

# **Community Engagement Consultations**

**July - August, 2017**

**Open Houses and Online Survey Feedback Analysis**

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## Purpose of Report

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This report endeavors to summarize and articulate the feedback provided by participants of the five feedback sessions held in July and August 2017 and the results of the online survey made available during that time period.

The feedback and viewpoints provided within this report are not intended to be utilized definitively towards meeting formats or ways forward. Rather, they are intended to assist towards gaining further insight on the feedback contributed by participants and enhance further debate towards development of a program tailored to Nanaimo residents.

## Creating a Process Framework

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In consideration of these statistics, one or more of the following steps could help provide high value towards building a successful process framework:

1. Create a hybrid solution. Define topical criteria for each of format to be leveraged, document when/how/why each format should be utilized. Request all documentation from staff which contains prior consultation format processes and procedures utilized by the city (e.g. eTownHall), along with applicable feedback where available. Design and document a consultation process which enhances each format where it is advantageous to do so, and detail the pre-event to post-event processes in an easy to understand format for each contributor type:
  - a. Council Members
  - b. City Staff
  - c. Facilitators/Moderators
  - d. Professional Contributors
  - e. Technical Personnel
  - f. Participants
2. Engage in further community consultation on alternative feedback formats and reevaluate before creating consultation recommendations if there is a desire to reach a “one-size-fits-all” format.
3. Create a hybrid model in an attempt to achieve a “one-size-fits-all” consultation model to recommend.
4. Seek feedback from each contributor type upon initial completion of recommendations in order to gauge level of approval and permit further potential adjustments prior to recommending to council for implementation.
5. Seek feedback from each contributor type upon commencement of the pilot program at each event in order to identify and address potential process enhancements.

## Considerations and Challenges

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Based on feedback expressed towards the various meeting formats and in general, the following may be of assistance towards overall success, regardless of chosen meeting format(s).

### Increasing Satisfaction and Value of Community Engagement Events

- Provide participants with opportunity to select and vote on topics beforehand
  - Split topic allotment; pre-select certain amount of topics, and allow new topics selected at event
  - Provide information about topics that have been selected for inclusion prior to event to facilitate more productive and educated conversations
- Set tone and procedure. Success is in part dependent on skills of the event organizers, facilitator(s) and other event personnel, reliant upon all who participate. Define and explain desired interaction:
  - Provide clear instruction for the rules on speaking
  - Provide limits to speaking time
  - Consider a rule of speaking once until everyone has had a chance to speak
  - Provide staff support at the event for instructing and supporting people in using the process
  - Consider limit topics, discuss specific topics only
  - Model desired behavior
  - Define and articulate how and when issues that are raised will be handled
- Utilize online resources e.g. Facebook Live, Twitter, online forums, specialized software
- Provide experts to speak about the ins and outs of pre-selected topics where applicable
- Increase frequency of feedback opportunities
- Integrate the ability to engage online throughout the entire process
- Promote listening and learning with empathy and understanding
- Create a follow up process to reengage with participants about their feedback
- Ensure accuracy of information by vetting feedback prior to presentation to decision makers
- Document and report on supplied feedback from participants
- Deliver a way forward that recognizes the perceived disconnect and current state, identifies quantifiable indicators of change and improvement, provides solid action steps towards removing that perception through “walking-the-talk”, and validates progress made through the use of change indicators
- Draw out a vision which shows the advantages and benefits to leadership in having a full community engagement process that spans from the idea stage through to planning and completion stages
- Engage external environments for feedback and share the results
  - Attend meetings of service groups, non-governmental organization board meetings, and chamber meetings
  - Use focus groups to get a read on opinions over time. The same group might gather at specific intervals, which allows for development of a level of trust and deeper sharing

- Poll specific audiences (students, small business operators, parents, people with specific or mixed handicaps, developers, environmentalists, etc) from time to time as relevant to gather input for larger matters
- Visit spaces and speak with the public (e.g. McDonalds in the morning for coffee, evenings at the Vault, parks, Rotary meetings, etc.)
- Provide methods for leadership to express themselves broadly such as through individual editorials from the Mayor, Councillors, and Staff

## **Minimizing Pitfalls through Proactivity**

- Define purpose, specific direction, steps, and goals in order to best achieve desired outcomes for an event
- Accommodate the varied levels of learning and address the potential for individual feedback to be lost
- Implement ways to increase audience interest and participation
- Provide pre-event training/information on how to best utilize the engagement event, learning and modeling desirable behaviour
- Provide strong yet fair, neutral, expert facilitation
  - Utilize independent/local/community moderators to assist with this free expression; avoid the potential for officials being unnecessarily linked to a chosen course of discussion/decision making
- Address the issue of subject focus domination by strong voiced/assertive/outgoing participants
- Address the issue of reserved personalities who are uncomfortable speaking publicly or being unheard; reduce the intimidation factor of public engagement
- Design processes that assist towards naturally increasing listening and reducing imposing
- Reduce the potential for “political speak”.
- Ensure engagement on topics is of interest to participants rather than being focused more on the interest of decision makers
- Allow for people to provide significant amounts of input; provide input opportunities before, during, and after events
- Ensure processes are created that can sufficiently address topics from the idea stage through to the action stage and beyond
- Design the ability to reassess decisions and alter direction into the processes
- Recognize the significance and importance of utilizing feedback before decisions are made
  - Requires a good process to get feedback actively used
- Be cognizant of feedback disconnect red flags
  - Feedback not being suitably utilized or recognized
  - Feedback being used as a means to overstate the importance or validation of a subject topic
  - Feedback from special interest groups and small amounts of individuals overly influencing decision making
- Address the perceived disconnect between leadership and community decision making processes where people feel they are not listened to or heard; that their time is wasted

- Build trust by actively listening, responding, and taking action on engagement results

## **Before the Event**

Providing the ability for participants to view and provide topics and questions, and vote upon them, allows an allotment of questions/topics to be prioritized and pre-determined before the event.

Utilizing various forms of advertising media to inform people of the engagement event is key towards participation, and is enhanced by providing incentive such as listing known topics that will be discussed and articulating the ability to engage and discuss other topics that are of interest to them individually. Making relevant information available before the meeting is highly advantageous.

Scheduling varied times and locations along with increased frequency can help address scheduling conflicts of participants. Utilizing various locations throughout the city for engagement events provides an enhanced sense of inclusiveness and increases interest simply by meeting participants in their area.

Choosing suitably sized accessible facilities and enhancing the conversational environment through having refreshments, soft music, and extroverted staff who start up conversations can help encourage and increase participation.

Overall, ensuring that the event is well planned and that the format process and desired outcomes are well understood is crucial towards the event's success.

## **During the Event**

Having professional facilitators is important towards establishing the ground rules and identifying boundaries, maintaining structure, delivering neutrality, providing everyone a chance to be heard, and setting time limits to ensure that time is not monopolized by speakers and leadership.

Being able to ask questions and offer ideas without having to significantly engage in public speaking assists in accommodating varied needs and is appealing to many. Having the ability to offer questions and ideas at private booths, stations, and other areas where one-on-one or small-group interaction is possible assists towards such efforts. Having staff present to respond to questions and record suggestions/ideas from participants further assists towards varied needs.

While recognizing that some do not consider online processes to be a good method of dialogue, or they do not have or use a computer, or they simply prefer in-person interaction - the importance and value of providing the ability to participate online cannot be understated. Its strengths such as flexibility, convenience, interactivity, and being able to work at one's own speed, along with the inherent ability to gain feedback from a wider selection of the community are of great benefit. Many prefer online interaction over in-person engagement of this nature altogether.

Having current information, plans, documents, and experts available on subject material during the event is helpful towards increasing knowledge, sparking dialogue, and having better informed conversations. Discussion is enhanced when a presentation is delivered upon start of complex subject discussions.

Establishing sufficient processes to increase participation and record engagement is paramount towards enhancing the value of the event as it enables the ability to collect more insight, generate reports, and share information. This can then spur post-event participation, learning, knowledge sharing, and provide valuable insight to decision makers in taking further action steps and becoming better informed.

Opportunities to increase participation and interactivity, record engagement, and gather feedback can be harnessed in a variety of ways including:

- Tablets on location
- Ability to write questions/topics/ideas at stations
- Facebook Live
- Twitter
- Specialized online software such as CitizenLab
- Teleconferencing
- Audio recordings
- Cameras/Video footage
- Comment cards and stickies
- On-site/off-site electronic surveys
- Note taking

## **After the Event**

Follow through and act upon the results. Keep momentum moving forward by reconnecting with the community - share the information gathered in a timely manner via online and offline methods. At the same time, encourage people to provide further feedback through well-constructed online surveys that have an offline representation to accommodate those who would rather not provide their feedback electronically. Expand this ability to provide further feedback by providing a comment section on recorded video to discuss further thoughts and ideas.

Providing the ability to rate importance of ideas, viewpoints, discussions, and other gathered information prior to preparing an information package for decision makers can further assist towards validation measures and importance of considerations.

Categorize comments/ideas provided in event and provide the ability for the public to rate their importance and supply further feedback. Provide a comment section on recorded video to discuss further thoughts and ideas.

- Provide an information package of attendance and results to Council
- Provide method of input for public to engage further on discussed topics Sharing information gathered important
- Provide a comment section on recorded video for thoughts and ideas
- Provide an information package of attendance and results to Council

## Embracing People Power

The process of engagement towards decision making is a slow but valuable process; providing the ability for others to help shape and influence outcomes through their contributions at early stages through to completion helps to increase the success factor, nurture trust, and strengthen community bonds.

Starting and continuing conversations, gathering as much data as possible from these shared experiences, and sharing it with the community and leadership throughout all stages of topic focuses - and acting upon the results - is foundational towards a successful engagement system that truly leverages people power.

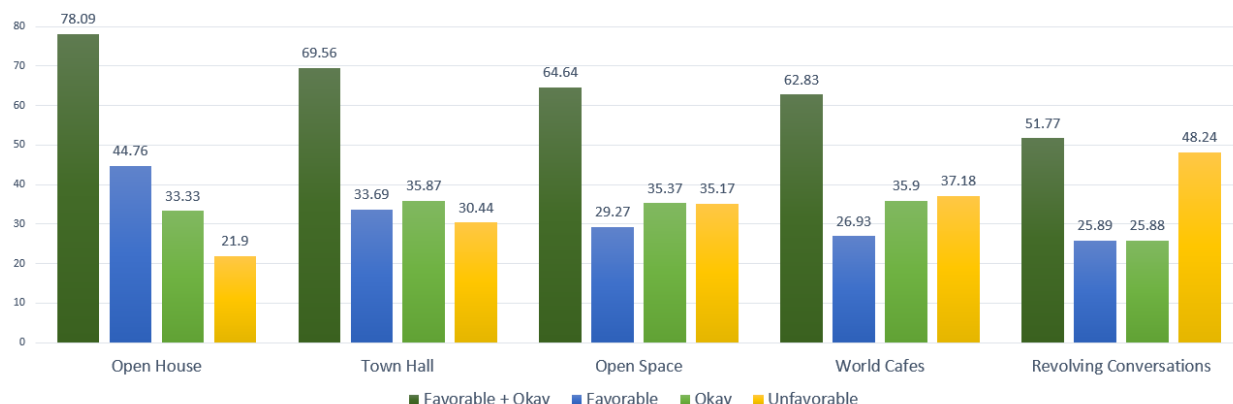
Integration of processes with continual engagement, data collection, and sharing of results delivers many benefits towards decision making such as:

- The ability to absorb information and weigh in after further consideration, dialogue, and research
- Providing the ability for new factors to be introduced which weren't previously vocalized or considered
- Reaching a broader audience and increasing the quality of synthesized information through ongoing participation opportunities
- Enhancing the ability to identify and implement shared goals
- Greater community acceptance and support for projects and initiatives
- Enhanced due diligence and improved decision making
- Less resources expended on projects and initiatives which do not gain broad acceptance

## Feedback Statistics

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### Suitability of Engagement Formats

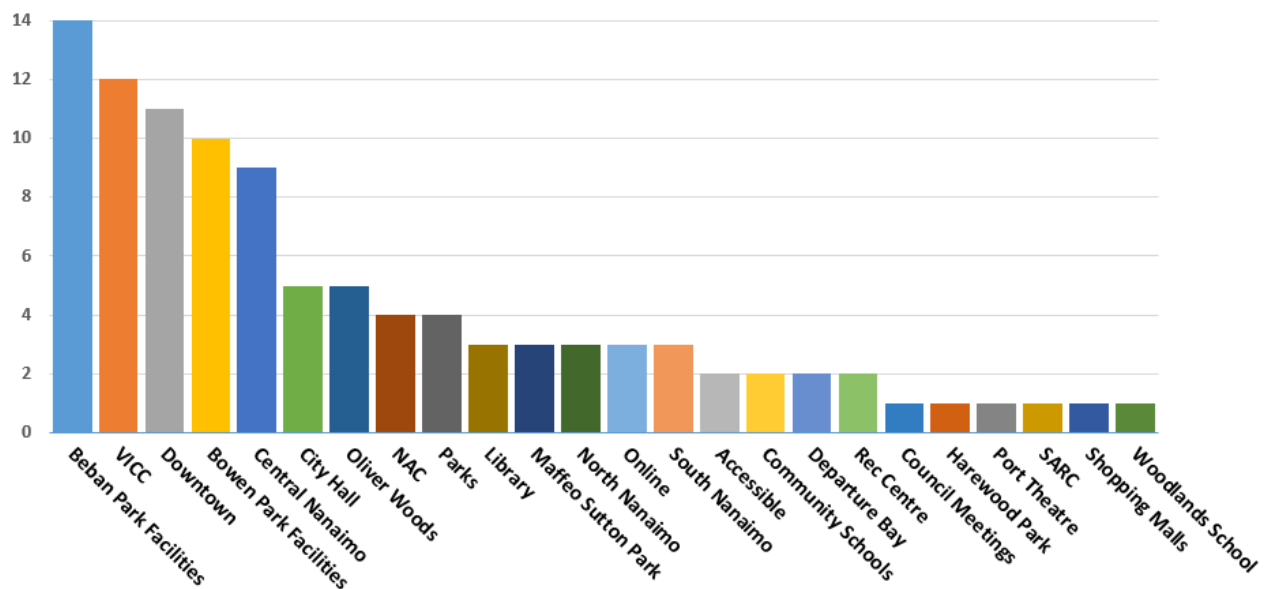


- 64.42% of participants indicated one or more feedback formats to be good or excellent towards suitability.



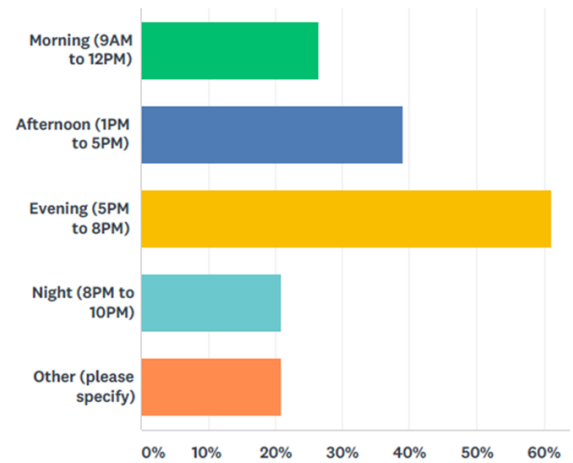
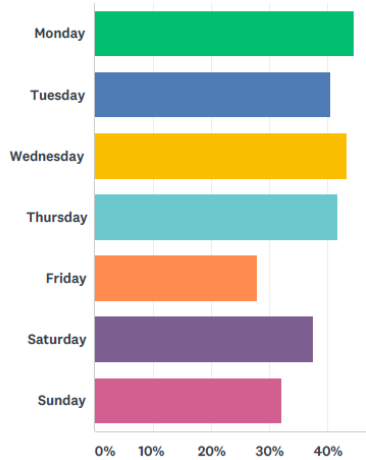
- On average, participants found 1.38 of the 5 options (27.6%) to be good or excellent towards suitability.
- The range considered to be favorable (good to excellent) indicates that overall suitability of the provided formats is between 25.89% and 44.76%.
- The range considered to be satisfactory (okay to excellent) indicates that overall suitability of the provided formats is between 51.77% and 78.09%.
- Each participant on average only found 1.38 of the 5 formats to be good or excellent, indicating that none of the methods should be considered suitable for a “one-size-fits-all” consultation arrangement.
- In a range of 1 to 5 with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent, overall satisfaction of feedback methods was 2.98 (59.60%). One interpretation of this, is that it might be said that most people thought that the 5 formats provided was okay.

## Preferred Event Locations



## Preferred Event Days and Times

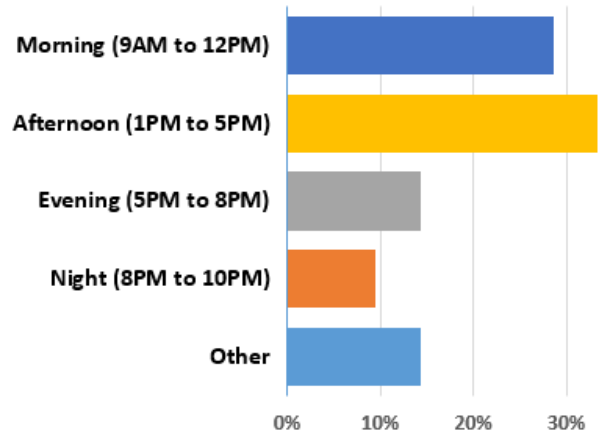
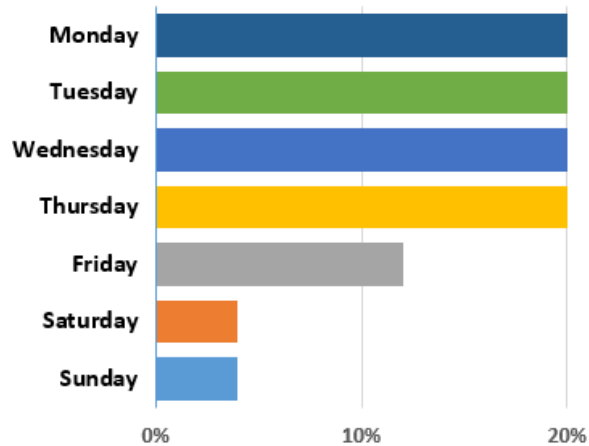
### Online Feedback



### Day/Time Preference “Other” Feedback

- Prefer to attend online
- Avoid weekends
- Have multiple times to accommodate varying schedules

### Open Houses Feedback



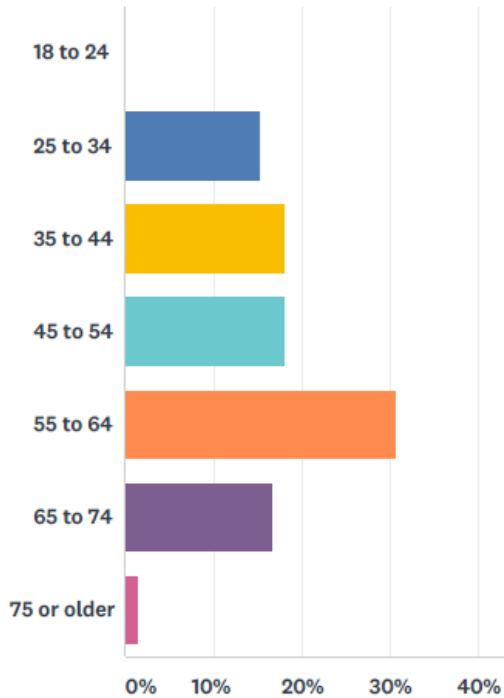
### Day/Time Preference “Other” Feedback

- Make different each event

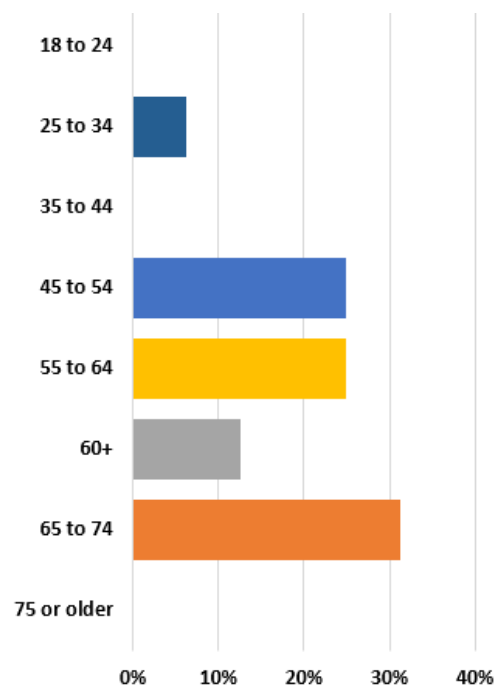
## Participant Demographics

### Age of Participants

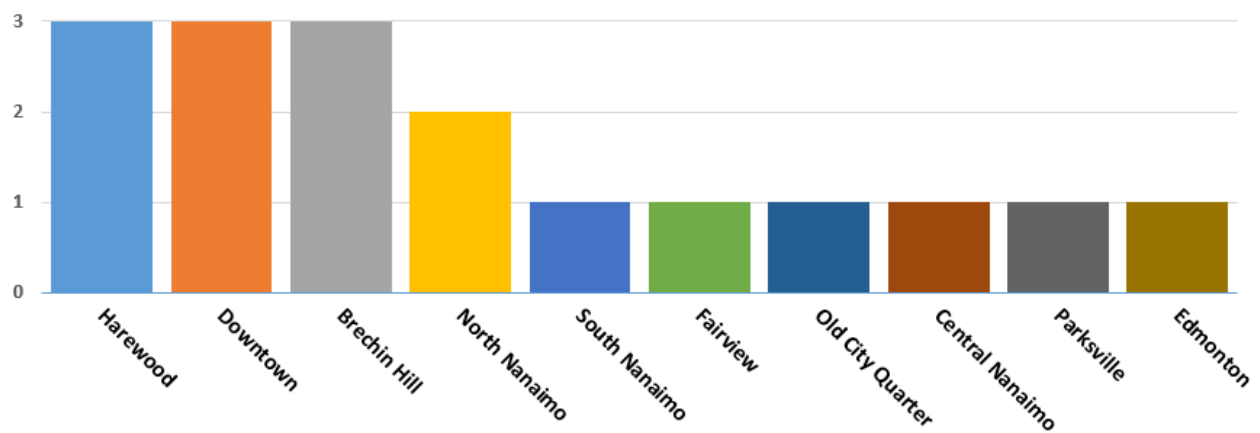
Provided Online



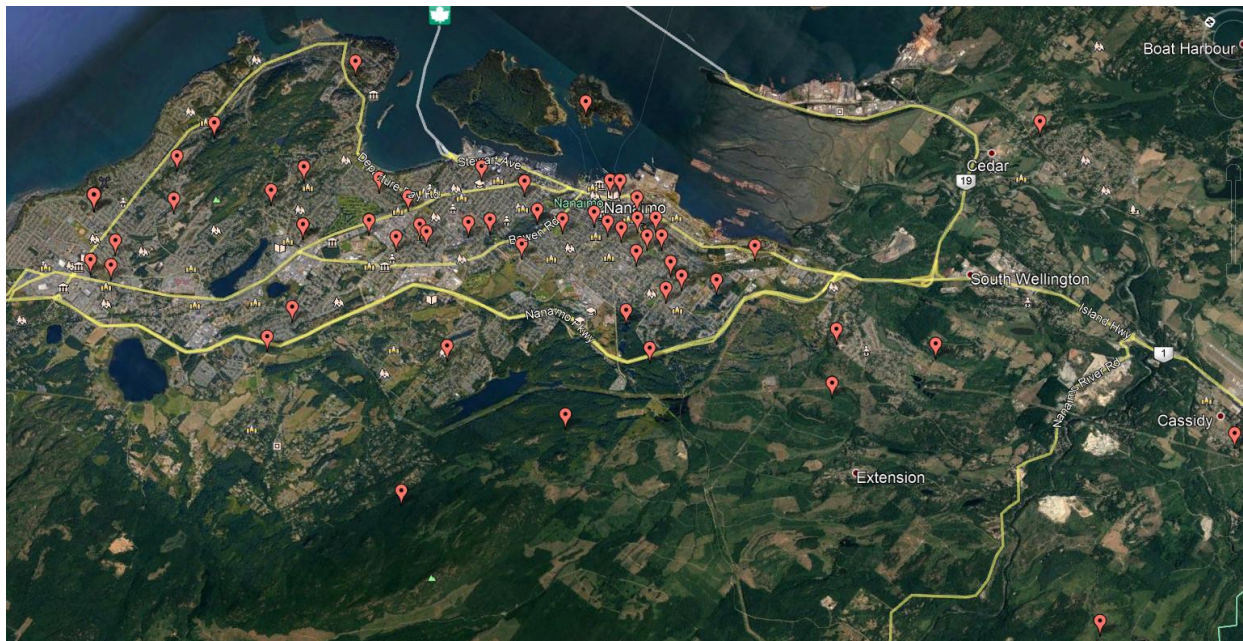
Provided at Open Houses



### Area of Residence – Provided at Open Houses



## Area of Residence – Provided Online



*NOTE: Invalid locational data has been excluded as well as one data point which was in Vancouver, which was excluded in order to allow an improved map display. Two participants indicated that they do not live in Nanaimo.*

## Open House Format Feedback Summary

### WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY WORK

A forum where the public can tour through several information stations at their own pace, ask questions and provide feedback.

The facility is set up with several information stations, each addressing a separate issue. Resource people guide participants through the exhibits.

PROS	CONS
Foster small group or one-on-one communications.	Difficult to document public input.
Ability to draw on other team members to answer various questions.	Usually more staff intensive than a meeting.



## Format Advantages

- For those with varied schedules, it permits additional flexibility to arrive and depart at will
- A more social, casual, comfortable, neutral environment that's paced at one's own speed
- Visual information easily incorporated, Increased opportunities to provide verbal and written feedback

- More people able to speak; everyone can be heard, and an ability for one-to-one as well as one-to-many discussions
- Good format for those who are more introverted due to the ability for participants being able to contribute yet remain relatively out of the spotlight
- Accommodates a variety of learning and participation styles
- Input easily documented via “stickies” and surveys

### **Format Suitability**

- Use at various stages during planning processes
- Seeking for what the public will hear at these sessions
- Large topics
- Allowing voices to be heard
- Providing a safe place for people to be heard
- Learning to agree to disagree
- Fostering proper and professional conduct

### **Format Unsuitability**

- Often one-sided, less helpful for feedback, more oriented towards “testing the waters” and validating a predetermined plan than being effective as a feedback tool towards planning
- Often perceived as engagement on topics that are of more interest to decision makers rather than what people would like to focus upon
- Difficulty for people to provide a great amount of input
- Unstructured format can result in many repetitive conversations
- Some may provide opinions feeling they “should say something” while having insufficient knowledge of the issues

### **Concerns and Challenges**

- People feeling ignored or unheard; their time being wasted as a result
- The importance of the feedback being utilized before decisions are made
- Feedback contributions not being utilized at all, insufficiently, or as a means to overstate the importance or validation of a subject topic
- Requires a good process to get feedback actively used
- Often monopolized by overbearing personalities
- Potentially overly influenced by special interest groups and small amounts of individuals
- Small attendance numbers – does not attract a large cross section of the population
- Limited results as it only focuses on people who show up
- A tendency to be attended by a small number of people who want to complain or have rigid opinions

## Pre Event

- Schedule more of them to accommodate varied participation availability
- Booking facilities for the same afternoon and evening could accommodate varied time restraints
- Providing varied locations throughout the city could provide an enhanced sense of inclusiveness
- Ensure a family environment and suitably sized facilities
- Enhance conversational environment by having refreshments, soft music
- Utilize extroverted staff who start up conversations
- Provide advance notice with details about what questions can and will be addressed
- Make relevant information available before the event
- Important to provide valuable background information
- Utilize more advertising to inform people of the open houses and incentivize participation
- Make booths available to discuss items not on the agenda or local specific issues
- Make plenty of information available on the City of Nanaimo website with contact personnel listed with their email addresses

## During Event

- Have a good neutral facilitator
- Ensure that both speakers and leaders do not monopolize all the time
- Provide ability to offer ideas without having to significantly engage in public speaking
- Provide ability to offer ideas in private booths or stations or other areas where interaction is more one-on-one
- Provide a verbal presentation before engagement
- Ensure current information, plans, and documents are available
- Provide ability to participate
- Have online forums

## Post Event

- Share information gathered
- Provide additional data gathering opportunity such as comment section on recorded video
- Provide an information package of attendance and results to Council

## Increasing Format Value

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Document supplied feedback from participants                                  | • Vet feedback prior to presentation to decision makers to ensure accuracy of information |
| • Create a follow up process to reengage with participants about their feedback | • Predefine subjects  |



- Ensure availability of supporting information for participants when possible
- Provide formal presentations where applicable
- Utilize surveys to capture input
- Scheduled a Q&A period

## Data Collection

- Tablets on location
- Space to write ideas at each station
- Facebook Live
- Audio recordings
- Cameras/Video footage
- Comment cards
- On-site electronic surveys

## Questions Asked

- How will the information stations be selected?
- Who controls what gets on the consultation agenda?
- If this is supposed to be an open topic engagement, what is on the open house boards?

## Town Hall Format Feedback Summary

### WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY WORK

A group meeting format where people come together as equals to share concerns.

Often hosted by elected officials to elicit input from constituents.

PROS	CONS
Views are openly expressed. Officials hear from their constituents in an open forum.	The meeting escalates out of control because emotions are high. Facilitators are not able to establish an open and neutral environment for all views to be shared.



*Image credit: vineyardgazette.com*

## Format Advantages

- A forum for citizens to speak to their elected officials directly
- A good way to allow the public to really be heard
- A reasonable means of providing a forum for citizens to express concerns
- Can be a good exchange of ideas
- Good towards providing information to decision makers
- Constructive and informative when well facilitated
- Good for non-controversial topics
- Good for input at beginning of projects

- Has potential to get the public more involved and with better understanding

### **Format Suitability**

- Can be useful during early phase of strategy and setting priorities
- Good for presentations of information and introducing new concepts
- Suitability depends on topic
- Vent feelings and frustration in a public setting
- Provides a forum where citizens can speak to their elected officials directly

### **Format Unsuitability**

- Audience can lose interest as topic proceeds
- Higher potential for “political speak”
- Very short and not representative
- Inefficient with potential for “us vs them”
- Caters towards loud outspoken people and negative conversation
- Authoritarian approach
- Limited for providing input

### **Concerns and Challenges**

- Make sure experts are available on subjects
- Very few voices heard
- Only vocal minority is heard
- Can feel like a process to checkmark a consultation box as “done”
- Average members of the public will not be drawn
- Potential for event going out of control due to high emotions/frustration
- Who chooses topics?
- Produces one sided communication
- People need to feel genuinely heard and have their input acted upon

### **Pre Event**

- Have citizens pick the questions, not city staff
- Have questions submitted prior to the event and allow respondents time to review questions
- Have a team of greeters who welcome people and explain the process
- Provide an app to submit questions that can be voted upon by participants after which they are prioritized by most popular and asked at the event
- Post agendas



## **During Event**

- Have staff present to respond to questions and record suggestions/ideas from participants
- Invite conversation from each participant
- Provide a method for those who are intimidated to express views in front of a group
- Video tape event
- Provide the opportunity to hear all participants interested in topic
- Establish and articulate ground rules for decorum upon start of event
- Having thoughtful, impartial, fair yet strong, well experienced facilitators is essential to keep things timely, ensure procedure is followed, encourage discussion, and maintain decorum
- Consider utilizing local/community moderators instead of staff
- Designate an impartial third party to expel any who cannot conduct themselves appropriately
- Run it like a convention with opportunity to debate particular issues
- Provide online access to ensure greater participation
- Have experts available on subject material

## **Post Event**

- Categorize comments/ideas provided in event and provide the ability for the public to rate their importance
- Provide method of input for public to engage further on discussed topics

## **Data Collection**

The following were suggested as ways to collect data during and on conclusion of the event as applicable:

- Video taping
- Provide the ability to comment upon recorded video

## **Increasing Format Value**

- Set strict time limits on questions/comments
- Attend meetings of service groups, NGO board meetings, and chamber meetings to gather further feedback
- Make sure there are experts available on the subject
- Increase frequency of feedback opportunities
- Limit topics and discuss specific topics only
- “Big ticket” items should utilize this method after open houses are complete
- Operate it like a convention with opportunities to debate
- Strong facilitator expertise required

- Utilize local/community moderators to assist with this free expression; avoid officials being linked to a chosen course of discussion/decision making

## Questions Asked

- Since council wants to continue with Town Hall meetings, what is the difference between what's happening now and the new pilot program?
- How can we move this onto the net?
- Are agendas posted?

## Open Spaces Format Feedback Summary

### WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY WORK

A forum where participants offer topics and others participate according to interest.

Elements of an open space meeting include:

- No agenda, just a general topic or "invitation".
- Participants to create the agenda in the first 30–90 minutes of the meeting or event by posting and prioritizing issues on a bulletin board.
- A number of breakout sessions/conversations take place from the issues bulletin board.
- Participants can choose which sessions they are interested in joining and can move on to another at any time.



Image credit: pinterest.com

PROS	CONS
Provides structure for giving people opportunity and responsibility to create valuable product or experience.  Includes immediate summary of discussion.	Most important issues could get lost in the shuffle.  Can be difficult to get accurate reporting of results.

## Format Advantages

- Good way to get and share information in a relatively informal setting
- Everyone has an opportunity to speak about items
- People can be more engaged and select topics that interest them
- Good for seeing a summary of discussions in a variety of break out groups

## Format Suitability

- Multiple rooms for noise issues
- Neighbourhood related or driven issues
- Polling points of view
- Collecting ideas
- Brainstorming on ideas
- Gathering topics for presentation as future needs for the community
- Networking
- Internal organizational planning

## Format Unsuitability

- Limited number of participants
- Lengthy time required to get to the crux of matters
- Easily sidetracked
- Potentially chaotic and unproductive
- Inaccuracy of reporting
- Unfocused
- Open-ended and vague
- Long time period required to participate
- Less concentrated impact
- Lack of structure

## Concerns and Challenges

- Lack of confidence in results being acted upon; popular direction achieved but not being followed through by officials
- Results potentially manipulated and utilized by politicians as ammunition
- Favouring stronger personalities that can dominate conversations
- Quieter participants may not be heard
- Can easily escalate into arguments
- Inefficient way of sharing information and reporting public feedback
- Excessive time requirements for participants
- Not enough time for citizens to consider and formulate opinions

## Pre Event

- Preference for most topics to be chosen
- Advertise ahead of time including topic choice
- Declare a general topic

## During Event

- Restrict topics to a certain number, participants choose from their top priorities
- Provide stickies with table beside
- Record each conversation
- Have someone take notes
- Have conversation around a table where people can join/leave as they wish

- Have professional facilitator at each conversation

## **Post Event**

- Report findings to council, website, and public
- Announce findings

## **Data Collection**

- Recordings
- Note taking
- Stickies
- Online resources

## **Increasing Format Value**

- Utilize online resources e.g. CitizenLab, Facebook Live, online forums
- Keep participant numbers small
- Provide participants with opportunity to select and vote on topics beforehand
- Provide information about topics that have been selected for inclusion prior to event
- Split topic allotment; pre-select certain amount of topics, and allow new topics selected at event
- Provide experts to speak about the ins and outs of pre-selected topics where applicable

## **Questions Asked**

- What about determining topics at one session, conversations on topics at a second session?
- Would this descend into the all-too-familiar “how much will it cost the taxpayer” debate?

## Revolving Conversations Format Feedback Summary

### WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY WORK

Leaderless meeting where people are seated in a circle encompassing another circle.

Only those seated in the inner circle are allowed to speak.

The inner circle should represent all the different viewpoints present, and all others must remain silent. The process offers others a chance to speak only if they join the 'inner circle'.

PROS	CONS
Can be used with 10 to 500 people.	Dialogue can stall or become monopolized.
Works best with controversial issues.	
Stimulates active participation.	



Image credit: euforicservices.com

### Format Advantages

- Good for encouraging people to actively listen

### Format Suitability

- More suited for small groups of 20 people or less within inner circle
- Larger participation numbers can result in conversation monopolization with little opportunity for reserved people to contribute
- Non-controversial topics

### Format Unsuitability

- No direction or sense of goals
- People tend to impose their views as opposed to listening to ideas
- Too exclusive
- Leaderless conversations can have a tendency to not get anything done
- Not time efficient
- Doesn't encourage open discussion
- Conversation easily influenced or sidetracked
- Difficult with Type A participants
- Reserved personalities can end up being unheard
- Not well suited for controversial topics
- Introduces an element of being "on-the-spot" which many people prefer to avoid

## Concerns and Challenges

- Determine criteria of who will be in inner circle
- How to ensure everyone has an opportunity to be heard
- How to create an environment that is not intimidating for some people

## Pre Event

- Important how the topics are selected
- Educate participants about the format process and the desired outcome
- Provide an agenda

## During Event

- Take notes
- Provide a rotation of the inner circle
- Allow for anonymous input
- Consider others suggestions when adding to the dialogue
- Provide a good neutral facilitator
- Use a method where the people in the outer circle choose who they replace in the inner circle
- Document/record viewpoints and opinions

## Post Event

- Provide a well-constructed survey
- Follow through and act upon the results

## Data Collection

No ways were suggested for collecting data

## Increasing Format Value

- Success depends on skills of the organizer and explanation of the process
- Provide clear instruction for the rules on speaking
- Provide limits to speaking time
- Speak once until everyone has had a chance to speak
- Provide pre-event training/information on how to best use this format
- Provide staff support at the event for instructing and supporting people in using the process
- Provide training for officials to assist in increasing listening skills

## Questions Asked

- Who decides who sits in the inner circle?
- If it's an informal topic, why such a structured and regulated system?
- How do you ensure everyone has an opportunity to be heard?

## World Cafes Format Feedback Summary

### WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY WORK

A meeting process featuring a series of simultaneous conversations in response to predetermined questions.

Participants change tables during the process and focus on identifying common ground in response to each question.

PROS	CONS
Participants feel a stronger connection to the full group because they have talked to people at different tables.  Good questions help people move from raising concerns to learning new views and co-creating solutions.	Participants resist moving from table to table.  Reporting results at the end becomes awkward or tedious for a large group.  The questions evoke the same responses.



*Image credit: Co-creative recipes*

## Format Advantages

- Focused
- Ability for everyone to talk to each other collaboratively
- Strength of mutual participation
- Opportunity for more ideas shared to/with more people
- Can encourage lots of good discussion
- Informal setting more comfortable for participants
- Provides a variety of new views
- Prevents “gallery” influence on events

## Format Suitability

- Good for future planning, new projects, visioning
- Useful for specific topics/projects
- Good for well-defined topics
- Strong/careful event organization preparedness
- Committed participants



## Format Unsuitability

- Difficulties in gathering all the data
- May restrict dialogue due to time/stronger voices
- Limiting nature due to having to move from table to table
- Repetition, time intensive, commitment intensive
- Varying levels of learning are not well accommodated
- Lengthy and tedious
- Attracts very narrow sample of the population
- Segmented discussion cause an inability for all to hear all the discussions taking place
- Individual feedback often lost
- Difficult for ESL participants to engage
- Joining discussions mid-stream causes repetition and confusion
- May be prone to domination by strong voiced/outgoing participants

## Concerns and Challenges

- Some people tend to dominate and persuade; overall strength of combined participants to resist this is conducive to its success
- Shy people would possibly never be heard
- Many unfamiliar with format and how it would operate, unconvinced of the format's value
- Feels like some sort of "speed dating" set up
- Relying solely on oral communication; no visual or other methods of sharing
- Move the topic not the participants to permit familiarity/comfortableness of participants with each other
- A complete waste of money and time if public input is ignored
- Author note: Zero responses received about having the conversation online and minimal feedback on data collection. May be due to survey fatigue/lack of desire to repeat previous answers, or indicative of lack of interest of these factors for this format (unlikely).

## Pre Event

- Ensure event is well planned
- Provide leadership training to ensure format success
- Have predetermined questions prepared
- Prepare an agenda of topics to be discussed

## During Event

- Strong, neutral facilitators at each table
- Record the results of each conversation



- Choose a moderator at beginning of conversation to record findings and thoughts
- Towards end of gathering, have monitors of each table share the thoughts/findings of the table
- Needs good synthesis at end of sessions
- Time limits to move participants along

## **Post Event**

- Clear reporting is important
- Provide various ways for people to provide further feedback through online survey and mailed in suggestions
- Have an extra way to give results of event e.g. email or mail out to create extra engagement on the subject

## **Data Collection**

- Provide surveys on iPads at end of event
- Surveys/mailouts

## **Increasing Format Value**

- Line items on board may reduce response repetitiveness
- Allow participants to remain at table
- Consider asking participants to generate thoughts that are contrary to their initial view; can be helpful towards seeing the other side in a productive way and spur further conversation

## **Questions Asked**

- Who determines the topics?
- Who would record or tabulate solutions/suggestions

## **Topics of Interest Provided**

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- Recycle Depot should be city-sponsored. They are important and necessary and should not have to struggle to get their new building
- City budget for public engagement. City staff on facebook groups
- Ward system
- Online connection to Council
- A council that seems out of control

- Painfully insufficient bus service. Reduce wear and tear on infrastructure by improving bus service (schedule and coverage) to make roads last longer
- Rules and regulations on staff and council participation online
- OCP – starting points. Waterfront Development & access. Strategic priorities
- Linley Valley
- Making certain we (the citizens) have the opportunity to preserve and extend physical and visual access to the waterfront
- Moving forward on plans already defined for use of waterfront
- Need to limit high rise buildings in/along waterfront areas. Put limits on development where infrastructure is not in place. Important to have public input
- Improve transit service
- Cruise ship terminal and/or ship yards over by Dep. Bay ferry or turn into Granville island type market
- Close off street by Modern Café or Commercial and have more of a sidewalk café setting
- Better parking downtown. More 30min-2hr spots
- Ward system
- The governance model needs a major and total revamp step by step
- Cycling/commuting is on the rise but people (cyclists) refrain from cycling to work because of traffic and speed. How could we share the road and make it safe for all users?
- How are city services being affected by the resignation of 20+ managers
- City transit from Area A "Cassidy area"
- Participating in parks and recreation
- How to make Nanaimo a liveable city
- Code of conduct
- City operations and staffing levels review
- Hiring process and evaluation procedure of city management
- Dealing with continual "scandals"

## Research Suggestions Provided

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- Learn about placemaking
- Watch the Tedtalk on YouTube: The Human Scale
- Watch the documentary "The Human Scale"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy\\_movement\\_hand\\_signals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_movement_hand_signals)

<https://what-democracy-looks-like.org/occupy-wall-street-and-consensus-decision-making-historicizing-the-preoccupation-with-process/>

100 Ideas to Help Engage Community PDF:

[http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-01-31/vg/309531/475/100\\_Ideas\\_to\\_Help\\_Engage\\_your\\_Community\\_Online\\_Email\\_friendly.pdf](http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-01-31/vg/309531/475/100_Ideas_to_Help_Engage_your_Community_Online_Email_friendly.pdf)

Guide to Better Engagement PDF:

[http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-01-31/vx/309531/489/BangtheTable\\_Online\\_Consultation\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-01-31/vx/309531/489/BangtheTable_Online_Consultation_Guide.pdf)

Spectrum of Online Engagement Tools Infographic PDF:

[http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-03-24/h8l/309531/3025/BTT\\_SPECTRUM\\_Final3.8\\_2017.pdf](http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-03-24/h8l/309531/3025/BTT_SPECTRUM_Final3.8_2017.pdf)

10 Lessons to Better Engagement PDF:

[http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-01-31/vz/309531/491/Matts\\_Ten\\_Lessons\\_To\\_Better\\_Online\\_Engagement\\_eBook.pdf](http://www.bangthetable.com/l/309531/2017-01-31/vz/309531/491/Matts_Ten_Lessons_To_Better_Online_Engagement_eBook.pdf)

Building a Business Case for Online Engagement, Managing Risk in Online Engagement, Online Citizen Engagement 101, Increasing Participation in Online Engagement, Reporting & Analytics, and more:

<https://webinar.com/channel/6319819464272077062>

## Appendix A - References

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### Open Houses - Engagement Methods Handouts

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/get-involved/community-engagement/engagement-methods-handouts.pdf>

### Open Houses - Public Engagement Boards Feedback

[https://www.nanaimo.ca/meetings/pdf/Supplemental/CE170824SPublic Engagement Board Feedback .pdf](https://www.nanaimo.ca/meetings/pdf/Supplemental/CE170824SPublic%20Engagement%20Board%20Feedback.pdf)

### Open Houses - Public Engagement Survey Feedback

[https://www.nanaimo.ca/meetings/pdf/Supplemental/CE170824SPublic Engagement Survey Feedback k.pdf](https://www.nanaimo.ca/meetings/pdf/Supplemental/CE170824SPublic%20Engagement%20Survey%20Feedback.pdf)

### Online – Processed Survey Feedback

[https://www.nanaimo.ca/meetings/pdf/Supplemental/CE170914SPublic Engagement Online Survey Results.pdf](https://www.nanaimo.ca/meetings/pdf/Supplemental/CE170914SPublic%20Engagement%20Online%20Survey%20Results.pdf)

*NOTE: The unstructured “raw” online survey feedback was utilized for this report which contains further data. See [Appendix D - Initial Categorization of Combined Feedback](#).*

## Appendix B - Analyzation and Reporting Methodology

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The online and in-person textual feedback provided by participants was first combined for each specific feedback format and focus, after which the feedback was initially reviewed in order to create a base set of differentiating categories and sub categories to place input.

The base categorization was utilized towards initial parsing of the data for pre-reporting reflection and usage towards identifying trends found amongst the various feedback formats, general feedback, and input sources.

The base categorized feedback was then analyzed, refined, and re-articulated into a smaller set of distinctive categories in order to supply directly consumable information to assist towards development of a tailored plan.

*For clarification purposes; the base categorization which occurred was not designed to be strictly definitive towards where the feedback belongs and applies since there are many cases where items of feedback are suitable towards multiple categories in varying degrees and/or potentially deserving of their own category. Consideration of this factor was applied throughout the process of generating this report.*

## Appendix C - Future Surveying Considerations

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When conducting surveys which reach online and offline audiences it is important to reduce data duplication which can affect statistical results of responses. For example, if a participant provided feedback for measuring purposes at multiple open houses and/or within the online survey, individual response counts cannot be calculated with accuracy due to the inability to identify whether an answer has been repeated by the same person. This can be better improved by requesting their postal code and/or names on surveys in order to increase accuracy of statistical measures. Barriers of privacy concerns are greatly alleviated when the purpose of the request for personalized information such as this is sufficiently explained.

When providing options where general feedback will also be sought, make it clear that there will be an opportunity to provide general feedback later in the survey in order to ensure answers remain focused and specifically applicable to each question.

When possible, provide “other” options for textual input to permit conditional feedback

When asking questions consider adding other qualifying questions to rate “importance” (e.g. how important is this to you), and knowledge of subject (“quality”) - e.g. is it an informed opinion or a feeling.

For online surveys, take advantage of automated branching in order to improve quality of survey results, retain interest, and reduce participation fatigue. This can be as simple as e.g. “Does x concern you?” – an answer of yes results in a subset of related questions whereas an answer of no could provide a means to skip to the next section, or more complex where specific answers result in a different chaining of questions e.g. “Which do you prefer”, followed by targeted questioning based on answer selection.

## Appendix D - Initial Categorization of Combined Feedback

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*Blue coloured feedback in sections below indicate feedback provided in-person at open houses whereas black coloured feedback denotes raw feedback provided in the online survey.*

### Combined Feedback on Open House Format

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**Q: What are your thoughts on using Open Houses for informal public conversations? Any ideas on how this model could be improved?**

#### Positives

##### Unreserved

open discussion involving Nanaimo residents is always a good idea

I like this idea because for the more introverted among us, it is less intimidating than being put in the spotlight and have to employ public speaking skills. Also having booths sounds very interesting.

I like the open house engagement concept.

I like it - accommodates those with busy schedules that may not be able to attend a "set time" session & the laid-back atmosphere is nice for those that might not want to speak up in a big group setting (like me!)

Open Houses are good!

All good

The open houses I have attended have been enjoyable and worthwhile. Staff have demonstrated knowledge.

Look forward to attending

Open Houses provide better public engagement

I approve on using Open Houses for informal public conversations. Not sure about question 2

"It encourages more people to speak than a large forum, and allows people to work around their schedules.

Sociable, more casual, way of engaging public. Non-intimidating. Public input can easily and efficiently be documented via "stickies" and surveys.

The open house makes sense. Easy to follow. Easy to speak and listen.

Yes! Participated in park and neighbourhood open houses.

Great start.

Inviting and comfortable for many people. People can gather information at own pace and ask questions as needed. Many opportunities to provide feedback in spoken and written form. A personal and democratic approach to public engagement. Time efficient for the public. Appeals to a variety of learning and participation styles. MORE FUN!

Appeals to many as people can gather information at their own pace and in a variety of ways. Visual information can easily be incorporated. Individual questions can be answered by staff members.

I like the neutrality involved in sharing opinions – everyone can be heard.

### **Conditional**

"If the public feedback was documented, given genuine consideration, and those giving the feedback were followed up with.

Open houses are good for people who show up.

Generally good but I don't usually attend.

These are pretty good, assuming the team members and stakeholders have the correct information. Still a valuable way to get to the community.

If the open houses are not lead completely by staff it MAY work.

I like open houses if well run.

Best way for non-outspoken people to express opinions.

Suitable for a defined subject.

So far this is the only method I like as I can hear what's going on.

Good format for one on one discussion with stakeholders.

## **Unsure**

"No idea

Need pros and cons.

Not sure

## **Concerns**

### **Unsuitable Engagement Model**

I think most people don't believe their feedback is important and an open house is really to tell people what is going to be done, not asking what people would like to see happen.

Kind of seems like a propaganda machine...

good for information sharing, a quick snapshot of public interest in a given topic. less helpful for feedback.

Good to have a means to listen.

Open houses work well for selling for a home, but I am dubious about their effectiveness to engage the public on city issues. The problem is that people have many interests and city issues are rarely at the forefront of concern. It's what affects people directly, their interests, their pocketbooks, which will grab their attention.

Information usually very one sided.

Having stations where people go place-to-place seems difficult for the public to provide a great amount of input.

My experience with this approach has not felt very satisfactory because it's unstructured. I had to stand around for a while to catch what was being said then formulate my questions without knowing whether or not the person had already spoken about that. Also, I am hearing impaired which is challenging.

City resources could be more effectively used for formal public consultations.

I mostly can't be bothered to attend open houses.

Can't direct the conversation- it's predetermined.

Open houses tend to be one-way. Canned information handed out with no dialogue.

Seems propaganda-ish.

Issues with segmentation – missing related cross topic dialogue. Not a good format for public to feel fully engaged/participate.

### **Feeling Unheard/Results Not Acted Upon**

"City council and staff rarely ever listen to the people anyway. Why else would we have needed a referendum about an event center ?

People often ignored; waste when public suggests something en masse and it is ignored; times often not good for single parents to attend; real and legitimate sense of community division; personal feelings often override facts and science

IT seems like nothing more than a formality. Staff and Council do what they want to no matter what is said

They work as long as the topic of discussion (the Multiplex, for instance) isn't already a done-deal and the open houses are just window dressing

also sometimes the officials whether elected or paid staff are not open to listening to negative comments/ they just want you to validate whatever is on the agenda

listen to what the public have to say.

If used AFTER decisions are made, it is useless. Sorry.. i have been part of too many such efforts.

I did not feel listened to at waterfront tent event. It was very crowded. no for and against discussion

when you have an open house forum, you usually only hear from those who are comfortable speaking in public. Many others don't feel their voices are heard.

Trust is built with actions that are congruent with talk. That hasn't been my experience with open houses."

I would suggest using it to inform the public but not as a feedback method as it is very difficult to capture public response and the response is only heard by the staff member present.

When people offer suggestions take them seriously, stop ignoring the public.

Nothing will be done

My experience has shown that they are a complete waste of time and money. Because no matter what the public says, they are just ignored. It is a complete sham and us old folks read right through it. The lot of you are on the way out. What we did with that cop lady? We will do that to 7 more that are not you clowns.

Results largely ignored if against officials' agendas; used as ammo if for agenda.



We did this to give our thoughts on the redevelopment of the city waterfront. Now these thoughts and decisions are not being used. I consider this a waste of time.

Important to get info and feedback before decisions are made.

### **Bias/Overbearing/Limited Participation**

The people who would show up would be chronic complainers, and responding to these folks tends to be a waste of staff time as well.

I never find to attend. I fear that there is a set group of people who keep attending the open houses. A sort of Nanaimo special interest group. Not there fault but might be overly influential.

Limited to only the thoughts and opinions of people who show up, most likely people who already have formed an opinion or have an axe to grind

Limited as it fosters input from a few people. Take your conversations out to small neighborhoods. Have community members offer to host one in their homes.

Not Effective, often a few individuals dominate these formats, and conflict a significant issue here.

Open houses generally attract a small number of people, who often just want to complain.

An Open House, with information booths is a nice idea, but I sadly don't think it will draw many people. Going out of the house is to do something fun or necessary. Going out for an issue of civic duty is something people will do only if it is truly pressing.

Few people turn up. It's a waste of time and money.

Only those with time will attend. This doesn't provide a good cross section of the population.

Very few people have time to attend Open Houses in person, even when they are interested in the topic of the Open House. To have a "general" Open House seems like a waste of staff time as there would be very few people who would attend these sessions.

Same people show up. Neighbourhood associations should be invited /added to consultation mix in a meaningful way

Someone has to monitor single issue self-interest groups. Don't monopolize the discussion and meeting.

Similar to this format [open house] – usually not too well attend so for those of us who do attend, it's a great chance to give input.

### **General Dissatisfaction**

No

no

no

It would be vastly improved if more council and staff took time out of their day to respond to citizen emails and letters, rather than forcing the public to attend more physical meetings.

## Meeting Structure/Implementation

### Suitability Criteria

Start with this type of conversation to get ideas what the public will hear at these sessions

Use this kind of public conversation at various stages during the planning process.

Save open houses for bigger items

This covers many benefits. It allows people to learn how to come to a safe place and be heard as well as learn to conduct themselves in a proper professional manner that breathes humanity and caring rather than negativity and long-term festering animosity. It allows Community to come together and be heard together as well as agree to disagree at times. I think this is very important.

Useful for many types of projects. Can be combined with more formal presentations and surveys to capture input (eg. dot democracy)

### Locations/Times

Open houses are too often scheduled at inconvenient times and locations for many people, in order to improve that you would have to schedule more of them, which then increases costs.

Book facility for same afternoon and evening, this way people who work can go in the evening, others can go to the afternoon session.

Maybe different times and locations ?

I think they are a great idea as long as they are family friendly, and there's elements that creates the environment for conversation. I'm talking about having coffee, tea, soft music and staff that are extroverts who will start up conversations.

it should be a regular basis

Not always convenient times, places to get out to.

schedules never work, busy people never afforded appropriate opportunities to engage.

sometimes they are at inconvenient times// hard to get to//

Busy schedule – hard to find time to always attend

Time of day: some non-evening.

Open houses need to be more evenly spaced throughout the city. The Events Centre open houses were balanced more toward downtown and south end. North Nanaimo seemed an afterthought.

It's not always feasible for working families to take part in open houses.

Sometimes there is not enough room to move around the boards if the location isn't big enough to accommodate # of people attending.

Give time for planning. Not a 1 week notice.

### **Pre Event**

"Advance notice with details on what questions can/will be addressed. Always add a booth for ""other"" to accept items not on the agenda and one for ""local specific issues"" input.

More advertising to the public so they know about the open houses and are incentivized to attend

I have found the ability to get valuable background information – detailed explanations from staff members very helpful in this format.

Ideal preceding a town hall to explain concepts and issues.

### **During Event**

Figure out a way to record public input. If it is "staff intensive" there ought to be enough people to record discussions and suggestions at each station .

Perhaps there is an opportunity to use tablets on location to aid in data collection?

There should be a space to write ideas down at every station, rather than 'here are our ideas do you like it? ' ask 'what are we missing how can we make it better? '

Facebook Live

I can't think of a solution to the issue of documentation. Audio recording?"

Have cameras to document the meetings

Comment cards at each info station.

"I think it would help if open houses were video taped and residents could view them as able, as it's difficult for many to be limited to being present at open houses.

Documenting public opinion could be easier if the open house concluded with an electronic survey that was available on iPads or touch-screen stations.

### **Post Event**

It is important however to share information gathered at such Open Houses with the participants/attendees

Ensure to post feedback comments

Comment section could follow the video where people can submit their thoughts and ideas. Allows for much greater community engagement.

Again, provide feedback to participants.

Information package of attendance and results given to Council.

### **Facilitation**

be sure that the leader/speaker doesn't allow one person to monopolize all the time. Is assertive enough to say there are others here who are seeking info. extra and I need to move on ...etc

They can be great as long as the facilitators can remain neutral on the topic.

good.... needs to have structure tho

Identify some boundaries

### **Accommodating Needs**

Some people do not like to go in front of everyone with a microphone to offer his-her ideas. The idea of a private booth or stations where the participants can offer their ideas on a more private manner, is more appealing to many. The staff available in each station could record the suggestions and thoughts of the participants.

I would actually rather a person-free open house where I can read at my own pace without being watched. Maybe have one or two people on site but away from the booths to answer questions.

### **Online Interest**

Today's population is more social media driven.

Online forums as well

I suggest an online interactive public engagement forum such as Facebook.

A 'virtual' online version may also be of benefit and further increase accessibility/ public participation.

People are too busy. Or at least I am. I prefer online opportunities. I'm filling this in while on vacation on Hornby Island. (I do live in Nanaimo). I like this option better than the others though.

This is the cheapest method of obtaining information. Most people have a computer

Online may reach more due to flexibility and convenience.

In today's world, you need to reach those who physically cannot be there and perhaps engage the younger generation. Have a live stream with speakers from each information station. Have the speakers have access to a live chat in which to engage with those viewers.

online delivers a broader way of gaining feedback from a wider selection of the community.

I would rather have online access to peruse when I'm able.

Get everything on line and a good screening process to make sure one vote only.

### **Informational Materials**

"Have the same info available online so that dialogue with staff is already informed and thus more meaningful.

Also make lots of information available on the City of Nanaimo Website with contact personnel listed with their email contacts.

provide current information and plans.

I prefer to hear a verbal presentation before attempting to engage in small group discussions.

I like it as long as there is also documents that can be read over and shared with others.

Great for obtaining input, however some topics will be of interest to people enough to solicit a valid opinion, others may give an opinion feeling they 'should say something', yet have no idea of the issues.

Could be a great vehicle but you have to do a better job at getting the word out.

### **General Considerations/Challenges**

If this is supposed to be an open topic engagement process what is on the open house boards?

Not everyone has access to computers.

Not everyone can attend.

Informal public conversation is great in theory but it has great potential to go in many directions without any progress.

The people that do attend are people worth listening too. These people are giving their time freely and care about their community, they are there."

There's far too much reliance on social media - not everyone is on FB or other sites and certainly many aren't there routinely. That means much gets missed.

The difficulty with the Events Centre open houses is that staff seemed to have such a tightly controlled message that many questions were directed to the City Manager's office, which is terribly inefficient.

How will the information stations be selected? Who controls what gets on the consultation agenda?

Yes, the forum already exists at Council Meetings and can be documented very easily. Change how residents are allowed to communicate and what they can during question period! Simple!

Needs good process to get feedback actively used.

Miscommunications with one on one. Presentation on each board to group then gather feedback. Better direction to public.

One sided information normal – fails with two sides opposed.

Ideal before World Café.

Challenge – often only one side presented but these pros and cons are great. Open house as good as are resources. People – can be good (?)

### **Topics for Discussion**

City transit from Area A "Cassidy area" for I pay tax but do not get the privilege to participate in anything Nanaimo has to offer but I pay taxes like everybody else...

### **Unsorted**

X

This is a test.

.

ask

H

## **Combined Feedback on Town Hall Format**

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**Q: What are your thoughts on using Town Hall Meetings for informal public conversations? Any ideas on how this model could be improved?**

### **Positives**

#### **Unreserved**

I like the format of Town Hall Meetings.

Town hall meetings (broadcast on local cable) are a much better way to allow the public to really be heard. It's clear by the language being used in this survey (shame on you BTW) that the city prefers the open house method because it's a way to control and contain opposition, but the goal of engagement should NOT be to control opposition. The goal of engagement should be to LISTEN to opposition and really hear the concerns being voiced.

good to see the level of engagement with a given topic.

Yes, great idea.

yes

Great idea

This seems like a reasonable means of providing a forum for citizens to express their concerns.

Fine

This is a fantastic idea and often use in my camps and Foster groups that I worked in. We came together in Great Space and had many things to say but at the same time it was neutral spot where a person could be safe to herd and their opinions be taken seriously.

Town Hall Mtg can be a good exchange of ideas.

Town Halls! Love it!

Much better in a forum than at a Council mtg. Don't worry about emotions.

Again, it is a good idea for people who show up.

Regular meets good.

#### **Conditional**

good idea...need topics and structure

Outspoken & negative people would likely dominate the event. If a particular topic of interest though it could be good.

If town hall meetings were held regularly and facilitated to encourage good discussion(making sure all have an opportunity to speak in a safe and inclusive environment) I would hope that it would become a positive event that would give good information to the decision makers."

Looking forward to attending.

Constructive and informative as long as officials can remain neutral. With our current council I find most do not have the ability to listen or refrain from voicing their own preference.

Good if not too controversial. Perhaps, over time, such meetings would diffuse controversy. To not hold any conversations puts then public against the city. Tough times these days.

listen to what the public have to say. forums attended were city sales pitches . city had no interest in the publics thoughts. forums were just lip service.

Great idea ,but it will only work if there is cooperation from council.

Town Hall Meetings are good for people that are unable to get to an open house

Again, it depends on how the topics are brought forward. If topics are brought forward only by staff, then it is something that will go out of control.

Generally good if screened and strictly controlled for language and aggression

If used right

If well-led, town hall meetings are great. You need a strong chair. Don't see a lot of difference from open house. Perhaps just in size?

Has potential to get the public more involved in projects and/or better understanding.

Could be a good opportunity for certain topics and get people/public involved on input at the beginning of a project.

Like them for debates and if well defined by chairperson and if fair.

Parts good. Potential part of hybrid.

## **Unsure**

I like to hear 'sides' clearly stated with people who have some 'facts'.

## **Concerns**

### **Unsuitable Engagement Model**

usually get dominated by one or more special interest groups or individuals. Difficult to shut down participants who dominate

same

Very short and not representative. Staff should work on all FAQ

Again the Cons: above re:meeting going out of control/emotions high; I certainly understand how frustrations can lead to emotional outbursts, that's human. Because of this I suggest that setting strict ground rules ie: anyone (this includes council members) using aggressive/abusive language would get 1 warning and then if they persist, they will be asked to leave. If they refuse security will escort them out & possibly police called. This ground rule should be visibly posted at the entrance to the room and reiterated at the beginning of each meeting.

John McCain used Townhalls during his election campaign against Barack Obama in the 2008 Election. It was slightly helpful to his campaign, but I would judge that the overall impact was fairly minimal considering that he lost the election decidedly. Townhall Meetings, as I see them, are more of a pressure release, a chance for people to vent their feelings in a public setting.

I think they are inefficient and create a us can them environment. I don't think these should be used.

Often overwhelmed by 'negative nellyies' and bullies ... a poor participation process overall.

I feel that average members of the public will not be drawn to this sort of thing.

Not comfortable with this method as personal security can be an issue.

Caters towards loud, outspoken people and negative conversation

The worst model for promoting public engagement. Officials presented as “experts”. Authoritarian approach. Very limited opportunity for giving input. Lengthy and inefficient.

Too formal.

### **Feeling Unheard/Results Not Acted Upon**

I find very few voices are heard in this situation.

Ok, generally only produce one sided communication

Only the vocal minority will be heard.

Sometimes these feel like a process to check a consultation box as “done”.

### **Bias/Overbearing/Limited Participation**

The same people will likely dictate conversation

People only show up if it directly affects them.

Those with strong opinions tend to bully those of differing opinions either overtly or through intimidation

I am dubious as to their effectiveness to engage people in calm, rational discussion that can effectively change minds and perspectives. For people who like a chance to declaim loudly and gesticulate forcefully, I imagine it can be a good time.

hard to manage and/or hear divergent voices when/if large single view groups prevail



Ineffective format, often a few individuals dominate these sessions, and full of community conflict.

Too one way in terms of presenting information. Often taken over by interests groups. Attend meetings of service groups, NGO board meetings and chamber meetings to gather information.

People who are specifically invested in municipal politics are likely to be over-represented.

Unfortunately, in a community with some well-known characters who seem to come to meetings prepared to do little else but yell from their pulpit, it can be really difficult for the rest of the community to be heard. I don't know how this can be improved - perhaps strict time limits on questions/comments?

As you mention in the pros and cons - emotions can tend to run high. A single voice can overshadow the rest of the participants.

The conversation is often taken over by those who yell the loudest.

yes they can get lively because usually they are held about real issues that citizens care about. I think our current city councillors are too heavy handed and not open to hearing opinions that vary with their own

I get concerned with town hall meetings as they are easily sidelined. Tough to focus on issues.

Often dominated by a few who try to monopolize the meeting.

### **General Dissatisfaction**

Would have been good for Council to have done something like this before the Event Centre instead of turning to an expensive referendum...

No

no

Councilors need thicker skin, and less shmarmy condescending attitudes.

Perhaps actually listen to the people of Nanaimo instead of newcomers and corporate interests.

This survey is too simplistic. It does not start early enough in the process.

Complete sham

An old idea which can be intimidating for some.

## **Meeting Structure/Implementation**

### **Suitability Criteria**

Can be useful before interests are strongly set – eg – early phase of strategic plan / priority setting.

Good for presentations to provide info. Excellent for introducing new concepts.

Depends on topic for suitability.

## **Locations/Times**

Inconvenient numbers may be low.

Should host town hall type meetings every two months so people feel heard from.

## **Pre Event**

Have questions submitted prior to the meeting. Allow respondents time to review questions with an option to delve deeper. This would keep the flow going and be less boring for others.

Written submissions prior to forum

and Town hall meetings could be improved by having a bank of greeters who welcome people when they arrive and explain the process. They would also reassure people that if they did not feel properly heard in the meeting, they are invited to note their concerns and will be contacted later to ensure their point of view has been/will be conveyed.

Again, Nanaimo does a poor job of getting visibility for these types of events. I'm pretty active/aware and often I find out about them after the fact and by chance.

This format could work well if there was an app to submit questions, which all attendees could see and vote Moderators would review questions and ask the best ones and the most popular ones on the people's behalf. I've seen this work well at a tech conference. It's efficient and it keeps loud mouths off the mics...

Get the message out through Chek News.

also educated those that are unfamiliar with debates and talks on how to conduct themselves in an environment that will in the future allow them to be heard.

Provide public background before meeting and then have meeting.

Needs agenda.

## **During Event**

Have cameras present

My ideas on this are expressed in the previous page, that was dealing with Open Houses and information stations with staff present to respond to questions and to record suggestions or ideas from participants.

Invite conversation from each participant, rather than focusing only on those who speak the fastest and/or loudest.

"Video taping the open houses and allowing for people to view and comment as they can, many are unable to attend specific dates and this allows for more community engagement.

## **Post Event**

After which the comments/ideas could be categorized and rated by the public in importance.

## Facilitation

think if it is established right away more people who can speak respectfully even when they are frustrated/angry, will feel comfortable to attend & participate and the bully's will hopefully be silent.

Needs good moderator

Elected officials are not necessarily good facilitators"

can work if as i said earlier the leader is strong enough to have to move on to other's ideas/question.  
have a police presence in order to avoid people getting out of hand

Depending on who is chairing/running the meeting it can go the wrong way and people may get upset

Have an unbiased facilitator

designate an impartial third party to expel any who cannot control themselves.

Rules of decorum ignored by many -- including elected officials and staff; turns into a pissing match between personalities

With a thoughtful, trained moderator, a town hall promotes community and allows people to be heard and supported.

There would need to be a strong person "running" such a meeting who understand parliamentary procedure well and knows the community well.

Have one neutral person keep things under control.

Important to hear all sides."

Moderation and facilitation are important, but it also takes a certain kind of personality to stand up and provide an opinion. The process can often lead to more outrage when a person's microphone is turned off or they're told their time is up.

Local or community moderators to assist and with free expression and to maintain safety and openness instead of City officials being possibly LINKED to a "preferred of chosen" course of discussion and/or decision making.

Needs a good moderator – strong, capable, impartial, logical, fair.

Establish strong rules.

Roberts Rules of Order. Decorum!

Strong moderator!

Strong moderator required; USA example during their town hall meetings can be seen on YouTube.  
Need sheriffs!

Need good facilitator – able and encourage discussion and shut people up when needed.

Requires a strong presenter who is respected.

Very difficult to stay on track, keep timely. Requires strong, neutral facilitator/moderator.

### **Accommodating Needs**

Once again I pay City of Nanaimo taxes and I cannot participate no city bus that I pay for.

Use technology to also engage remote participants through teleconferencing, for those not able to attend in person.

"Not everyone can attend.

Not everyone has access to a computer.

Many people are shy and don't want to offer feedback in public.

### **Online Interest**

Nice to meet elected officials. However same comments as option 1. I prefer online.

Provide online access

For a larger democratic use social media.

Still think on line is the way to ensure participation.

Many people are using social media, because it is interactive and real time.

Old school idea. How can we move this onto the net?

Not always easy for working families to attend. How about online forums?

Could be intimidating to many to express their views in front of a large group.

### **Informational Materials**

### **General Considerations/Challenges**

Make sure you have experts available on the subject, not council members that are solely there because they are elected. They are not experts!

"The reason, I believe that emotions run high is because there are so few opportunities for people to have their voices genuinely heard and acted on. People feel frustrated, angry and the temper of the meeting can be a reflection of how much people feel 'heard'

make sure this is a method always used unlike how the "event center "magically appeared in the 2016-19 strategic plan. no power to do this again by elected officials

This is the standard. It's okay. I think ultimately using all methods at first to establish what's the most effective would be most effective. You guys may find that using all, perhaps with different degrees of frequency, is best.

Hold meetings on specific topics only.

Are agendas posted?

Considering the thug council members assault each other, god knows what more could happen...

Limit the topics for each meeting.

Big ticket items should get 1 group meeting after opens houses are complete

I would restrict the scope of the meetings to a specified list of topics to ensure more targeted feedback from the public and more structure overall to the forums.

Run it like a convention with opportunity to debate particular issues. I have been to many conventions that brought many together with differing backgrounds and ideologies and it has never escalated out of control even when people are passionate about the issue. That is just a fear that keeps open communication from happening.

My questions are not addressed as they relate to environmental concerns. All questions need a turn, so people return.

"What do you mean ""as equals ""? Are you talking so socio-economic, Neighborhood, age...or what?

Since council wants to continue with Town Hall meetings then what is the difference between what is happening now and the new public engagement pilot program?

Public wants input into what gets discussed at any type of forum.

Town Halls are important because they are a forum for citizens to speak to their elected official directly, but "informal" meetings, as you point out, can be chaotic and dysfunctional if the audience is allowed to run the show. What also makes these forums ineffective is "political speak." The politician is pretending to listen but deflects and refuses to answer questions directly, which riles the audience more. Staff have NO control over this aspect of a Town Hall. The effectiveness lies largely on the public speaking / listening skills of the politician being questioned.

I've been to meetings where emotions can run high—sometimes not wanting to get on anybody's bad side causes people to not speak up regarding their own views. Giving those people an opportunity to ask questions in advance, or online would be good. Also, the ability to attend remotely would be useful.

Many people don't realize these engagement sessions are happening. How come this has not been happening sooner?

People would like this type of communication prior to attending a form with no topics, must know prior to attending.

Have citizens pick the questions, not city staff. Post questions as they come in! Have some meetings focused, some open!

The more people have the ability to engage the more they will trust the process, but it is important that the information be treated respectfully and acted on and feedback given.

Loose format. Who chooses topic for townhall? Public/Council?

Audience can lose interest as topic proceeds. Topic may not reach a conclusion without having all heard.

## Topics for Discussion

### Unsorted

X

Test

Same response for the Open House gatherings

### Combined Feedback on Open Space Format

---

**Q: What are your thoughts on using Open Space Meetings for informal public conversations? Any ideas on how this model could be improved?**

#### Positives

##### Unreserved

Ok

Good way to see summary of discussions in a variety of break out groups.

This is a wonderful way to get and share information in a relatively informal setting.

No need to worry about an item that is important to the community being missed.

my experience is that these work well.

not valid cons...have seen it managed easily and have staff resources to do so.

People can feel more engaged in topics that actually interest them.

This one is good as well. It's almost like the internet but in person. You can post your issue on the board with your perspective and then see if others are interested in discussing it.

Good

I like this most. Discuss what people want to at that time.

Should use

Intriguing

ok

There ok

sounds good to me. I could get better informed.

In this process, at least there is a method of choosing the topic since the pilot program is supposed to be "open topic"

Good idea.

Open houses are great.

### **Conditional**

I think my choice of star indicates my thoughts and I really don't have any ideas as to how it could be improved. I just don't like the 'no agenda' thing.

"Who would conduct the session or sessions? I like the idea of a participant driven agenda, but have concerns about who and how it would be run and how it would function.

I want to know first prior to attending

As long as there is still some structure

I think this is a great idea but with some limitations.

Would need to be part of a larger program so where "big" issues are discussed

I do not believe that ""important issues"" would get lost in the shuffle. If you are genuinely wanting to hear from the public...your job as elected officials is to listen. What may be important to you, may not be so important to the citizenry. I can think of 3 or 4 topics myself right now.....so the picking of topics should not be difficult. Those that lead the discussions will be the determiners of the discussions success. "

"Since the importance of a given issue differs from person to person, I don't see that as a con. If an issue doesn't resonate with the community, few people will attend that breakout session, if I am understanding the model correctly.

I think it might work if the people attending had a full and common orientation to the issues before participating,

Parts good for potential hybrid.

### **Unsure**

again I do not understand how this would work but I am curious and perhaps it is worth trying. I think any process that attempts to connect citizens with decision making is good.

Might be a good way to generate issues for further exploration.

### **Concerns**

#### **Unsuitable Engagement Model**

I think it may have a less concentrated impact than some of the other methods,

If you want to get as much input from the public, this would limit the number of participants. It would take too long as well to get to the crux of the matters.

Can get bogged down on minutiae too easily

1) easily sidetracked.

Does not give citizens enough time to consider and formulate opinions.

This sounds like an inefficient use of time. I don't want to show up just to find out 90 minutes later that the issues important to me won't even be discussed.

No meeting should happen without an agenda. Again, if citizens want to do this on their own, great. Don't dedicate staff time to it.

Sounds chaotic & potentially unproductive

The accuracy of reporting issue is a major drawback.

Seems to be a lot of work for organizers and participants.

Any public engagement sessions should deal with current issues that are a concern to the overall public. These engagements tend to get off topic, because people like to hear themselves talk.

too unfocused

Sounds potentially chaotic and frustrating for participants. Could be difficult to gather information about issues. Difficult to record individual viewpoints.

I find them too open-ended & vague. Prefer the more structured world café approach.

Seems to be a more appropriate method for internal organizational planning.

### **Feeling Unheard/Results Not Acted Upon**

Popular suggestions often ignored by officials because they are against the officials' agendas. Results manipulated by politicians to use ammunition

might work unlikely any ideas would be respected or acted on

2) pointless if popular direction achieved but not endorsed by local government.

### **Bias/Overbearing/Limited Participation**

usual suspects. Not flexible

radical groups can take the lead

Open to domination by stronger personalities.

Good idea if you want **PERSONAL INFORMATION REMOVED** to run the agenda.

This format popular but it produces weak results because it favours the "squeaky wheels" who always dominate the conversation.

It sounds very casual, topics easily selected and directed by those with the loudest voice. Important aspects of an issue may be overlooked while quieter participants may not be invited to speak.

### **General Dissatisfaction**

Cumbersome

Can easily escalate into an argument.



Chaos – most things get lost.

Sounds like “organized chaos”. Inefficient way of sharing information and reporting public feedback.  
Could easily lead to feelings of frustration.

Seems very disorganized.

likely to be a whine fest!

I appreciate the idea, but I really don't think this idea will work. This idea seems to me to have a distinct lack of structure despite being titled as a structured approach to discussing issues.  
however this kind of structure does not appeal to me.

no

Sounds chaotic.

lacks focus

These different types of meetings seem to be going from bad to worse.

Not going to happen.

scrap it

Why not regular public meetings with one specific topic per meeting?

## **Meeting Structure/Implementation**

### **Suitability Criteria**

I'd suggest that this is best used for neighbourhood related or driven issues

it's a good way to poll how many people see things in your point of view and to see the array of points of views of others.

This method is useful for gaining topics that can be presented to council as future needs of the community

Good idea for simple 'brainstorming' of ideas.

It would be best suited for the initial stages of a discussion, before drilling down into more specific issues/areas with a more directed discussion/setting

Great way to get wide variety of ideas from public.

Good for seeding of initial ideas.

Great way to brainstorm.

Networking

### **Locations/Times**

Need rooms for noise issues.

Use conference centre.

I'm not sure I would have the time to attend. Sounds like a long meeting!

People in general don't have hours on end to spend in a meeting.

Again, too time consuming, asking too much of people involved. People are practical and interested in spending time doing things that really grab their interest. Civic matters are usually way down on that list. Engaging the public needs to be quick, direct and efficient. A lofty, time hungry idea like this one won't find purchase on the public's schedules.

People have limited time and very limited time to discuss civic issues. 30-90 minutes of generating a topic for conversation is already far more time than most people would be willing to put into discussing a civic problem.

The timeframe could be a barrier for participation, since it sounds as though it could go on for a few hours."

### **Pre Event**

Could be interesting but I would prefer for most topics to be chosen & advertised ahead of time. Would help people get "engaged" in advance if they knew what would be discussed

Could topics be submitted a week prior to the session? If, there were six topics picked...a vote could be held online to decide which would be the first two or three discussed. The next meeting date would discuss the remaining topics.

There needs to be some kind of agenda to be productive.

Might be helpful to collect topics before open space meetings.

I would restrict the topics to a certain number, and have the participant community choose from their top priorities. That alone will require a half hour or more.

My guess is that some general topic would need to be declared.

Participants determine the agenda. Can cover different topics.

List of topics being discussed?

### **During Event**

If everyone can add their topic of discussion to the agenda that would be more democratic

collect notes

Provide stickies, have one person stand at each breakout table to gather/continue. Do it similar to this! Sticky boards, table beside.

To improve on the Cons, I would recommend to have staff in each group to moderate, and to record thoughts as pertinent.

Need someone to write info in each room.

If open house sessions are recorded and remarks are respectful, accurate reporting of results should be attainable!

I would suggest that conversation happens around a table where people can join as they wish, and have a note taker staff to do the reporting.

### **Post Event**

Discussion highlights to be published for Council, website and public.

and later release a publicly available (and announced) summary report.

### **Facilitation**

There should always be an expert on hand to help bring conversations back on the topic at hand.

Small group discussions need to be moderated/facilitated by staff and good notes taken and shared with participants

Breakout sessions from there - but they still need to be facilitated or someone with an agenda could still hijack a discussion (intentionally or unintentionally).

These sessions need to be led by a very good facilitator

Have a moderator

Need non bias professional facilitators

The facilitator doesn't know everything.

"include a leader/facilitator police presence in all formats"

There would have to be some kind of facilitator to help keep the different groups moving.

Needs good leadership to identify topics of interest to participants. Not just agenda of the most vocal.

Like the concept of these being working groups, but would need a strong leader for each group to ensure time is used efficiently and effectively moves group from gripe to goal.

I think these would be most effective with a leader who can truly pick issues that should be prioritized or who comes with points to be discussed already.

### **Accommodating Needs**

This sounds good I would like to participate and hundreds more to from Area A Cassidy Nanaimo taxpayers but no city transit.

### **Online Interest**

CitizenLab – online / accessible / granularity.

Online forums eg. Facebook Live are also good. Feedback is recorded

### **Informational Materials**

They can be good, but the lack of preparation in providing information to the participant community can lead to a lot of misinformation taken away; the city will not be able to defend itself in any situation where a participant starts to make false claims against it.

## General Considerations/Challenges

Keep numbers small. You may need to host more meetings. Keep an attendance list so others may attend who haven't before.

Seems like you would need a longer participation from the public, and exact start times

[Will there be a process to move this info forward, move to resolution?](#)

The idea of participants creating the agenda is intriguing as it does allow the public's concerns to rise to the surface, however, the average citizen isn't necessarily educated enough to know what the most important issues area.

Would this descend into the all-too-familiar "how much will it cost the taxpayer?" debate?

I'd rather see a hybrid wherein participants contribute to 50% of the agenda and the rest is directed by an expert who knows the ins and outs of the topic.

Seems like people will have to pick between issues or risk missing the conversation. Maybe if it was two part ie. issues determined at one session and then conversations happen at a 2nd session?

I'm still not sure why, with appropriate staff, reporting would be an issue.

It seems like a very 'clunky' way to have people discuss topics. What if people want to go speak on more than one topic?

Mine must always remember it takes time to grow and many people will come in with negative feelings because they're frustrated and wanted to see change immediately. Slow and steady is the game and open communication is very important. The several meetings in the beginning may be used as teaching tools to help educate those that are not familiar with this method and to show them how this can be worked. Then as time goes on you should be able to build a strong communication line with communities.

There is always an agenda

Could you try a 'half open' space meeting where broad topics are already set and elaborated and explored by the public?

## Topics for Discussion

### Unsorted

none

Same as others

Test

X

## Combined Feedback on World Cafes Format

---

**Q: What are your thoughts on using World Cafes for informal public conversations? Any ideas on how this model could be improved?**

### Positives

#### Unreserved

Seems like a good option.

Very intriguing! I like how focused this one is. And everybody gets to talk to each other! Definitely one of my favorites.

I have participated in many gatherings with this format and the results were good.

It sounds like a nice solution, a variety of viewpoints being offered and mutual participation in creating a viable solution.

No ideas to improve. Sounds like an opportunity for more ideas shared to more people

Good to try

Ok

Ok

Good idea.

Lets do this!

Sounds fun. Good to hear other perspectives.

#### Conditional

For certain topics, I think this method could work great.

I think this could be really good with practice. The more people get to know each other and feel comfortable moving around the better it would be. If it were to be a frequent event I think it could work really well.

Again, this would work with a small number of participants but would this work for a city wanting input from as many constituents?

Sounds great but really, where do we have the facilities to do this right? A park - no.

I've been in some of these and really don't know how they could be improved. I think the experience can be individually satisfying for some, but it is very hard to gather all the data at the end. It might be useful at a specific time for particular situations.

I'd suggest this is a better more workable and useful choice than the previous open unformatted meeting style.

I think I've attended one of these. I like them.

Good idea, though not as "informal" as the open house concept

Like the idea, but would have to be kept small, just a few table moves, i.e. four - moves.

Keep it simple. Don't expect staff to work overtime to appease the public if there is not going to be enough participation. As in most issues, people have their own agendas, and all public engagement sessions should be related to important city business.

Haven't participated in one of these yet. I like the idea of moving from table to table for small group discussion/information and coming to a common response to each issue. Should prevent "Gallery" influence on meetings. Brings in a variety of new views.

Like if well facilitated.

Can encourage lots of good discussion.

It can work really well – needs a lot of pre-work & training.

Worked great at SDWI. Yes, some people tried to dominate and persuade but some tables resisted and did well.

May restrict dialogue via time/stronger voices. Line items on board may reduce response repetitiveness. Parts good for potential hybrid.

### **Unsure**

Unsure as to what this is. No sense making it more complicated that it already is as council is completely out of touch with the Citizens of Nanaimo. Why make a bad matter worse?

I have never heard of World Cafes so I have no opinion but I had to pick a star, that's why I stayed in the middle:)

Might be okay.

might work for some questions

I don't feel like I have a clear enough idea of how this would work in practice to offer input.

This feels like some sort of speed dating set-up.

I don't see how this would work well for anything other than future planning... maybe 1 meeting a year like this would help

Council would need to put egos and personal agendas aside and do some sorting of ideas, and I don't know if they have the capacity.

not sure if this would work -- shy people would possibly never be heard

## **Concerns**

### **Unsuitable Engagement Model**

Relies solely on oral communication. No visual or other methods of sharing information.

### **Feeling Unheard/Results Not Acted Upon**

All these ideas are interesting but a complete waste of money and time when public input is ignored. Such as the dam park issue. What is the point? Just for show?

### **Bias/Overbearing/Limited Participation**

always you have dominant participants who take over the group discussions

May be somewhat inefficient and prone to domination by more outgoing personalities.

This doesn't feel like something that would encourage an open discussion or encourage many people to show up due to the limiting nature of moving from table to table.

requires in person participation, usual suspects, limited access

Who would attend. I feel great apathy attending council meetings, there is a lacknowledgement of app recitation for oposing viewpoints. Repetition is always difficult

Can be manipulated by a stronger speaker.

### **General Dissatisfaction**

Not a great idea

There is a common theme with all these ideas : time intensive, commitment intensive. People simply are not willing to put much time into civic matters because they usually don't feel that pressing. Engaging the public needs to be quick and effective. World Cafes sounds interesting, but I just don't see people willing to put the time into it.

Ridiculous.

No.

to chaotic

These seem the same as the others; does not helpful to engage officials.

No thanks.

Ridiculous

more waste of time. whole lot of chatter no results.

Bad idea

Sounds like speed dating. Conversation shouldn't be rushed.

Not going to happen.

I do not see the value of this

The problem with all of these models is they tend to attract a very narrow sample of the population.

This method is not very good because many people learn at different levels and if you're throwing a bunch of information at them they may not even read an all entirely and only read between the lines and then that often breeds ignorance and lack of understanding and then as a result short tempers and people getting giving up

A lengthy and tedious process. Individual views of an issue may not be reported/recorded at the end. Not effective for people who are visual learners.

The school board did this and the facilitators at some tables attempted (failed) to “persuade” people towards an agenda.

## **Meeting Structure/Implementation**

### **Suitability Criteria**

requires strong organization prep and commitment from participants

It is an interesting way to converse on topics but when there are issues that affect everyone I think residents would rather hear the larger discourse.

This is good for informal questions

I think World Cafes are useful for specific topics / projects like the development of a Vision for an OCP. But "informal" public conversations with no particular topic? Not useful.

World cafes need a defined topic to succeed.

Good for OCP, new projects, visioning, etc.

Each table had a convenor and that convenor dominated the conversation and manipulated it in the direction they wanted.

### **Locations/Times**

#### **Pre Event**

A focus for discussion is good

It sounds like this method requires careful preparation.

Predetermined questions by whom???

Again, who determines the topics if this is an open topic forum?

Once again, who formulates the questions? Based on what?

Will meetings start with a specific question?

#### **During Event**

Maybe the results of each conversation could be recorded at each table.



To improve on the cons I would suggest that each table choose a moderator at the beginning of the conversation who will record findings and thoughts. Towards the end of the gathering the monitors of each table share the thoughts/findings of that table.

I would improve by setting limitations on time spent a table. With a 5minute warning so that people feel like they can finish their thoughts. I would also have each conversation be monitored by a staff member who is not involved in the conversation but who does the reporting.

Don't move people. Move topics. People usually get more comfortable with the same people.

I agree. Move the topic not the participants. People form a sense of community at the tables.

Needs good synthesis at end of sessions.

Time limits to move participants along.

### **Post Event**

Clear reporting would be important.

I would also add various ways for people to finish their thoughts on issues through an online survey or mailed in suggestions. I would not do final reporting at the end but rather have an extra way to give results of meeting. Email or mailed out. I think this would create extra engagement in the subject.

having participants fill out individual surveys on iPads at the end of the event would be helpful.

Reporting results/opinions is difficult. Individual feedback often lost.

### **Facilitation**

Would need strong facilitators at each table though

My experience with this format is that it's success/failure is highly dependent on the quality of the facilitation.

I think this could be very effective again with a strong lead.

Totally depends on leadership, I'm not sure there are people on our city payroll would be able to do that

Need a lead for each table to record and focus / redirect repeating questions

Can be good if professionally facilitated. Involve people from outside of city staff.

Will require extensive training to ensure all voices heard – challenge when all strangers come together, often one strong voice dominates. Facilitator must be neutral, not biased.

### **Accommodating Needs**

informal settings are more comfortable for participants

Intimidating for many to participate in this process, especially with strangers.

Difficult for some ESL participants to engage in this.

## **Online Interest**

### **Informational Materials**

Information before hand for reasoning on questions.

### **General Considerations/Challenges**

Think you mean work cafes - people move from table to table

Done this, tends to generate a lot of conversation but not much to document

who would record or tabulate solutions or suggestions, if any?

been in them before. if a person doesn't move that is their choice. i like to move.

Needs skillful handling.

The questions are sometimes too leading and could be directed by what staff feels is important rather than what residents want.

Don't have people switch table, instead, switch topic at the table.

This can be an effective tool. I have also seen a modification where participants are asked to generate thoughts that are actually contrary to their initial view. It can help people see the other side in a way that is productive and creates conversations.

The idea of calling them world cafes is a bit dated and I'd be more inclined to refer to it as Speed Dating for Citizen Engagement or something like that. It may help get the idea across that people need to move a bit better.

I like that the questions are directed and multiple groups are discussing at once. The reporting of results would have to be addressed

Joining discussions mid-stream causes repetition and confusion and I suspect this would not be a productive means of either conveying information or eliciting/recording cogent feedback.

Attended something similar at Beban Park/Seniors Connects. So much noise from each table could not hear my own group talk so I left.

## **Topics for Discussion**

Born and raised In Nanaimo 41yrs and have no way to participate in any parks and recreation.. that I pay for on my City of NANAIMO TAXES

Subject: how to make Nanaimo a liveable city.

## Unsorted

X

Test

none.

Nil

## Combined General Feedback

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### Committee Mission Statement

Looks good. Resident focussed. Also needs to work for Council and staff around end result.

I do not believe that any of the 5 chosen [methods] are the complete answer. Everything, including issues chosen need to come from the general public.

Yes! Improving engagement is critical. This City needs to engage citizens more!

Yes I support the mission statement.

Waste of money doing this each time. Just vary the engagement methods and no one can complain.

Right on!! 11

Good idea

What about having people do a brief personal survey in front of places like Walmart, Thrifty's, Costco, etc. Quick, short questions and the interviewer notes down responses.

Works for me.

I do support the Committee's statement. Thank you for the opportunity.

Need for Public Committee to be City Wide with geographical balance.

Very pleased with the way things are going.

Yes to mission statement, given City's history of limiting minutes produced. I would want to know there are rules about transparency, publication

Public & City hold open houses for brainstorming

Committee to continue to end of 4 sessions.

The committee needs to develop and have posted the 6 common principles of public participation

Public & City to bring top topics included in Public/City open house and present them in town hall format. Be sure to leave open input for other topics brought forward if consensus indicates the need.

## **Existing Methods of Engagement**

Why not meetings with break-out sessions where people discuss at “their table” and one person reports summary to the whole meeting. Everything is documented through the summaries. Facilitates one-on-one through to the entire group.

Shaw Cable broadcast council meetings.

It is very hard to know what is going on when Council minutes are released so late. Would like to see them online and current.

The City needs structured input from citizens. Currently too diffuse for us by the City or the public.

Online input works 10

Do not like e-town halls – would like face to face. Responses to email questions to Council are a problem. Would like a more respectful response.

1) In person – sometimes public gets carried away and off topic. Limits to appearances?

2) Question period AFTER a vote is unfortunate. People should have Q’s answered before council votes.

Online fails to reach everyone. Great amount of time needed to be kept informed.

Most mailings and inserts are not read by the recipients.

Question period ). Why not calls from people at home? Some of us have kids!

Limit mail outs or add in something already being printed. I.e: NCHS newsletter, AG Guide. Use Social Media. Online surveys

The facilitator is key to any group feedback sessions. I’ve attended many and for the most part did not feel they were worthwhile.

All the techniques are good. The value depends on timing and openness to use input.

All good efforts and all important. New web site looks great.

Citizen lab is an online software program which can allow the conversation to start.

Hard to drill down this website to get info about this committee?

Improve SARC audio & video during C.O.W.; Record in-camera meeting and release with minutes; record Finance & Audit Committee meetings

The bottom line is no matter what the engagement method, does anyone listen, look at the comments or address the problems raised & discussed?

Citizens CTEE(?) receive procedural training and “mine” the knowledge bank from general public. Promote meeting subjects on website pre-meeting 2-3 weeks ahead.

## Other Recommended Methods

travelling road shows on specific topics or projects

Not really, all I know for sure is this is a program that has the potential to knit this community back together. If not with this council, at least future councils will be aware that the citizens need to be & want to be involved all through their mandate not just at the polls.

Online engagement

"I would love to see that council business is separated from council engagement with the public. It still boggles my mind that there are delegations at a council meeting attempting to sway council opinion in a matter of minutes. Any delegations should meet before council well before the meeting where council is to decide anything. Council should be properly informed before they make a decision, not rely on last minute delegations to 'educate' them.

"

No

Encourage online surveys but make sure people have informed themselves prior to participating. Make sure the surveys are NOT biased as some have been. They must offer several options and not be slanted in the direction wanted by the surveyor

Maybe create an online forum to coincide with these in person forums? That's all I got.

I have already given my recommendations extensively in previous pages and above.

Video or audio suggestions set up at the library or other public venues

What about an online survey putting forward the kinds of questions that you would put forward at any of the other information gathering events

"I have 2 methods to recommend.

1. Twitter - Interact Quickly and Efficiently with your City Council and City Staff

**PERSONAL INFORMATION REMOVED** from IT actually suggested this idea to me during our interesting conversation at the Oliver Woods Community Engagement session. **PERSONAL INFORMATION REMOVED** indicated that this practice was being used by a small town in Spain as an initiative begun by the town's mayor to engage the town's citizenry. As I recall the idea has been very effective. I am not surprised.

The secret to Twitter is it's fast. It's bite sized bits of information a person can quickly assimilate and then continue on with their day. There is always something new and apparently important that is vying for our attention. We are swimming in vast oceans of information and our opinions are regularly being sought from friends, government and consumer goods corporations.

Unfortunately, all the suggestions offered here have been ""Public Meetings"" of one type or another. All variations on a common theme of asking people to take time out of their lives to go to a public event and discuss civic issues for a not insubstantial amount of time. There is so much we have to do all the time, discussing civic matters is far down on the list for nearly everyone.

But Twitter is fast. Blazing fast. A City Councillor tweets a thought about development in the Linley Valley and they get immediate feedback from citizens who follow them. A City Staff member wants feedback on a new aspect of the website and citizens can respond immediately. It's fast for Councillors and Staff and fast for Citizens. The key is : fast and time efficient. People do have time for 180 characters.

PROMOTION : An Ad in the newspapers and on the radio and other media, saying something to the effect of, ""The City of Nanaimo, Councillors and Staff, want Nanaimo Citizen's feedback on city issues. Join your City Councillors and Staff on Twitter and Tweet us your concerns and read our tweeted thoughts on what's going on with your city. We're hip. We're with it. We're into Web 2.0""

I can't stress enough how much MORE EFFECTIVE this would be over variations on the theme of people getting out of their houses to join a variation on group discussion. Only a small group of citizens are interested in using their free time to discuss civic issues. But, nearly everyone who is on technology, is on Twitter and Twitter is fast and easy. Fast and easy is something everyone will do.

2. Newspaper Editorials : From The Mayor, and From City Councillor, and From City Staff

I have heard that members of City Governance in other cities often write editorials which appear in local papers. This is a great idea. I can appreciate that oftentimes City Councillors and Staff feel that the Nanaimo public is not getting their perspective on City Issues. The Event Center comes to mind. I must admit that I am at a loss myself as to why an Event Center was considered a good idea when Vancouver and Victoria are less than 2 hours away and all big events would go there. Putting the city into more debt for a facility which would see little use seems ludicrous to me. The Convention Center is still mostly unused and still being paid for and another massive building project was still considered. Like trying to right a ship by adding more wind. I don't understand it, but, I am willing to hear the perspective of councillors and the mayor on the issue.

Most Nanaimo citizens are not willing to go out of their way to listen to City Councillors at Council Meetings, but picking up the paper and scanning through an article written by the Mayor or City Council is something most people wouldn't find too onerous. That's the key. Fast and easy. People are willing to do things that are Fast and easy.

Good for City Governance because they have an opportunity to communicate their perspective using a platform which has high distribution and high readership, and good for citizens because they will actually engage in the perspective of their City leaders.

Conclusion : If City Engagement methods are Fast and Easy, the City's Citizenry will engage. "

Online

no

I think meetings work different for all levels of society, depending on education

Connecting with various community groups to speak directly to their constituents - a 'go to the public' outreach approach to complement the 'come to us' strategies.

No.

Social media and use hashtags that can be passed around easier.

See above

No

Test

"1. Use of focus groups to get a read on opinions over time. The same group might gather at specific intervals, which allows for development of a level of trust and deeper sharing (with any luck).

2. Polling of specific audiences (students, small business operators, parents, people with specific or mixed handicaps, developers, environmentalists, etc) from time to time as relevant to gather input for larger matters.

"

When matters come up, allow the public to ask questions BEFORE council makes a decision, not after. Integrate the process of engagement into meetings.

On Line Forums! Where anyone can post a topic and others can chime in. Where research of ideas can be submitted for others to view.

Some variation of the Aboriginal 'talking stick method.

Most people are busy and on line is how we tend to engage these days

Online / Social Media but in a controlled (ie moderated) form.

Councilors visiting spaces and speaking with the public (e.g. McDonalds in the morning for coffee, evenings at the Vault, parks, Rotary meetings, etc.)

Create an online community discussion. It can't be anonymous or people will be awful, but it could even the conversations out a bit more and would also allow proplr to participate and engage at their leisure.

See above

Online collaboration for planning and evaluation processes, and teleconferencing as an option for discussion forums.

No.

Not currently

FaceTime.

I like reading documents.

Real-time discussions online are already happening. We should be harnessing that to get a better handle on the pulse of the community.

Online townhall.

See above

No but thank you for explaining a meeting ive never heard of

Online forums may be helpful for those who cannot attend the face to face meetings.

No

Once the purpose/ objective/ goal is established then the methodology will become apparent.

Use the question period already in existence but allow greater scope on the questions from residents.

Listening and learning with empathy and understanding. Having a 'totally radical change' discussion around climate change, fossil fuel consumption/reliance, our waterfront, sustainability. We need to look past pleasing baby boomers and engage with younger generations, who want and can imagine a transformed city.

Yes, many people do not like groups. Post office hours when we can come and talk one on one, or make an appointment. Or go to house bound people.

workshops on real listening and not being open.

"Many options are provided by IAP2. Some additional resources you might consider include:

100 Ideas to Help Engage Community (PDF)

BIT.LY URL REMOVED – SEE “RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS PROVIDED” SECTION OF THIS REPORT FOR TARGET URL

Guide to Better Engagement (PDF)

BIT.LY URL REMOVED – SEE “RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS PROVIDED” SECTION OF THIS REPORT FOR TARGET URL

Spectrum of Online Engagement Tools (Infographic PDF)

BIT.LY URL REMOVED – SEE “RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS PROVIDED” SECTION OF THIS REPORT FOR TARGET URL

10 Lessons to Better Engagement (PDF)

BIT.LY URL REMOVED – SEE “RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS PROVIDED” SECTION OF THIS REPORT FOR TARGET URL

Webinars:

<https://webinar.com/channel/6319819464272077062>

- Building a Business Case
- Managing Risk
- Basics
- Reporting & Analytics

etc

You can call me at **PERSONAL INFORMATION REMOVED**



PERSONAL INFORMATION REMOVED.

"

Social media.

Nil

Social media, email

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy\\_movement\\_hand\\_signals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_movement_hand_signals) <https://what-democracy-looks-like.org/occupy-wall-street-and-consensus-decision-making-historicizing-the-preoccupation-with-process/>

I would recommend hiring public engagement specialists - not having informal public meetings. The problem that this Mayor and Council have is that the citizens don't trust that they are really interested in hearing what we have to say. Four public meetings where we sit around and the politicians give us lip service isn't going to fix the distrust. Hire professionals to make recommendations for public engagement.

Can't think of any others at the moment.

Yes, but you never listen to public opinion anyway. Just ignore it and do whatever you want. Futile effort and waste of money.

No

"Social media is the way to go, or call in public engagements as well as public engagements if people will show up for them.

It would cut down on staff time. Also, limit the engagements to important issues the public cares about. Otherwise it is a waste of time. "

## Topics

Have very specific narrow focus topics

Keep it more democratic and include all topics

## Listen and Follow Through. Build Trust.

Council needs to be involved to show that they actually intend to listen

"The most important piece to this in my opinion is to build trust. Trust that when we give feedback it is taken seriously, and considered important and when appropriate acted on. Only when we see this, will people want to participate on a regular basis.

"

Honesty and building on former public forums instead of constantly redoing plans that never seem to materialize anyway

The city has a lot of work to do to earn back the public trust. I think rooting out your bias against passionate engagement might be a good place to start.

Which ever method is picked, I would strongly suggest that if council attends, either all of them or just a few, that they would respectfully put their electronic devices away. I have noticed at regular council meetings that when a delegation is speaking or even staff for that matter, a few Councillors are ignoring what is being said; very disrespectful in my mind. I realize that they may need to use such devices to follow along with the agenda & items discussed. However the blatant disrespect for the speaker is unacceptable. I believe this program is about having conversations. Conversation is about both speaking & listening. The public can not be heard if they are not being listened to!

I appreciate that there is an effort to move forward in our community and get public input into what's important. I also lack confidence in our ability to have anything positive happen in this community with this particular Council.

When the public speaks, don't ignore public input and just do whatever you want. You bunch of tyrants are on the way out next year so doesn't matter what you do.

Council actually listening and not just pushing personal agendas, ie event center open house.

Listen to what people have to say and follow through.

### **Increase Involvement through Liaison / Diversity / Motivation**

Work with other organizations, this is just not a city government thing. Coordinate with VIU and involve students. Young people need to be involved. Go out into community spaces where people meet (e.g. The Vault) and have conversations. Involve Leadership Vancouver Island.

How will the participants be selected? Will people who represent a wide cross-section of nanaimoites be identified and invited to participate, or will it be a come one, come all model? I think it's important to engage newcomers and people from different demographics rather than fall back on a small group of people who have been in Nanaimo for decades.

Not everyone is comfortable with face to face meeting or can access meeting sites. Surveys, television and radio talk shows, print media can help to include more people. minimal involvement of politicians is also important.

I'm curious about WHY Nanaimo wants to develop public conversations and engagement. Some information about the expected outcomes of this pilot would help at the outset. It isn't self evident what the motivation is behind the exercise. The city wants to facilitate greater public engagement because....? Specific reasons and general. Knowing the goal would help motivate me to participate.

All of these ideas come from a very extroverted mentality, where participants have to engage in discussion with strangers to have their voices heard in the community. The program needs to find ways to involve and engage people who don't enjoy this type of interaction. Solo feedback opportunities like surveys or online portals are far more preferable.

Participants should be various ages and backgrounds.

## Training

We need a council that can model these various types of conversations, without that we are not walking the talk.

Train city councilors to do what their suppose to do, represent the views of the community, not interest groups and their own agendas. If they didn't understand that the community didn't want an event centre prior to a referendum (80% not in favor) they are not very in touch with their constituents.

## Commitment to Action

Yes. Make results binding. Not jiat sugestions if popular.

## Online

"was online engagement discussed?

"On line Forums.

Via Skype.

Some people are too busy to attend meetings in person.

Open forum online, overseen by independent person or people to supervise inappropriate responses

Online

Online 'virtual' session options would be ideal ... hence the reason I'm completing this survey is due to ease of access!

Most people don't have time to attend meetings. Use social media to your advantage to engage the public.

I would suggest maximizing the use of online collaboration tools in the planning and evaluation processes, to encourage maximum participation since physical attendance is not always practical for everyone.

An online forum suits me best. I'm not comfortable speaking in groups and have a lot of ideas to share. Hectic and unpredictable schedule is limiting engagement opportunities.

Online discussion forums

Start with this type first

People communicate on line these days due to time constraints and scheduling situations.

Before running a face-to-face consultation, consider augmenting the process with an online component, as the District of Nanaimo is planning to do soon.

I prefer data collection s/w. But, why reinvent the wheel? Just use Facebook Live or any online forum does all the data entry for you!

Data collection software – allows participation on going time for busy people. at leisure. can think through responses.

Ensure there is a common social media platform (FB group?) for those who cannot travel to meetings.

like this kind of feedback

Online forums

Online forums – issues, pros + cons, moderating, fee based stops inappropriateness.

Messaging Board-type systems – community forums.

Survey/online – I've never seen these work for anyone but the very engaged and the very outraged. General public doesn't connect to (?) well.

## **Accommodating Needs**

Make meetings accessible to families, not just adults.

"Transportation to and from city from Area A

Some of us are single parents and work, etc. and have little time to appear even though interest is high.

## **Meeting Processes**

Post on the city of Nanaimo's website a place where people can ask and post questions to be answered by experts - no politicians involved as they are not experts, especially this council.....

"Public engagement is often a messy process, which is why governments typically have a hostile view of it. The language used in your survey to describe the ""cons"" of town hall meetings is typical of that view.

"Publish background information on a topic. Hold several meetings over the course of different nights, different weeks. Interested parties would attend. Do not allow people to take the mike and monopolize the experts and/or grandstand.

Participants would need to commit to a code of conduct before participating to ensure a respectful, meaningful exchange."

Monitor that all participants are invited to share their perspective, not just the loud ones, and that clear records are shared with decision makers.

Identify the purpose of these sessions: is it for decision making, for relationship development, for capacity building??

Learn about placemaking. Watch the Tedtalk on YouTube: The Human Scale. Also watch the documentary "The Human Scale".

## **Setting Topics**

Allow the public to ask questions of pieces of paper. Have the questions answered by the experts. Then ask the participants to complete a survey now they are fully informed.

How is the conversation started? Who decides on what is discussed?

Keep the topics to important issues that have an impact on everyone in the city. Don't bother with the sessions if there is no intent to imply the will of the people. It's a waste of everyone's time.

### **Event Awareness, Timing, and Location**

Please advertise with plenty of time. In all parts of the city and with various times so that more people are encouraged to participate.

More advertising.

"Regular and extensive publicity ahead of time including interviews with key people, to provide orientation and spark ongoing interest.

Make sure the community is aware of these meetings to get a good turn out.

More media exposure.

Lots of advertising in computers and in newspapers and radio

Improve communication around these events. Send out an annual or semiannual calendar like the recycle program. Do NOT rely on the internet. Must have a direct, physical outreach. Consider stationing folks at major grocery stores for a full week where info:calendars are distributed.

I want to see enough variety in time, venue, and discussion model to allow as many people as possible to participate. Typically, the most marginalized have the most difficulty attending, due to time, transportation, and financial constraints.

### **Pre Event**

Work with the parks and tourism committees to have a better guideline of future planning. Better yet highlight future products on a webpage with links to community suggestions and surveys

### **Post Event**

Feedback to the Community after these experiences: "This is what we heard".

Data collection gives opportunity to state problems in timely manner.

### **Facilitation**

A moderator would be needed and a recorder.

You will need skilled hosts/facilitators no matter which method used.

Ensure that nobody dominates the conversation.

Strong facilitators are important for success.

We don't need to hire expensive consultants involve community members who are good at facilitating.

### **Meeting Model Considerations**

Not really. I recommend trying all of these methods out. Until they are tested in the field you'll never really know I'd say. Perhaps the standard method could be left out for now since it already has been tried. But it could be the control group...

Use various methods at one site and one occasion.

I think a Town Hall style discussion is the best option.

Formal Debate – can be useful under certain circumstances but requires a lot of prep, a respected moderator and talented debaters.

Occupy and other groups use non verbal non threatening methods to indicate support or not for choices that I'd suggest be shared and possibly used.

Whatever format is chosen, it will likely need to be amended as it unfolds. Questions to answer need to be participant driven and not staff or Council driven. Leadership of such an event could come from knowledgeable citizenry or from staff that are prepared to be fair, honest and above board with all of it. It must be transparent as the dickens to have any value. It should also be made very clear to all who participate, how and when the issues that are raised will be dealt with by staff and Council.

Possibly combine the open house sessions with a scheduled question & answer period

Only as good as speaker and voting on it is needed.

It may be that different types of fora are best suited to different stages of consultation. Maybe you start with more open, general fora, and as things become more defined, you have a series of focus groups. Then you bring the results back to the wider public for another round of input. AND you constantly monitor after implementation, in preparation for the next round of review.

Be a bit more innovative in meaningful and constructive public conversations, don't try to "plan out" everything and expect to get your answers.

Unfortunately, the premise is faulty. 4 informal, public meetings is not going to be useful in the end and is a waste of staff time (tax dollars). I feel sorry for staff who have been directed to do this.

Debate good. Let's do it. 8

## **Positives**

This is a nice idea. I appreciate the City wanting to reach out and engage the community.

this survey was interesting.thank you.

I would love to hear more as you progress on what else needs to be done and if anybody can take part in helping out.

## **More Concerns**

Stop spending money on stupid consultants.

Some of us have a lot of time and can have too much influence

## **Topics Provided**

Tell public which councillors did or did not sign code of conduct and why.

We need a thorough review of city operations and staffing levels.

Tell public how City Manager is hired and evaluated.

Let public know how council will deal with continual “scandals”

As development is booking, traffic and speed may be an issue in certain areas, especially where contractors are involved. Which incentives(?) could solve that issue?

## **Uncategorized**

Follow the suggestions previously listed

No

I believe this has been answered in previous comments.

no

No

Get rid of the current council

Test

To try the suggested ideas

We pay for it on our taxes and can't participate in anything"

n/a

No

No

Is this all just window dressing to make us feel engaged while things continue on in the same old way?

Have **PERSONAL INFORMATION REMOVED** in a televised boxing match! A la Trudeau and the P.C. Senator!