



let's talk niagara falls

Community Engagement Framework





introduction

This framework has been developed to demonstrate and articulate the City of Niagara Falls current and on-going commitment to engaging the community in a meaningful and effective way.

In 2015, Niagara Falls City Council identified the need to ensure meaningful public involvement that respects the contribution of our residents and businesses as a strategic priority. Effective community engagement not only provides Council with an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with the people of Niagara Falls, but provides for sound investment in better decision making by ensuring decisions are informed of community needs and aspirations.

We take great care in listening to our community to determine the necessary changes and improvements to make our great City, even better.

Overall, the framework aims at developing a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered. It outlines our goals and guiding principles for community engagement, providing staff with tools and templates to ensure consistent and active participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of our programs and services.

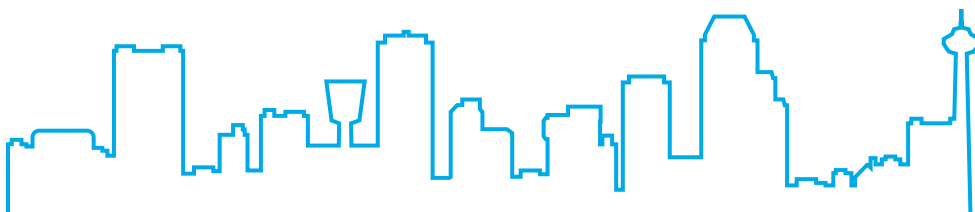
Specifically, the aims of Community Engagement Framework are:

- To ensure City staff has a clear understanding of and a commitment to engaging with the community in a meaningful and effective way.
- To provide a consistent and coordinated approach to community engagement for staff, to guide the selection of the most appropriate method and level of engagement.
- To strengthen community connectedness by creating opportunities for the community to get involved with, and have their say on, matters which are important to them.
- To improve the relationship and level of trust between the community and the City by ensuring the community is informed about and involved in Council decisions.
- To utilize online communication and engagement techniques, maximizing online participation.
- To enhance traditional, in-person engagement methods and processes.
- To improve the coordination, planning and promotion of the City's community engagement activities.
- To ensure the feedback from the community will be listened to, respected and taken into account in the decision-making processes of Council.

Just meeting the minimum requirements is not good enough to make informed recommendations in the public interest. The City is committed to working more closely with the community to improve engagement and participation in Council decisions, so that residents feel empowered to be more active in shaping their community and future.

Viewed as a “living document”, the Community Engagement Framework will evolve and change over time. We encourage input from staff, members of the community we serve and our partners to help us to further refine it.

In addition to using the guide, staff should consider relevant legislation or other City public engagement policy requirements.



our core values for public participation

The City of Niagara Falls recognizes and follows the best practices for public participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

Best Practices & Core Values

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will actively contribute to inform Council's decision-making.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

In all dealings with the community, the City of Niagara Falls will also employ its Corporate Values of:

- Accountability
- Leadership
- Respect
- Teamwork



why we engage

What Community Engagement Means

No one knows better what is needed for our community than those of us who live here, work here, and play here. The purpose of community engagement is to gather perspectives for decision makers, not to make decisions. It means that the City of Niagara Falls talks to our communities before making decisions. It means that if you have concerns or ideas about improving the quality of life and services in Niagara Falls, we want to talk to you about them.

What Community Engagement Does Not Mean

What community engagement does not mean is that everyone will always agree on decisions that are made within the City. Niagara Falls is made up of a diverse population with very different interests and approaches to what Niagara Falls is and how to improve it. What we will do, is listen to all of those different opinions and incorporate them into the decision-making process, in a fair and balanced way.

Benefits of Community Engagement

Community Engagement provides a valuable link between Council, City staff and the community. It offers a range of benefits, including, but not limited to:

- Improving Council's decision-making process by taking into account a greater range of perspectives, experience, and knowledge
- Ensuring that diverse voices have a place at the table
- Creating a shared purpose
- Encouraging greater community participation
- Creating a better connected, and informed community
- Reducing the level of misconception or misinformation
- Identifying and addressing potential and existing concerns
- Empowering participants to take ownership of programs and initiatives
- Ensuring commitment and greater ownership of the final decision by the community

who we engage

The **City of Niagara Falls** wants to communicate with and engage all of our diverse stakeholders. This includes any person, group, or organization that has an interest or concern in, or may be directly affected by, the City's actions, objectives and policies.



POPULATION
88,071

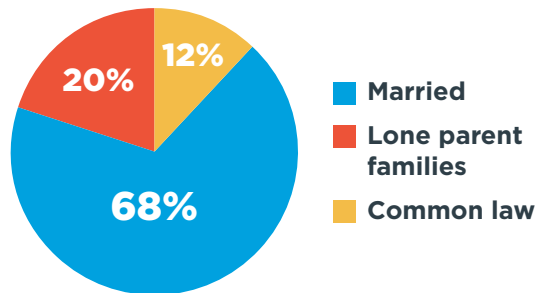


HOUSEHOLDS
33,380



**PERSONS PER
SQUARE KM**
395.8

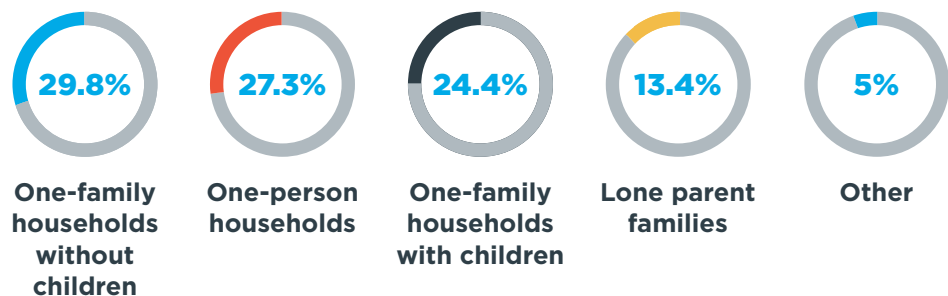
FAMILIES TYPES IN NIAGARA FALLS



LANGUAGE SPOKEN

- **English: 64,750**
- **Italian: 4,425**
- **French: 1,805**
- **Serbian: 1,155**
- **Spanish: 865**
- **German: 760**
- **Polish: 695**

HOUSEHOLD TYPES IN NIAGARA FALLS



AGE GROUPS

- **0 to 14: 12,930**
- **15 to 19: 5,405**
- **20 to 39: 19,445**
- **40 to 64: 30,355**
- **65+: 14,875**

43

MEDIAN AGE

when we engage

The City of Niagara Falls is committed to engaging the community in the following situations:

- To inform a decision or action through community input
- To help identify community needs and aspirations
- When the community has raised or expressed an interest
- When there is a high risk of a matter impacting the community
- When required by resolution, law, policy or agreement

In the engagement planning process, consideration is given to the complexity of the decision and the optimal time needed for people to respond. While the Municipal Act sets out minimum requirements for some specific consultations, each engagement process is considered on its individual basis and merit.

To ensure a successful consultation, careful consideration is given to the appropriate tools and timing for the project or decision. Community engagement does not replace the final power of the decision-makers, but is invaluable in the way it enhances Council's capacity to make well-informed decisions on behalf of the community.



how we engage

This framework has been developed to demonstrate and articulate how The City of Niagara Falls follows the continuum of participation designed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The spectrum helps match the engagement objective with the related participation approach. Matching the approach to the objective helps ensure City staff meets the expectations of the community being engaged.

The spectrum illustrates that there are different levels of participation, depending on the public participation goals, promises made to the public, time frames and resources. The five levels in the spectrum are: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower. As you move down the spectrum, the impact to the public increases.



IAP2 public participation spectrum

Increasing level of public engagement	Public participation goal	Promise to the public	Technique Examples
INFORM	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Web sites • Open houses
CONSULT	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings
INVOLVE	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how the public input influenced the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberative polling
COLLABORATE	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into other decisions to the maximum extent possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision making
EMPOWER	To place the final decision making in the hands of the public.	We will implement what you decide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballots • Delegated decision

Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)



measuring our success

The City of Niagara Falls is committed to measuring the success of our community engagement activities. We want to make sure that when you have participated in engagement activities, you feel your contribution is valued and utilized during the process.

By measuring our performance, we can continuously find ways to improve our approach. It will help the City stay accountable and transparent to our community.

In order to assist with the monitoring and review of the framework, the following items will act as Key Performance Indicators:

- The Community Engagement Framework will be continually reviewed and updated to ensure relevance and increase effectiveness.
- The effectiveness of the framework will be measured by the degree to which it leads to more informed decisions (policies, plans and projects).
- Upon completion of a community engagement process, outcomes from the process, including considerations and recommendations made by Council will be communicated – closing the loop.
- A robust, online community engagement database that records the engagement activities of participants and quarterly reports outlining our success in engaging stakeholders will be managed and reviewed.
- Staff undertaking engagement activities are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the engagement.



feedback to the framework

Your feedback to the development and review of this strategy is encouraged.

Feedback can be directed to the Communications Division at the City of Niagara Falls by email: **letstalk@niagarafalls.ca** or give us a **call 905-356-7521 ext. 5105**.

Visit **letstalk.niagarafalls.ca** to learn more. We're listening.





mycity

**Niagara
Falls**
CANADA



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