

2026-2029 Strategic Plan: Public Engagement Approach and Funding Plan

ISSUE

The City of Saskatoon's current Strategic Plan was adopted on January 31, 2022 and is scheduled to end on December 31, 2025. In preparation for the 2024-2025 Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget, consideration is needed to identify a permanent funding source to support public engagement for the next and future four-year Strategic Plans that achieves the Council Policy on Public Engagement.

BACKGROUND

Saskatoon Speaks, Community Vision (50-70 Years) and Original Strategic Plan

In 2009, as the City of Saskatoon prepared to initiate a new Strategic Plan to guide City Council's priorities and decisions, as well as other comprehensive plans, it recognized the need for a long-term vision for the city – one rooted in the shared values and aspirations of its residents. The decision was made to engage in a visioning process with the community to have a conversation on what matters to the residents.

The objective of the Community Vision document was to inform the direction and focus of the Strategic Plan. The visioning process was a multi-faceted approach designed to allow for participation from the full spectrum of Saskatoon's diverse population. Between 7,000 and 10,000 people participated in Saskatoon Speaks – people from all parts of the city, all backgrounds and walks of life. The final vision document summarizes community perspectives and captures shared values, the opportunities, and challenges they see, and the hopes they have for Saskatoon as it grows over the next 50-70 years.

The final [Community Vision](#) document was formally approved by City Council in June 2011. The cost was approximately \$750,000, funded in part by the City of Saskatoon (\$416,300 capital) and the remainder from FCM Green Municipal Fund (\$333,700).

The Community Vision guided the City's first Strategic Plan, designed to put the vision into action. Thus, the 10-year Strategic Plan (2012-2022) was adopted by City Council on February 6, 2012.

2018-2021 Strategic Plan (4 Years)

With a new City Council – elected in late 2016 – there was a need to refine the Strategic Plan to reflect the priorities of the new Council and their constituents. On January 16, 2017, an engagement event called "[Let's Talk Trends](#)" provided an opportunity to explore how Saskatoon will be shaped in the future. The kick off event included presentations from a variety of local experts to talk about innovation and partnerships, crime and safety, community well-being, inclusion and diversity, economic development, sustainable growth and planning, downtown development, transportation, and environmental sustainability. Between 100 to 150 people participated in Council Chambers.

The resulting 2018-2021 Strategic Plan (4 years) was adopted by City Council on August 27, 2018. The updated Strategic Plan was intended to refocus efforts and shift resources to 10 priority areas, each assigned to a dedicated Council Lead during the four-year term. The updated plan was also used to guide the City's inaugural multi-year business plan and budget process, starting in 2020.

The estimated cost related to engagement and communication was approximately \$25,700 and was funded through existing operating budgets.

CURRENT STATUS

2022-2025 Strategic Plan (4 Years)

The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan was developed during the global COVID-19 pandemic. It was built on the Saskatoon Speaks community vision document and important strategic planning work performed over the past ten years. City Council and Administration worked together to develop this plan.

An online public survey and City staff survey were both open for responses from October 27 to November 10, 2021. The purpose of this engagement was to collect feedback on the content of the plan's three pillars: 1) Advance City Council's Priorities, 2) Deliver Excellence in Core Services and Operational Priorities, and 3) Drive Corporate Transformational Change, as well as receive any general comments respondents may have regarding the draft strategic plan. There was a total of 538 responses to the public survey and 158 responses to the staff survey.

At its meeting held on November 22, 2021, City Council received an information report outlining the results from these online surveys. The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan was approved by City Council on January 31, 2022.

The estimated cost related to communication was approximately \$6,500 and was funded through existing operating budgets. Public engagement activities were designed and implemented using internal staff resources and platforms.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Since the 2010-2011 Community Vision initiative and 2012-2022 Strategic Plan was completed, updates to the Strategic Plan have been initiated following the four-year civic election cycle but there has been an inconsistent approach to partner, stakeholder and public engagement. In addition, City Council adopted a new [Public Engagement Policy C02-046](#) effective September 1, 2019 which recognizes decisions are improved by engaging residents, partners and other stakeholder groups that are impacted by decisions. The Policy outlines guiding principles including transparent and inclusive public engagement activities and processes that help support City Council and Administration in their decision-making processes. Furthermore, City Council passed a motion in September 2020 to address systemic barriers in public engagement and has committed to the TRC Calls to Action and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with implications for how the City consults and builds relationships with Indigenous peoples. These combined require a shift in City practice to fully meet

the engagement principles along with achieving the expectation that the City engage directly with Indigenous peoples and those with living experiences of systemic barriers.

Currently, there is no established funding source to support partner/stakeholder/public engagement and related communications for the development of the Strategic Plan developed every four years. The next civic election will be held in November 2024 and the existing Strategic Plan expires at the end of 2025. City Council and Administration would benefit from establishing an approach and dedicated funding source that provides flexibility to support partner, stakeholder and public engagement that would achieve the principles outlined in the Council Policy on Public Engagement.

A scan of approaches used by other cities was completed to see how they addressed public engagement to develop a Strategic Plan. The scan initially included the City of Calgary, City of Edmonton, and City of Mississauga, who similarly completed a community vision initiative. Cities differ in this regard but perhaps the most similar approach to Saskatoon's is the City of Edmonton. In fact, the City of Saskatoon's original community visioning process and strategic plan were modeled on the City of Edmonton's. Therefore, Edmonton offers a useful framework to public and stakeholder engagement when completing the renewal of their strategic plan that could be modified and used for the City of Saskatoon. To clarify, Administration is not suggesting changing from a 4-year strategic plan to 10-year cycle, but rather is looking at their approach to engagement as a useful model.

City of Edmonton's Vision 2040 (30 Years) and Strategic Plan (10 Years)

In 2007, the City of Edmonton began a strategic planning process to engage residents to share their vision of Edmonton in 2040. That process resulted in the creation of a 10-year strategic plan¹.

The original strategic plan was amended in 2011² after the newly elected City Council wanted it to better reflect its priorities. The plan was amended once again following the 2014³ election of a new City Council.

City of Edmonton's Vision 2050 (30 Years) and Strategic Plan (10 Years)

In 2017, City Council approved a process called Vision 2050⁴ to engage Edmontonians as part of updating the City's vision and the renewal of the Strategic Plan.

Collectively, thousands of Edmontonians provided input and shared what's important to them as they imagined the Edmonton of their future and the people who come after them. The vision, goals, and principle of this plan are based directly on the feedback gathered by talking to Edmontonians in person and

¹ [The Way Ahead: 2009-2018 Strategic Plan, City of Edmonton](#)

² [The Way Head: 2009-2018 Strategic Plan, City of Edmonton \(Updated in 2011\)](#)

³ [The Way Ahead: 2009-2018 Strategic Plan, City of Edmonton \(Updated in 2014\)](#)

⁴ [Vision 2050 | City of Edmonton](#)

online, through workshops, small group discussions, public engagement sessions, and social media. Feedback on each element of the plan, the vision, principle, and goals, was collected and validated with over 5,000 (4,053 survey, 1,634 session participants) Edmontonians providing input. The process resulted in the creation of a new 10-year strategic plan called ConnectEdmonton⁵. The 2017- 2018 budget for engagement was \$256,000 which accommodated expanded public engagement to potentially host an Indigenous Youth event.

Edmonton's overall approach appears to include significant public engagement every ten years as part of updating the City's vision and the renewal of the 10-year Strategic plan. The 10-year strategic plan is amended following the election of a new City Council so that it better reflects Council priorities and the general operating conditions of the City.

The City of Saskatoon differs slightly in that Council adopts a 4-year strategic plan rather than a 10-year. However, if the City of Saskatoon were to adopt a similar engagement approach, more extensive stakeholder/partner engagement would take place every four years and could begin as early as the year before a general election and public engagement would continue after a general election. Depending on the approved annual contribution, the scale of partner/stakeholder and public engagement could be modified by each City Council after a general election. This could include, but would not be limited to, the following types of engagement activities:

- a) Guided conversations with community, non-profit and business leaders, to gather strategic feedback to understand what is important to them to be used in drafting strategic priorities.
- b) Guided conversations with Indigenous and those with living experiences of systemic barriers to gather strategic feedback to understand what is important to them to be used in drafting strategic priorities.
- c) Public feedback on each major draft element of the Strategic Plan (e.g. Strategic Goals, City Council Priorities, and Core Services and Operational Priorities). Feedback would ideally inform the development of specific outcomes and key actions. Public engagement could include a variety of approaches such as
 - a. City Councillor hosted drop-in public engagement sessions (10-11)
 - b. Targeted or drop-in workshops with Indigenous communities, those with living experiences of systemic barriers, students, newcomers, agencies, boards and commissions, etc. (approximately 6-9)
 - c. Representative Sample Online Panel Survey (n=800)
 - d. Self Selected Online survey
- d) Internal feedback on Corporate Transformational Change.

The potential cost and time required will be dependent on the desired level of public engagement by each newly elected City Council. To support this approach, and resulting engagement, Administration will submit a 2024/2025 Business Plan Option for the Strategic Plan Engagement Approach and Funding plan which will include a request

⁵ [CONNECTEDMONTON - Edmonton's Strategic Plan 2019 - 2028](#)

for the addition of an annual operating budget of \$30,000 to be transferred into a new reserve dedicated to funding public and stakeholder engagement for the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan and future strategic plans. This would provide funding of approximately \$60,000 from 2024 and 2025 to design more appropriate public and stakeholder engagement activities to support the development of the strategic plan. In future strategic planning years, there would be \$120,000 available through the reserve for more robust engagement. However, City Council could opt to reduce the annual contribution anywhere from \$15,000 to \$25,000 particularly since the City of Saskatoon's strategic planning process takes place every four years rather than every ten years.

It is worth noting that the Community Vision will be 25 years old, or halfway, into the 50-year vision by 2036. If there is a desire to refresh the Community Vision to reflect social, economic, environment and technological changes, the cost could range from \$375,000 to \$750,000. Establishing a secure operating budget and related reserve would provide increased flexibility and financial stability when planning for the long-term future of the city.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial, legal, social, or environmental implications resulting from this report. The costs will be part of the Business Plan and Budget Options that will be presented to the Governance and Priorities Committee in August 2023.

NEXT STEPS

Administration will submit the Public Engagement Approach and Funding plan as part of the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget Options to Governance and Priorities Committee in August. This business plan option would include an annual budget of either \$15,000, \$25,000 or \$30,000 for stakeholder and public engagement for the development of the strategic plan starting in 2024. The annual contribution could be set up as a transfer to a Strategic Planning Public Engagement Reserve that would be created through future City Council approval, to be used towards the costs every four years effective immediately after a civic election (e.g., 2024/2025 (2 years), 2028/2029 (4 years), 2032/2033 (4 years)).

Since the initial contributions to a reserve would only include two years, rather than four years, consideration could be to include an additional one-time funding from the existing Reserve from Capital Expenditure (RCE) through the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget Options process to complete more comprehensive engagement for the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

Any unused portion of the reserve in the future would contribute towards the more significant costs related to refreshing the community vision, at the halfway point of the 50-year vision in mid 2030.

Report Approval

2026-2029 Strategic Plan: Public Engagement Approach and Funding Plan

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