPERATING BUDGET (\$000’S):	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016-2019 TOTAL	2020-2025
Expenditure	85	85	85	85	340	510
Source of Funding:						
Grants						
User Fees						
Savings from Existing Budget						
Other						
Net Tax Levy	85	85	85	85	340	510
Additional Full-time Equivalents	1	0	0	0	1	0

METRICS (CUMULATIVE CHANGES)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Average % of those who participated in a Planning application process describing the level of engagement as “good” or better.	Baseline data to be gathered through follow-up surveys	80%	85%	85%
Number of planning application notices that are disseminated proactively through social media	40	240	300	300
Number of requests to be added to the notification list for planning applications (Note 1)	Establish baseline/determine current number	10% increase in requests to be added	15% increase in requests to be added	20% increase in requests to be added

METRICS (CUMULATIVE CHANGES)	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of visits to websites devoted to specific planning applications (Note 2)	Establish baseline/create "counters" to monitor	1,000 page views/month	1,500 page views/month	2,000 page views/month
Various social media indicators (Note 3)	Establish baseline/create "counters" to monitor	100 tweets/month 5 Facebook posts/month	150 tweets/month 7 Facebook posts/month	200 tweets/month 10 Facebook posts/month

Note 1: Through the planning application process, residents become aware of the application, and ask to be placed on our notification list so that they are advised of future meetings or events related to the application. As a result of these new engagement techniques, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of requests for notification.

Note 2: The City's website (www.london.ca) receives an average of 200,000 visits per month, and 600,000 page views per month. It is anticipated that with a more robust and user-friendly web presence, there will be an increase in page views on the planning application pages on the website.

Note 3: The City averages approximately 5,000 tweet impressions per month related to specific City initiatives, such as SHIFT, or the Bicycle Master Plan Update, for example. Similarly, there are approximately 500 Facebook visits, and 100 posts/month (by either the City or others). With a more active social media presence, we anticipate an increase in these indicators for planning application items.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF NOT PROCEEDING?

If current public notification methods are not improved, the City risks precluding Londoners from receiving information about potential land use changes in their community as their reliance on other means for information gathering, such as the internet and social media, grows and the traditional ways, such as print media and basic signage, declines. This would be contrary to Council's Strategic Plan priorities relating to open government, transparency and authentic engagement.

Some other specific risks include:

- 1** Londoners not having access to information through their preferred (and in some cases, their only) means of communication
- 2** Longer processing times for planning applications as matters are referred by Council back to Staff for further community dialogue at the Planning Committee stage (rather than being identified and resolved prior to Committee, where possible)
- 3** Disenfranchised citizens who do not participate in important planning decisions that shape the future of their neighbourhoods

OTHER INFORMATION TO REFER TO

Council received an information report on this matter in March 2015 and resolved that “...the estimated cost of implementation to improve the engagement process is approximately \$150,000 and will be referred for consideration as part of the 2016-2019 multi-year budget development should the Municipal Council endorse this strategy.”

Report to Planning and Environment Committee on March 23, 2015 – “Improvements to Public Engagement Through the Planning Process” (Agenda Item #12): <http://sire.london.ca/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=862&doctype=AGENDA>