



Community Engagement Strategy

DRAFT
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Table of Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
2.0	THE PROJECT	4
3.0	THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	5
	Purpose of the Strategy	6
	Basis of the Strategy	7
4.0	STRATEGY OVERVIEW	8
	Community Engagement Objectives.....	8
	Consultation Principles	9
	Key Audiences	10
	Implementation Roles and Responsibilities	10
5.0	ON-GOING ACTIVITIES	11
	Emphasis on Educating.....	12
6.0	PHASE TWO DETAILED STRATEGY.....	13
	Phase Two Outcomes.....	13
	Phase Two Activities/Tactics.....	14
7.0	FUTURE INITIATIVES.....	16
	Engaging Youth Specifically.....	16
	Going Further — Proactive Outreach Options	17
	Future Phase Consultation.....	17
8.0	MONITORING.....	18
	Monitoring Activities.....	18
	Reporting Activities	19

This Strategy was prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants, with advice and direction on consultation techniques and approaches from Glenn Pothier of GLPi.

1.0 Introduction

This document is the Community Engagement Strategy for the Southwest Georgetown Integrated Planning Project (now called the Vision Georgetown project). It has been prepared as a key Phase One deliverable for the project as part of Council's commitment to ensuring meaningful public engagement and participation in the development of a land use vision and plan for Southwest Georgetown.

This Strategy was prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants, with advice and direction on consultation techniques and approaches from Glenn Pothier of GLPi. It is based on a Council vision for Southwest Georgetown, the project Terms of Reference, and input from Town staff and the Project Steering Committee.

The following is an overview of the contents of the Community Engagement Strategy:

- Section 2.0 provides a brief overview of the Vision Georgetown project;
- Section 3.0 discusses the purpose of community engagement and highlights the importance of a properly executed engagement program to the planning process;
- Section 4.0 presents a strategy overview, defines key objectives and principles for community engagement, and identifies the main audiences to be targeted;
- Section 5.0 introduces a set of on-going community engagement initiatives that will be maintained over the life of the project;
- Section 6.0 identifies a detailed set of strategies and tactics as well as key 'thrusts' for community engagement, specifically for Phase Two of the overall Vision Georgetown project;
- Section 7.0 looks beyond Phase Two and begins to set out engagement goals and activities for future project phases; and
- Section 8.0 discusses the ways in which community engagement will be monitored for success.

2.0 The Project

In April 2013, the Town of Halton Hills retained a team of consultants (led by Meridian Planning Consultants) to undertake the Vision Georgetown project. The purpose of this significant initiative is to plan for the future development of Southwest Georgetown in order to accommodate an additional population of approximately 20,000 residents between 2021 and 2031. Members of Council have expressed a desire to create significantly different neighbourhoods in the Georgetown expansion area than have developed in Halton Hills to-date. The Terms of Reference for the Integrated Planning Study states that Council's vision is to create a community that is more people-friendly, more community-oriented, cleaner, greener, and more sustainable.

The Vision Georgetown project is being undertaken in accordance with the process summarized in Figure 1. It is a six-phase project that will be undertaken over a 3-year period, and will integrate the Secondary Planning process with a Subwatershed Planning process to ensure that the Subwatershed Plan provides technical support and facilitates the land use and infrastructure planning process. The final product of the Vision Georgetown project will be a Secondary Plan document that will provide a framework for the development of Southwest Georgetown as a residential/mixed use area.

The process summarized in Figure 1 highlights the importance of community engagement to the planning process by indicating that throughout the project, on-going community consultation and other engagement activities will be undertaken in accordance with this Community Engagement Strategy.



Figure 1: The Vision Georgetown Project Process and Timing

3.0 The Need for Effective Community Engagement

In order to arrive at a Secondary Plan for the Georgetown expansion area, Council has required that the entire planning exercise be supported by extensive community engagement. Community engagement refers to a process whereby members of the community work together in collaborative processes or through formal groups (advisory groups and other committees) to create policy change, build relationships, and develop/implement a common vision for the community. Council is committed to ensuring meaningful public participation in the development of a land use vision and plan for the future residential/mixed-use area.

The Vision Georgetown project is a significant undertaking for Halton Hills, with profound implications for the Town's future. The entire planning process is based on complex interdependences and interrelationships between natural, cultural, and built environments. The process is also based on the equally complex interplay of stakeholders. Landowners, developers, business and industry, environmental groups, academics, Councilors and a host of other stakeholders and political interests all bring wide-ranging levels of awareness, attitudes, insights, and sensitivities to the project. For example, there could be:

- A unique view of the initiative among those who may be eager for work to proceed as fast as possible;
- Low levels of awareness among the typical Halton Hills residents in general, particularly newer residents;
- Confusion among the average person who is not familiar with the complexities of urban/land use planning — and the provincial, regional and municipal policies that govern planning processes, such as Places to Grow and Sustainable Halton;
- Concern among some who oppose further population growth in Halton Hills;
- Concern about the loss of agricultural lands and the impact on local food production;
- Skepticism and cynicism about the Town's ability to create a new community in ways that are more sustainable and environmentally friendly — and/or about developers delivering on the vision;
- Questions about the way in which infrastructure — both hard and soft — will be addressed in the new community;
- Concerns about integration of the new area with the broader Halton Hills/Georgetown community; and
- Questions about cost and financing.



Figure 2: We will bring people with different ideas and perspectives together in a process that involves change.

Public consultation is an important, indispensable component of the planning process for Vision Georgetown. Through the actions identified in this Community Engagement Strategy, Town staff and members of the project consulting team aim to bring the range of groups/ideas/perspectives/levels of awareness together in an important process that involves change.

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of a Community Engagement Strategy for the Vision Georgetown project is to:

- Enable the Town of Halton Hills to make sound assessments about the future of Georgetown;
- Educate community members about planning processes;
- Inspire confidence in local decision-making;
- Maximize consensus and support for a Secondary Plan; and
- Facilitate wise and enlightened development that is defensible at the Ontario Municipal Board.

Basis of the Strategy

In assembling the consulting team for the Vision Georgetown project, Glenn Pothier of GLPi was included to lead all aspects of community engagement. With respect to the development of this Community Engagement Strategy, Glenn has been responsible for advising the Town and consultants on techniques and approaches for engaging and consulting with stakeholders and other interested parties based on the overall project goals and objectives. The details of the Strategy and recommended tactics and activities (as presented in the following Sections) were further developed as a result of:

- Meetings with Town staff to confirm consultation goals, objectives, and desired outcomes;
- A facilitated Community Engagement Strategy discussion with the Project Steering Committee on May 1, 2013; and
- A presentation of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy to the Project Technical Advisory Committee (for comments) on June 6, 2013.

4.0 Strategy Overview

This Section presents the overarching elements of the Community Engagement Strategy, which will apply to all consultation activities throughout each of the phases of the Vision Georgetown project, including:

- Engagement Objectives;
- Consultation Principles;
- Intended Audiences; and
- Roles and Responsibilities.

Community Engagement Objectives

Listed in no particular order, the following are the objectives of the Community Engagement Strategy for the Vision Georgetown project:

- To meaningfully engage Halton Hills residents and stakeholders to gather input which will be used through all stages of the project;
- To secure local municipal official (Council/staff) understanding and support;
- To ensure that Halton Hills residents, landowners, the business community and other stakeholders are made aware of the vital importance of the initiative and see value in it — and to promote/encourage extensive participation in the process;
- To excite people about the possibility and potential inherent in the Vision Georgetown project;
- To generate community support for (or at least acceptance of) the Vision Georgetown plan;
- To foster an environment that is conducive to substantive dialogue: a respectful, informed and productive discussion of the salient issues (ensure a common understanding of the initiative and that people have the right information);
- To inspire confidence in the project implementation and management;
- To identify community groups not typically engaged and engage them in the process in a meaningful way (e.g. youth);
- To present a well integrated and seamless project progression that ensures consistency of word and action, demonstrates positive momentum and minimizes contentious issues; and
- To establish and reinforce realistic expectations regarding what is feasible — both in terms of what can be delivered and the timelines for it.

Figure 3: One of our objectives is to foster an environment that is conducive to substantive dialogue.



Figure 4: We will identify community groups not typically engaged (such as local youth) and engage them in the process in a meaningful way.

Consultation Principles

In undertaking the outreach and engagement process, the team commits to:

- Providing the information required to stimulate discussion and promote meaningful participation — including communication that is clear, concise and timely;
- Ensuring reasonable access for input through both formal and less structured opportunities to participate — that facilitate widespread public involvement and information exchange;
- Reaching out to the broader community — that is, to individuals and groups less typically inclined to participate in municipal consultation processes (e.g. youth);
- Giving consideration to all input — assessing ideas and suggestions on their merits while being respectful of all views;
- Being accountable — sharing consultation summaries and scrupulously maintaining records;
- Acting with purpose — being clear about the intended outcome of a consultation opportunity and its linkage to the overall project and decision-making process;
- Promoting a cooperative and productive consultation environment that demonstrates respect for due process, appreciates the legitimacy of different opinions and focuses on ideas;
- Encouraging, not forcing consensus — recognizing the value of dialogue and accepting that everyone may not agree with every decision; and
- Protecting the public interest — ensuring that decisions are made in a timely manner and that full consideration is given to balancing scheduling and financial imperatives.

Key Audiences

Broadly defined, the following larger key audience clusters have been identified and will be engaged throughout the project process (listed in no particular order):

- Town Council and Staff;
- Advisory Committees of Council;
- Landowners/developers;
- Agencies (Conservation Authorities, etc.);
- Ratepayers;
- Business/employers;
- Local Residents, including youth;
- Interested groups/associations (from environmental, to recreational, etc.);
- Halton Region; and
- Media.

Implementation Roles and Responsibilities

The following will be important roles and responsibilities during the implementation of this Strategy:

- Town staff and key members of the consulting team will be responsible for implementing the engagement tactics and activities, and for undertaking regular and on-going monitoring;
- Glenn Pothier will lead the team's engagement activities as primary facilitator and master of ceremonies for key, large-scale engagement events;
- The Project Steering Committee will provide input to planning community engagement activities and developing engagement materials/documents;
- The Project Steering Committee will also be responsible for delivering key messages, sharing information on project process, and obtaining input from stakeholder groups and other identified audiences; and
- The Project Technical Advisory Committee will provide comments on engagement activities/documents throughout the study process.

5.0 On-going Activities

The following on-going community engagement activities will be implemented and maintained over the life of the Vision Georgetown project (i.e., Phases 2 to 6):

- A dedicated project Website:
 - Including provision for input through such means as web-based questionnaires, input forms, project team-directed commenting; and
 - Linking to reports, newsletters, event information and other project communication.
- Regular use of Social Media tools:
 - Twitter (near term);
 - Facebook page (to be considered in the longer term);
 - Blogs (to be considered in the longer term); and
 - YouTube Videos (see 'Engaging Youth' in Section 7.0).
- Preparation and distribution of Electronic Newsletters:
 - To be developed at nodal points in the project process — likely at project initiation, at the completion of the visioning and guiding principles phase, at the completion of the land use concepts phase, at the preferred land use phase, and at the draft secondary plan phase.
- Development and use of QR (Quick Response) Codes:
 - These codes (see sample next to text) will be placed on all core communication materials — individuals simply use their personal communication devices to take a picture of the code using an application program to link to a selected location (e.g. the project website, a workshop notice, etc.). In essence, this approach provides a direct link to key information for users (and is particularly popular with youth).
- Mailing list creation and maintenance — including regular updates to those on it through e-blasts, surface mailings, etc.
- Ongoing interaction of stakeholders with project team members by phone, email, surface mail and in-person meetings.



Emphasis on Educating

Most citizens are unfamiliar with Ontario’s land use planning system and, consequently, with the framework and intent behind municipal planning studies. However, many engaged citizens are not only willing to contribute to local initiatives, they are also eager to learn. Many want to become better informed and to better understand a system that impacts their community.

Therefore, a primary, on-going activity of the Community Engagement Strategy will be to create formal and informal opportunities for the public to become better informed. Using the tools identified above (as well as the additional consultation events identified in the following sections) Town staff and the project consulting team will ask for more than public opinion — we will help the community understand the nature and constraints of planning processes or any other issue they are being asked to address.

6.0 Phase Two Detailed Strategy

This Section of the Community Engagement Strategy provides a detailed discussion of the community engagement activities that have been identified for Phase Two of the Vision Georgetown project (June 2013-February 2014). It sets out the intended outcomes and outlines the strategies, tactics, and key ‘thrusts’ that will be implemented to achieve the intended outcomes. This Community Engagement Strategy has provided a focused discussion of engagement activities for Phase Two of Vision Georgetown or the following reasons:

- At this point in the planning project it is not possible to understand or predict process outcomes or project needs that will emerge as the six-phase planning process is implemented. It would not be effective or accurate to begin mapping out an engagement strategy for project phases that will not be initiated until 2014 and beyond; and
- Phase Two of Vision Georgetown will be the most important and intense from a consultation perspective. We will not only attempt to educate members of the community about the planning process, we will attempt to develop excitement about the future of Georgetown. We will also be setting the stage for our detailed planning work by working with the community to develop a set of guiding principles and develop a concept plan.

That said, Section 7.0 of this Strategy also begins to look beyond Phase Two of the overall planning project insofar as it is feasible to do so. It sets out a list and timeline of anticipated engagement activities for Phases three to six.

Phase Two Outcomes

Following approval of this Community Engagement Strategy, Phase Two of Vision Georgetown will be initiated. Community engagement activities for Phase Two will focus on three key outcomes:

1. Developing and finalizing a vision for the new community;
2. Developing and finalizing guiding principles for the new community; and
3. Generating alternative land use concepts and identifying a sub-set of them (or potentially a single preferred option) to carry forward.

To this end, the engagement process will be focused on involving the public and key stakeholders in the above. This will involve:

- a. The sharing of collective aspirations;
- b. The gathering of information/perspective re: existing conditions, key contextual considerations and so forth;
- c. Land use concept generation and evaluation — and choice/preference identification; and
- d. Ongoing education/information sharing.

Phase Two Activities/Tactics

The following is an outline and discussion of the specific engagement activities and tactics that will be implemented at key points in Phase Two, in order to achieve the above noted outcomes. The activities and tactics are based on the following “thrusts”, which are intended to drive key communication/engagement objectives at specific strategic points:

1. Get the Word Out!;
2. Educate and Inform;
3. Visioning and Guiding Principles;
4. Land Use Concept Generation; and
5. Land Use Concept Feedback;

Thrust 1: Get the Word Out!

Focus: Generate awareness of and interest in the project.

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
The following project name has been identified (with input from the Steering Committee) in an effort to brand the process (not the new community): “ <i>Vision Georgetown: Leading Today, Shaping Tomorrow</i> ”. A logo for this name/brand will also be developed.	June/July 2013
Implement an ‘awareness raising/promotional’ strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Notice • Co-promo using Town vehicles (e.g. Parks & Recreation Guide, Marquee signs, etc.) • Posters/signage in high pedestrian traffic areas • Billboards on the site (through developers) • Participation in a local cable show • Electronic newsletter • Earned media (news releases, media kits – backgrounders, etc., op. ed./think pieces, event) • Advertising 	July-Dec. 2013
Implement an ‘outreach road show’ strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador’s Kit (key messages script, slide presentation, discussion questions) — for ambassadors (see below) • Consultation in a box • Train/equip team members and ambassadors to visit/reach out to various community groups, functions and events (e.g. Farmer’s Market, Fairs, Seniors Groups, Youth Groups, Clubs, Associations, Ratepayers, and Neighbourhood Groups, etc.) 	July-Dec. 2013
Establish/Maintain a project participant list	June - ongoing

Thrust 2: Educate and Inform

Focus: Promote understanding of the project — make the complex comprehensible, communicate parameters/scope and bring people ‘up to speed.’

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Core Community Information Session (an introductory meeting to serve as an educational/foundational piece)	Sept. 2013

Thrust 3: Visioning and Guiding Principles

Focus: Engage people in helping to shape the vision/guiding principles for the new community.

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Visioning/Guiding Principles Workshop #1: Steering Committee	Sept. 2013
Visioning/Guiding Principles Workshop #2: Community	Oct. 2013

Thrust 4: Land Use Concept Generation

Focus: Engage the community in helping to shape potential land use concepts.

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Land Use Concept Generation Workshop #1: Steering Committee	Oct. 2013
Land Use Concept Generation Workshop #2: Community	Nov. 2013

Thrust 5: Land Use Concept Feedback

Focus: Gauge community reactions to alternative land use concepts with a view to identifying the preferred (or a sub-set to carry forward).

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Land Use Concept Feedback Workshop #1: Steering Committee	Jan. 2014
Land Use Concept Feedback Workshop #2: Community	Feb. 2014

We note that the specific agendas/approaches to each of the Workshops described above for Thrusts Three to Five will be developed in consultation with the Steering Committee. Workshop content and exercises will be tailored to the work plan objectives and make generous use of innovative potential facilitation approaches — from café-style roundtable discussions, to “dotmocracy” activities, to hand-held device live-time tabulation, to graffiti walls, and others.

The sessions will effectively harness the communication potential of precedent images and other visuals that are compelling, educational and illustrative. Moreover, they will be supplemented by non-workshop alternatives for providing input (through online commenting and so forth).

7.0 Future Initiatives

This section of the Strategy begins to look beyond Phase Two of Vision Georgetown insofar as it is feasible to do so. It sets out a list and timeline of anticipated engagement activities for Phases three to six.

It also begins to address additional consultation goals that will be addressed in later phases of the process, such as how to engage the local youth and how we intend to reach out to members of the public and other groups who don't generally participate in these types of planning processes.

Engaging Youth Specifically

Youth are typically under-represented in this type of planning exercise. As a starting point, the project team proposes to meet with and work through the Mayor's Youth Action Committee (who could potentially serve as conduits to and from various youth-constituencies). The team will seek the Committee's best advice on engaging youth in Halton Hills. There is currently a youth engagement initiative underway to develop a framework, policy and communications plan to increase youth civic engagement. One of the projects identified by the committee for future engagement is the Vision Georgetown project.



Figure 5: We are exploring innovative and exciting ways to engage youth in Vision Georgetown.

One youth engagement initiative that the team is proposing for discussion is a high school media studies project that would involve students preparing videos about the Vision Georgetown project for posting on YouTube, the project website and elsewhere, and potentially for use at consultation events. Other initiatives will be determined following the meeting with the Mayor's Youth Action Committee.

Going Further — Proactive Outreach Options

To maximize community input and to reach those who do not typically involve themselves in this type of community/land use planning exercise, two additional proactive outreach activities are proposed for discussion:

- Random recruit focus groups — This would involve randomly calling Halton Hills residents to recruit participants to participate in focus groups at a minimum of two nodal points in the project process: the land use concept generation/review phase and the draft secondary plan phase. The participants would include a mix of genders, ages, occupations, incomes, working status, resident locations and so forth. The recruitment would purposefully target those who do NOT typically engage in municipal planning exercises (given the intent to engage the ‘silent majority’).
- Strategic listening calls — This would involve having project team members (potentially including Steering Committee members) calling randomly into the Halton Hills population and engaging residents in brief 5-7 minute conversations about the new community. This approach could be used at selected times throughout the project process.

Future Phase Consultation

This engagement strategy has focused on the critical time period from project inception to generating alternative land use concepts and a single preferred option to carry forward, from June 2013 to February 2014. Looking beyond this timeframe, the project team anticipates using a variety of techniques to communicate about and get input on the background reports and draft plans. The following table summarizes some of the consultation tools and methods that we anticipate will be used beyond Phase Two:

Phase	Consultation Tools/Methods
Three	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. There will be limited community engagement in Phase Three beyond the on-going consultation activities.
Four	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. Public consultation events (i.e., presentations/Q&A, a workshop format Smaller group/kitchen table working meetings) will also be held to present and obtain input on refinement of draft alternative.
Five	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. Public consultation events (i.e., presentations/Q&A, a workshop format Smaller group/kitchen table working meetings) will also be held to present and obtain input on the preferred land use alternative.
Six	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. The draft secondary plan will also be presented through an Open House/Presentation and a Statutory Public Meeting will be held.

8.0 Monitoring

A Community Engagement strategy is only useful if it achieves its objectives. We will therefore evaluate the success of our community engagement efforts by conducting regular reviews against the Community Engagement Objectives as outlined in Section 4.0. The following is a brief overview of how we will monitor and report on the success of our engagement activities.

Monitoring Activities

Town staff and the project consulting team will undertake the following in order to monitor the success of the Community Engagement Strategy:

- We will provide brief surveys and response forms at events and on-line to assess how participants feel about being involved in the Vision Georgetown project process;
- Surveys will also be used to determine which parts of an engagement process participants felt were most effective, useful, informative or enjoyable;
- Participants will be asked to indicate the degree to which they developed a better understanding of the issues being discussed/presented;
- We will keep track of the number of participants who attend consultation events, contribute to meetings, visit the website, provide formal comments, and participate in other formal consultation activities; and
- We will also keep track of the number of participants who maintain contact with the Town following a public engagement session.



Figure 6: We want feedback from the participants on the success of our engagement strategy.

Monitoring will also involve our team's own reflection on consultation tools and activities. Following each phase of the study, we will consider the following as it relates to community engagement:

- Did we meet our engagement objectives?
- What worked well?
- What could have been done better?
- What changes might we implement to improve the process?

Reporting Activities

We will report on our monitoring efforts by providing briefings to the Steering Committee and to Council at the end of each of the project phases. We will provide an overview of:

- The engagement events/activities;
- The information/feedback obtained from participants and how the feedback was incorporated into results/outcomes;
- How the chosen engagement methods led to the process results/outcomes;
- How future engagement methods might be modified to ensure better participation and feedback; and
- How the consultation strategy will be updated for upcoming project phases, including key priorities, updated tactics and related timelines.