

KNOCKING IT OUT OF THE PARK

**DEVELOPING AN ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY FOR THE HAMILTON
PARKS MASTER PLAN**

**PREPARED BY CITYLAB
SIR STUDENTS**

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DECEMBER, 2020



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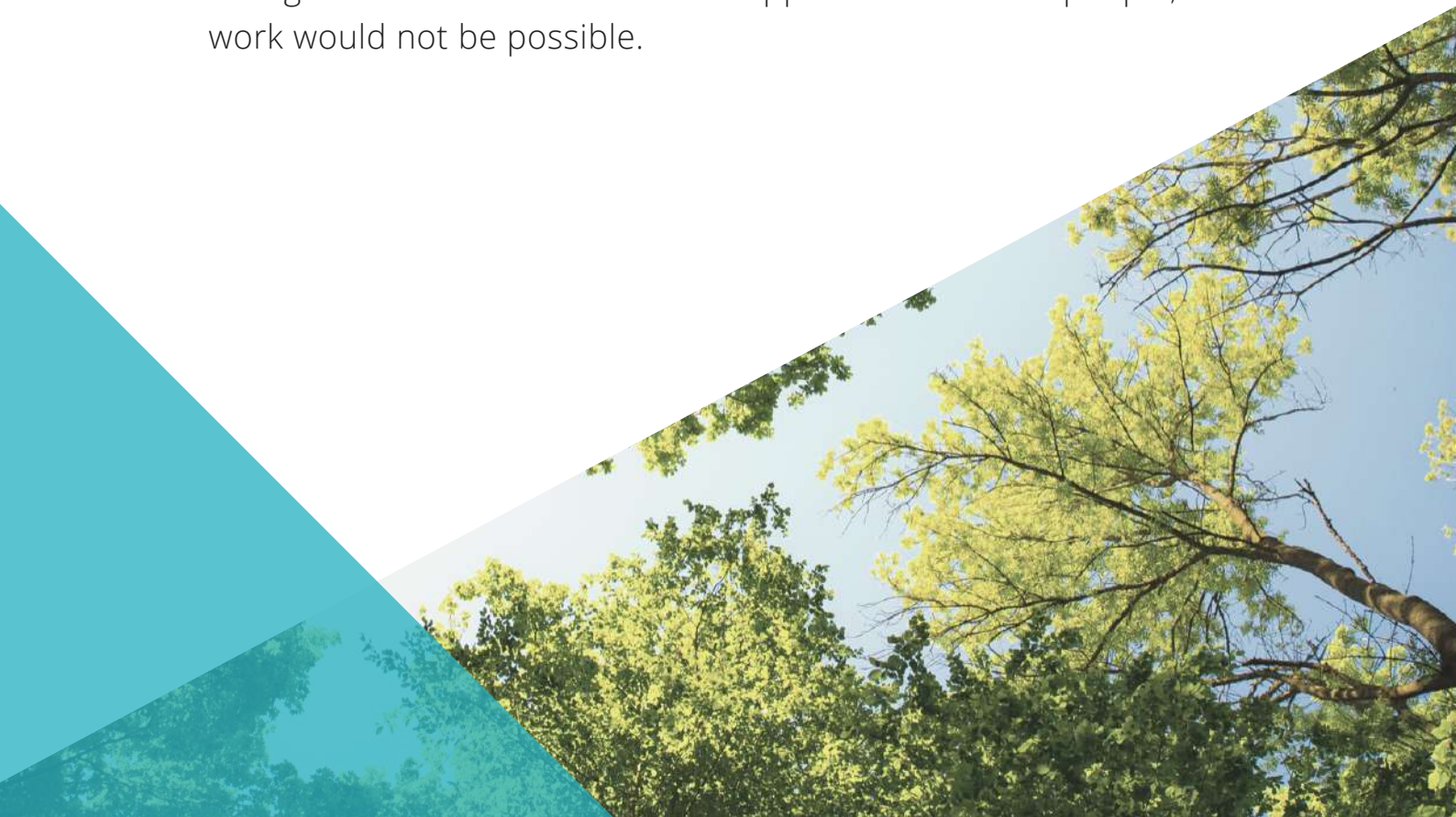
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CityLAB Hamilton recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the **Haudenosaunee confederacy** and the **Anishinabe** and **Mississauga nations of the Grand River**. CityLAB Hamilton recognizes and acknowledges that this land is protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. May we be guided by **love and respect** as we seek relationships with the original peoples of this land, one based on honour and respect. (McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences, n.d.).

Thank you to all of the CityLAB Semester in Residence instructors and staff for this unique opportunity, and for supporting us throughout our project and the semester. Thank you to our project partners from the City of Hamilton, Cynthia Graham and Johnathan Vandriel, for their **support and encouragement** throughout the project. Thank you to all Hamilton and non-Hamilton City staff that **engaged** with us and **participated** in our dialogue sessions. Without the support from these people, our work would not be possible.



1.0 PARKS MASTER PRE-PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CREATED BY: GRAEME FISHMAN, SAGE HARTMANN, CLARE MCGALL,
AND STEPHANIE WANG

1.1 INTRODUCTION

CityLAB Semester in Residence (SIR) is an interdisciplinary program that brings together students, academic, and civic leaders to co-create a better Hamilton (CityLAB, n.d.).



This program is an immersive learning opportunity that provides students an opportunity to gain valuable insight on issues facing the City of Hamilton and the citizens within it, ultimately provoking students and city leadership to inspire, energize, and build a healthy, sustainable, and vibrant Hamilton (CityLAB, n.d.).

Parkland is a public good that should be designed for and used by all citizens. Thus, it is important to listen to as many communities and demographics as possible when gauging the public's park and recreation needs. In anticipation of the Parks Master Plan community engagement period, and with the goal of proposing a more broad-based and universally accessible engagement strategy, the CityLAB student group was tasked with researching various methods of engagement to ensure effective and representational parkland feedback.

1.2 PROJECT FOCUS

The focus of the CityLAB student group was to investigate engagement methods that would involve, collaborate with, and empower Hamiltonians. By investigating previously employed engagement methods, the CityLAB student group attempted to answer the following questions:



Under these guiding questions, the CityLAB student group identified trends in gathered data that informed the proposed engagement method recommendations. In general, the CityLAB project's vision was to help inform the Parks Master Plan engagement strategy and, hopefully, future engagement strategies employed by the City of Hamilton.

1.3 DESIGN AND DIALOGUE



DESIGN

The project involved applying design thinking principles to streamline the survey and dialogue sessions



DIALOGUE

The dialogue sessions incorporated interactive elements to increase participation by complying with McMaster's 6 Principles of Community Engagement and lessons learned from Dialogue course lectures.

1.4 RELEVANCE TO CITY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The City of Hamilton’s 2016-2025 Strategic Plan illustrates seven priorities: community engagement and participation, economic prosperity and growth, healthy and safe communities, clean and green, built environment and infrastructure, culture and diversity, and our people and performance (City of Hamilton, 2020). The Parks Master Plan project aligns primarily with...



Community Engagement and Participation

Promoting civic engagement by empowering Hamiltonians to make a positive impact on the community .



Healthy and Safe Communities

Encouraging active, safe and healthy living by providing accessible parkland.



Clean and Green

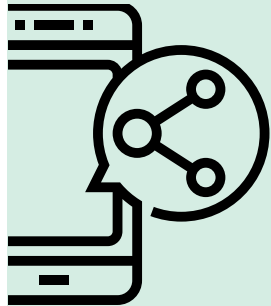
Promoting a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces that enriches the quality of life for community members.



Built Environment and Infrastructure

Connecting Hamilton to create a dynamic city that embraces best practices and vibrant green spaces.

1.5 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Use a phased approach for community engagement that incorporates multiple feedback loops;
2. Use a mix of virtual, in-person and paper engagement methods that correspond to each level of the IAP2 spectrum;
3. Leverage existing channels of communication that have a large following;
4. Do an internal scan of other engagement projects conducted by the City;
5. Engage underrepresented communities early, asking them how they would like to be engaged through the use of local champions;
6. Modify engagement methods to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Consider the Principles of Community Engagement;
8. Share findings from this report and the Parks Master Plan 2021 engagement with other Hamilton city staff working on engagement projects.

1.6 KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Through the primary and secondary research conducted by the student group, the Parks Master Plan engagement strategy will be evidence-based
- Recommendations made in this report will allow for accessible, inclusive, and transparent engagement that will ultimately build public trust in the City of Hamilton
- Students will pass this report and a transition report to the City of Hamilton with the hope that the research and recommendations made in the report will serve to advise the City
- Support from City staff partners and the CityLAB instructional team was fundamental to the successful completion of this report

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Parks are **vital** to establishing and maintaining a high quality of life in all communities. Parkland is an essential element of public infrastructure that has economic value, health and environmental benefits and cultural significance. Parks increase the value of privately owned land, promote healthy and active living, protect and preserve the natural environment, and improve the livability of a community. However, **every community is different** and park needs vary. Thus, **tailoring development** to the unique priorities of Hamiltonians is **essential** to contributing to the well-being of its users. To ensure that the Hamilton Parks Master Plan successfully gauges the park needs of its communities, it requires a broad and accessible engagement strategy that involves, collaborates and empowers citizens. In anticipation of the Parks Master Plan, the Parks Master Pre-Plan project team researched and developed an **engagement strategy** that will build the public's capacity to engage while also providing a Parks Master Plan that prioritizes the vision of Hamilton.



2.1 WHAT IS CITYLAB?



CityLAB is a social innovation hub that brings together student, academic, and civic leaders to co-create a better Hamilton for all (CityLAB n.d.). The CityLAB Semester in Residence (SiR) is an immersive program designed by CityLAB for post-secondary students to learn about the elements of community design, dialogue and project management (CityLAB, n.d.). A major component of the SiR program is the project experience in which students are partnered with Hamilton city staff to develop recommendations for a particular challenge the City is facing. From October to December 2020 four CityLAB SiR students were assigned to conduct foundational research for the Parks Master Plan project. Over the duration of two months, the CityLAB student group invested over 380 hours, working alongside city staff to address challenges regarding effective community engagement.

2.2 WHAT IS A PARKS MASTER PLAN?



A Parks Master Plan is a high-level guide for the long-term use, acquisition and development of city parks and recreational facilities. This Master Plan will guide critical decisions about parks and recreation facilities, infrastructures, programs and services. In general, the Hamilton Parks Master Plan will reshape the way Hamiltonians access and engage with their public parks.

2.3 WHAT PROMPTED THE NEED FOR A PARKS MASTER PLAN?

The City of Hamilton currently lacks an overarching parkland design and acquisition strategy. As a result, reactionary land purchases have caused an imbalance in the location of parks, and who they have been designed for. Additionally, ever-changing requirements for sports facilities need to be considered city-wide to determine if there is an adequate supply of community sports parks. These problems are exacerbated by urban intensification. Thus, in order to ensure equitable access for all Hamiltonians, the City needs a more strategic approach; a Parks Master Plan.



3.0 PROJECT FOCUS

The focus of the Parks Master Pre-Plan project is to provide an engagement strategy that is accessible, wide-ranged and supportive of the City of Hamilton's vision to creating a sustainable recreational parks network. In alignment with the City's Vision "To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully", the Parks Master Plan's vision is to make Hamilton a better place for everyone and support residents through all of life's stages (City of Hamilton, 2018, p.2).

3.1 PROJECT CONTEXT

The CityLAB student group began collaborating with the Department of Landscape Architecture on the Parks Master Pre-Plan in October 2020 under the guidance of Cynthia Graham and John Vandriel. The CityLAB student group joined the project in the pre-plan phase and were tasked with investigating and developing an engagement strategy that the City of Hamilton can use to gauge the park-needs of its community members. Notably, working with the community is essential to understanding their park-needs and desires. Thus, employing inclusive engagement methods is essential to providing Hamiltonians the economic, environmental, and recreational benefits associated with park access.



3.2 PROJECT SCOPE

OUT OF SCOPE

- Undertaking the proposed engagement strategy and methods (this will happen in 2021).
- Physical design of park space.

IN-SCOPE

- Literature review of existing engagement strategies.
- Small-scale focus groups.
- Medium-scale workshop.
- Survey on Engagement
- Synthesized and interpreted findings from these four approaches to inform the proposed engagement recommendations.

3.3 PROJECT GOALS

1.

Creatively engage with city planners and green space groups to learn about their community engagement successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

2.

Develop an engagement strategy that determines what methods and strategies will generate useful, relevant data and are preferred by Hamiltonians.

3.

Modify existing engagement strategies to be conducive to the new world with COVID-19.

4.0 PROJECT DESIGN AND DIALOGUES

4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the CityLAB student group initiated dialogues with engagement experts, they conducted a literature review to gain a better understanding of what effective and equitable engagement looks like. The review process involved researching over a dozen sources and would shape the student team's engagement over the following months. In addition to in-person and virtual consultation methods, this review encompassed engagement strategies used both within the City of Hamilton, in Canada as well as around the world. Focussing on local, national and international engagement strategies offered insights into what has worked already in Hamilton while providing new and successful ideas to adopt from other municipalities.

While virtual consultation is particularly important for any engagement strategy to accommodate COVID-19 social-distancing measures, city planners are beginning to realize that online engagement is a crucial element to any wide-reaching engagement strategy. This is exemplified by the City of Hamilton's recent formation of Engage Hamilton, a virtual platform for large-scale community engagement. Furthermore, the student group found cities all over Canada were beginning to experiment with similar technologies, such as Vancouver and Toronto. The student team's research from this review informed the preliminary findings presented in dialogue sessions with city planners from Hamilton and across Canada.

4.2 DIALOGUES

After conducting the literature review, the student team began a stakeholder mapping exercise to determine which individuals and organizations they should engage in the dialogues and survey. **Stakeholder mapping is the visual process of laying out stakeholders to illustrate the degree of interest and influence they might have on a given project.** Stakeholders with low interest and influence would be informed, while stakeholders with high interest and high influence would be partnered. Those with high interest and low influence would be consulted. Low interest and high influence stakeholders would be involved.

STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATION LIST

Hamilton City Staff

- Engage Hamilton
- Managers of Hamilton Parks Master Plan
- Manager of Community Planning
- City of Hamilton Communications Office

Non-Hamilton City Staff

- Vancouver Parks
- Province of Prince Edward Island
- Windsor
- Toronto
- Cambridge
- Kitchener

Organizations and Hamilton City Departments with Vested Interest in Greenspace

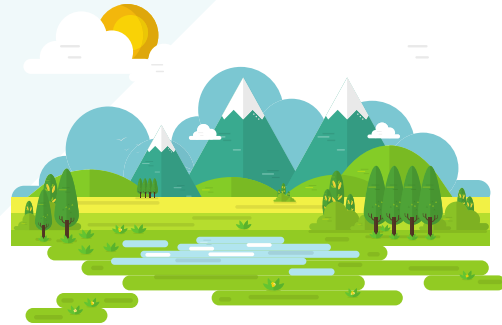
- Stewards of Cootes
- Environment Hamilton
- Our Future Hamilton
- Hamilton Public Health Services
- Conservation Authority
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Transportation Planning
- Parks Operations
- Forestry
- Corporate Finance

The student team determined that they engage with the following four stakeholder categories to inform their research. The categories are determined by their relationship to Hamilton's Parks Master Plan. The categories are as follows: groups with a vested interest in green space; internal city staff members; city planners outside of Hamilton; and, Hamilton city staff conducting engagement.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH VESTED INTEREST IN GREEN SPACE

This group includes many notable conservation and protection agencies, such as:

- Royal Botanical Garden
- Stewards of Cootes
- Environment Hamilton
- Our Future Hamilton
- Hamilton Public Health Services
- Conservation Authorities

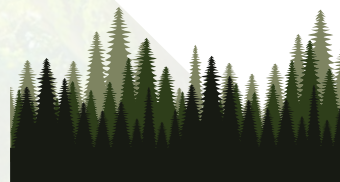


These stakeholders were *consulted* (**Royal Botanical Garden, Stewards of Cootes, Environment Hamilton, Our Future Hamilton, Hamilton Public Health Services, Conservation Authorities**), as they have a high interest in the Parks Master Plan while ultimately having a low influence on the final master plan. The consultation method of choice was a survey distributed to each organization that prompted input and feedback on engagement for greenspace projects. Understanding how these organizations engage with the public and how the data they collect is incorporated into their final decisions is something the Parks Master Plan engagement process can emulate.

INTERNAL CITY STAFF MEMBERS

This category includes many city staff members and departments that are tangentially impacted by the development of the Parks Master Plan, and whose input is required to develop a holistic master plan. The departments we reached out to include:

- Transportation
- Planning
- Parks Operations
- Forestry
- Corporate Finance



The student group chose to *consult* these stakeholders, as the final Parks Master Plan will inevitably influence their respective domains; however, these stakeholders are not directly involved in the formation of the Parks Master Plan which informed the decision not to partner with them. The team once again elected to consult these stakeholders with a distributed survey. This survey prompted responses on effective engagement strategies for particular demographics, as well as advice for effective engagement strategies that are compliant with COVID-19 restrictions.

Findings from the survey administered to these two groups can be found in Appendix B.

CITY PLANNERS WORKING OUTSIDE HAMILTON

- Vancouver
- Windsor
- Toronto
- Cambridge
- Kitchener



This category includes city planners with experience in engagement. In many cases, their engagement experience was particularly related to developing park master plans. This group of city planners included members from Vancouver, Windsor, Toronto, Cambridge, and Kitchener. Once again, the team elected to *consult* with these stakeholders through two dialogue sessions. These planners have expertise from years of experience in the field, yet they will ultimately be unable to contribute to Hamilton's Parks Master Plan because they work in other municipalities. These stakeholders were able to offer tremendous insights into how civic engagement should be carried out. Additionally, they offered invaluable advice on how to engage certain demographics, such as seniors or non-native English speakers, which typically have low engagement rates with traditional consultation methods. We were able to work this advice into our engagement recommendations for the official Parks Master Plan consultation process, which will hopefully result in a more inclusive and representative parks plan. **Findings from the two dialogues with this group can be found in Appendix A.**

HAMILTON CITY STAFF CONDUCTING ENGAGEMENT

This final category includes Hamilton city staff members who will ultimately have a role in community engagement for the Parks Master Plan. These staff members include: Cindy Mutch (Engage Hamilton), Cynthia Graham and John Vandriel (Landscape Architectural Services), Christine Newbold (Manager, Community Planning), Jasmine Graham (City of Hamilton's communications office), Dawn Walton (Recreation Supervisor), and Ray Kessler (Manager, Real Estate/ Property Management). **The student team decided to partner with the stakeholders listed above because of their high level of interest, as well as their strong influence on the Parks Master Plan project.** This partnership was created through the facilitation of a virtual workshop which spurred conversation on citizen engagement. This dialogue session generated many useful ideas and strategies for effective community engagement and greatly impacted our final recommendations. **Findings from the dialogue with this group can be found in Appendix A.**

DIALOGUE PROCESS

Three dialogues were hosted. All three dialogue sessions were structured in an almost identical manner and ran an hour-long over Zoom. Each session began with a presentation describing CityLAB, the project context, preliminary findings, and dialogue purpose. The goal of this first step was to prime participants to engage in high-level discussion about the topic. Although participants received information regarding the project background in the email invite, the student group believed they may benefit from a knowledge refreshment.

DIALOGUE PROCESS CONTINUED

Following the presentation to the group, participants entered the dialogue component of the session where they were told the ground rules of participation. An icebreaker activity was implemented for participants to introduce themselves to one another, stating their names, municipalities, and departments. Once the participants were familiar with one another they were shown a virtual whiteboard containing the following questions:

- **Who was your target audience?**
- **What engagement method(s) did you employ?**
- **What worked?**
- **What didn't work?**
- **What would you do differently?**

Participants were given example responses and some time to review the questions as they thought back to a particular engagement experience for reference. After giving some thought to their responses, participants spoke on a voluntary basis. Answers were recorded by the note-taker on sticky notes posted to the whiteboard. In doing so, participants had the opportunity to correct any misinterpretations on the sticky notes. 35 minutes was allotted to this group discussion and participation was moderated by the discussion leader to ensure equal participation. The Zoom chat was also being monitored if participants chose to respond over text.

Discussions wrapped up naturally and were quite fruitful due to the open-ended questions and eagerness of the participants. In the end, participants were encouraged to ask any questions to the CityLAB student group -- many of which were requests to see the final reports of the project.

A critical reflection was completed following each dialogue session. The CityLAB student group decided against having one notetaker per discussion group after the first dialogue with Hamilton City Staff because it was hard to keep up with the discussion. Every proceeding session had the discussion leader doing the sticky notes, while the assigned note-taker took more detailed notes on a separate page. The student group also underestimated the number of attendees from the City of Hamilton in the first dialogue. This prompted a last-minute change from WebEx to Zoom to use the breakout room function. As a result of this change, some participants ended up on WebEx thus delaying the start time.

5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The initial steps of the CityLAB student group involved a scan of literature that fell under four categories:

**History of
engagement
in Hamilton**

**Parks master plan
engagement
strategies from
other Canadian
municipalities**

**Reports and
academic
research on
community
engagement best
practices**

**CityLAB
guest
speaker
series**

5.0 CONTINUED

Findings from the first category provided a background on how the City of Hamilton's public engagement has evolved over time. Findings from the latter three categories were shared as preliminary results with our community dialogue participants (see Appendix C for the entire slideshow). Altogether, this literature review informs our recommendations to the City of Hamilton in conjunction with results from our community dialogues and surveys.

5.1 HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT IN HAMILTON

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

In 2014, a voluntary committee of local residents was formed by the City of Hamilton (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015). The voluntary committee, known as the Hamilton Engagement Committee, developed the *Public Engagement Charter* which sets the ground rules for local government engagement efforts (2015). While Hamilton had basic policies for public engagement, the City wanted to enhance engagement experiences to meet the rapidly evolving, diverse community needs of Hamilton (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015). Eight Core Principles of Public Engagement were created to touch on issues such as: transparency and trust; accountability and action; inclusion and diversity; ongoing engagement; and learning, reflection and evaluation (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015). Under these principles the City of Hamilton had to find different ways to engage people and ensure residents' input influences end results (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015).

OUR FUTURE HAMILTON

Following the establishment of the Hamilton Engagement Committee and *Public Engagement Charter*, the City of Hamilton undertook a variety of city-wide engagement projects. One such project is Our Future Hamilton. Our Future Hamilton began engaging people in 2015 and revolved around one question: "What is your vision for the future of Hamilton?" (City of Hamilton, 2017). Nearly 55,000 people shared their ideas, hopes and dreams for Hamilton to create a 25 year road map to propel the City forward (City of Hamilton, 2017). Our Future Hamilton is the largest and most inclusive engagement initiative ever conducted by the City of Hamilton, making it the gold standard for engagement efforts that would follow suit (City of Hamilton, 2017). The success of this project can be attributed to the traditional and innovative community engagement methods employed. Vision cards in a variety of languages, pop-up "lemonade stands", online surveys, project presentations, engagement toolkits, open houses and a community vision summit were all utilized (City of Hamilton, 2017). Special consideration was also given to underrepresented groups such as youth, newcomers, seniors, rural residents and priority neighbourhoods, as well as members of Hamilton's Indigenous population (City of Hamilton, 2017).



Figure 1: Our Future Hamilton engagement booths and vision cards (City of Hamilton, 2017)

TRAILS MASTER PLAN

Another example of a City-wide engagement effort is the Hamilton Trails Master Plan. Community engagement best practices from this project are highly applicable to the Parks Master Plan because both projects address outdoor public space design and networks. Similar to the Our Future Hamilton engagement strategy, the Trails Master Plan employed a mix of in-person, virtual and promotional strategies. One highly effective approach was setting up “Let’s Talk Trails” tables at events that had games for children, sticker dot voting and paper to write general comments (City of Hamilton, 2016). The project also exercised transparency through a project website that posted current engagement opportunities, the old Trails Master Plan, a video and a survey (City of Hamilton, 2016). Promotion of the project was done through a mix of virtual and analog methods such as posters, social media accounts, postcards, and CHCH broadcasts (City of Hamilton, 2016). A youth engagement opportunity was also established for Grade 9 geography students to promote a plan for a Trail Initiative that they hoped all would use in future (City of Hamilton, 2016).

ENGAGEMENT IN PARKS

Community engagement for park development has also evolved within the City. Early in Hamilton's history, city planners and landscape architects designed parks with little to no input from the greater community.

Gore Park, one of Hamilton's earliest public spaces, was originally owned by Hamilton's founder George Hamilton (Hamilton Public Library, n.d.). The land was later sold to the City as the land was considered in dire need of development (HPL, n.d.). Upon acquiring the land in 1846, the City advertised its intention to subdivide the space for building lots in the local newspaper (HPL, n.d.). To the City's surprise, 74 residents protested this decision, and City Council voted in the public's favour to add ornamentation and greenery to the land instead (HPL, n.d.). Since the City did not conduct public engagement from the beginning, the City had to tear down the buildings and retrofit the space to fit the public's needs (HPL, n.d.). Despite the demonstrated value of public input, the City would continue to go without engagement for land acquisition and park developments in the years to come.

Gage Park, another landmark space in Hamilton's downtown, was bought by the City in 1918 (City of Hamilton, 2010). In 1920, nationally-renowned landscape architects, Howard and Laurie Dunnington-Grubb, were commissioned by the Board of Parks to develop a master plan for the park (City of Hamilton, 2010). This design team installed formal gardens that were later complemented by tennis courts, a large fountain, and a bandshell (City of Hamilton, 2010). While all these features are still greatly appreciated by the public, they were not designed in accordance with the community's vision, but with that of the landscape architects'. As time passed, the City began to look for more ways to preserve, enhance, and complement the original park design. Landscape architects preceding Dunnington-Grubb began consultation with the public to better understand their vision for Gage Park. In 2005, the City of Hamilton initiated a Master Plan process with the goal of maintaining the cultural heritage of the site and responding to the growing popularity of the park for special events, organized sports, and a growing concern over maintenance (Graham & Stasiuk, 2016). The plan's community consultation strategy consisted of two open-house Public Information Centres (PICs) designed for community members to ask the design team questions and make suggestions (City of Hamilton, 2010). Participants were informed of the PICs via newspaper notices and newsletters (City of Hamilton, 2010).

ENGAGEMENT IN PARKS CONTINUED

Since the 2005 Gage Park Master Plan, community engagement has evolved even further to have multiple methods. In 2013, public stakeholder meetings, tours, and booths were done for the Beasley Park development project (City of Hamilton, 2019). While in-person engagement was extensive, the project lacked virtual engagement elements -- elements the Sam Lawrence Park Master Plan was able to utilize in addition to the in-person engagement methods (City of Hamilton, 2019; City of Hamilton, 2020). However, both these and other similar projects in Hamilton, currently lack specific methods to reach underrepresented members of the community. Thus, it is crucial the 2021 Hamilton Parks Master Plan has an engagement strategy that is truly inclusive.

5.2 PARKS MASTER PLANS FROM OTHER CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

VANPLAY: VANCOUVER'S PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES MASTER PLAN

Vancouver's Parks Master Plan is another example of engagement excellence. This project was divided into five phases that discussed:



Phase 1: Satisfaction, big ideas and priority setting;

Phase 2: Challenges and opportunities;

Phase 3: Goals for future and roles and responsibilities;

Phase 4: Testing the goals;

Phase 5: Level of service, big moves and operationalization.
of the big ideas (City of Vancouver, 2018)

In total, 33,000 residents were engaged due to highly visible events and a spectrum of opportunities for participation - ranging from deep dive workshops to online surveys (City of Vancouver, 2018). All community engagement efforts were linked to one another. People attending in-person events would be directed to the virtual engagement elements and those using the virtual elements would be informed of the in-person events happening in the future (City of Vancouver, 2018). Similar to Toronto's parks master plan, Vancouver brought an equity and inclusion lens to their engagement through engagement with youth, low-income individuals, newcomers, persons with disabilities and the Urban Indigenous population (City of Vancouver, 2018).

5.2 PARKS MASTER PLANS FROM OTHER CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

CITY OF TORONTO PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES MASTER PLAN.

The engagement for this master plan project consisted of two phases. The first phase sought to understand facility needs and establish principles to create a needs assessment and determine the strategic direction (City of Toronto, 2019). During this phase, the City conducted a resident survey, created a website and hosted a town hall and two stakeholder advisory group meetings (City of Toronto, 2019). The second phase consisted of testing and refining the draft plan that was based on the feedback from phase one (City of Toronto, 2019). In this phase, another survey was conducted in addition to pop-up booths, a planning review panel and a variety of working sessions (City of Toronto, 2019). Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division also found unique ways to engage Toronto city staff and green space agencies in addition to residents (City of Toronto, 2019). In doing so, they were able to align their engagement work with other divisions and discuss key facility priorities (City of Toronto, 2019).

One particularly innovative engagement method was holding councilor interviews to get feedback on local and city-wide facility issues and ideas (City of Toronto, 2019). Since councillors are constantly engaging their constituents on a plethora of issues, it is highly likely they would have some valuable insight and specific lists of concerns associated with the parks in their ward. The most innovative aspect of Toronto's master plan engagement strategy is their engagement of underrepresented groups, such as persons with disabilities, equity-seeking groups, youth, and seniors. Engaging with these groups in addition to typical facility user groups strengthened the quality and quantity of the data they received (City of Toronto, 2019). This aspect of Toronto's engagement strategy should be embraced by the City of Hamilton as they begin their Parks Master Plan.



GUELPH RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURE STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

In 2009, the City of Guelph conducted an extensive public engagement strategy consisting of surveys, workshops, open houses and meetings (City of Guelph). A highlight of this plan is the City's involvement of neighbourhood groups. Neighbourhood groups demonstrated a desire to strengthen their relationship with the City and were involved throughout the process (City of Guelph, 2009). The neighbourhood groups discussed issues specific to their constituents and also suggested ways to improve the delivery of their dialogue and communications during the public engagement period (City of Guelph, 2009).

5.3 ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND REPORTS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Key findings from academic research and reports can be used to enhance the community engagement work already being done by municipalities. According to Crompton (2017), improving public engagement requires the creation of new engagement methods in addition to finding new ways to implement existing methods. Public forums designed to be made more accessible will still have a demographic disparity due to lack of interest (Crompton, 2017). Thus, **municipalities must tackle this lack of interest through meaningful connections** to services for specific underrepresented groups, which can be done through helping participants identify their own priorities (Crompton, 2017).

Additionally, a report from Savic (2015) investigating international urban planning and development recommended municipalities:

- Utilize interactive engagement tools to provide feedback on working documents (e.g. interactive maps with embedded surveys, virtual tours)
- Game-ify engagement
- Build people's capacity to engage and then set parameters of discussion.
- Digitize engagement results into word trees, tag clouds so people can get an understanding of the greater ideas (Savic, 2015)

ENGAGEMENT UNDER COVID-19

COVID-19 has disrupted community engagement around the world prompting urban planners to re-imagine in-person and virtual methods. In September, a guidebook tailored for community engagement during the pandemic was released by the Urban Institute. It emphasized asking questions to reflect the current situation and offering space for community members to talk about how they are doing during the pandemic (Fedorowicz et al., 2020). Community engagement professionals must exercise social awareness to recognize when the community is feeling overburdened by the engagement methods, adjusting methods according to the public's capacity to engage (Fedorowicz et al., 2020).

Furthermore, GHD group -- a professional services firm -- created a toolkit for online engagement that aligns with the IAP2 spectrum of public engagement, pictured in Figure 2 (GHD, 2020). The toolkit provides specific engagement methods that fall under the six degrees of engagement: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower (GHD, 2020). Since the City of Hamilton wants to move beyond informing and consulting the public, staff should look toward the tools that will involve, collaborate with and empower the public.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

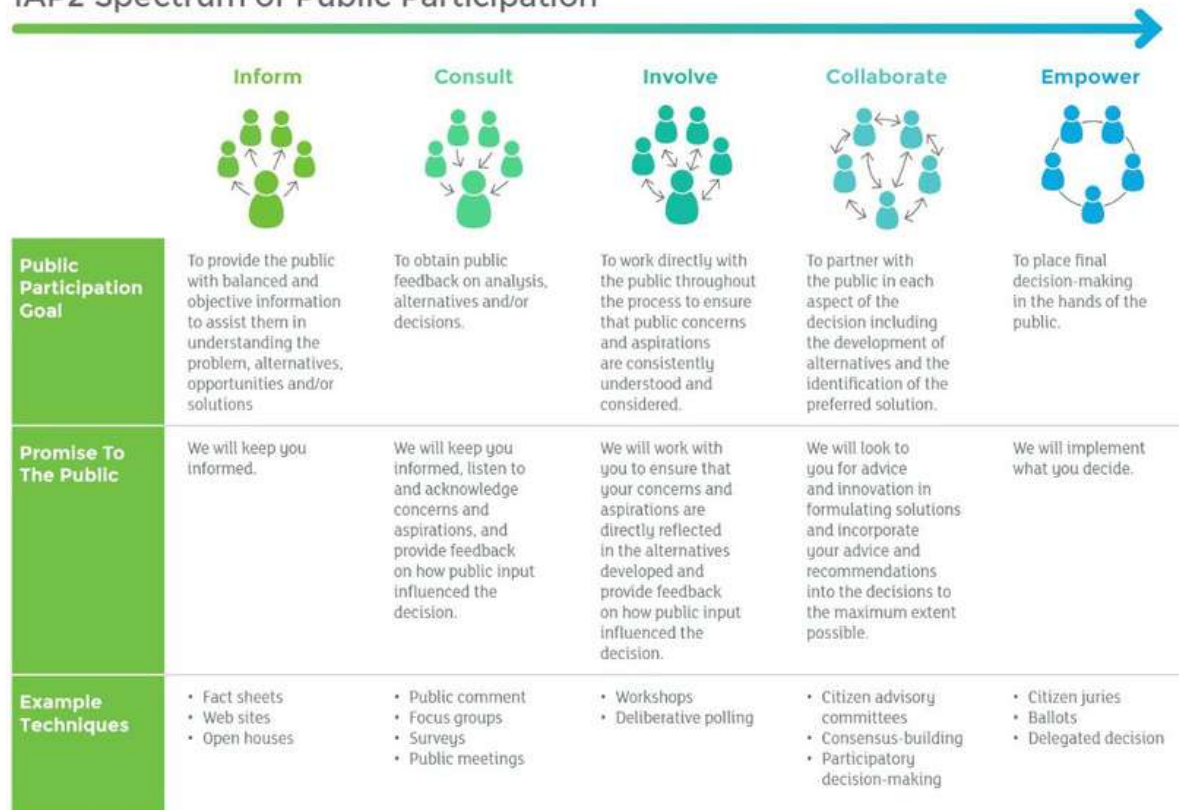


Figure 2: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement (Patient Voices Network, n.d.)

5.4 CITYLAB GUEST SPEAKER SERIES

Over the course of the semester, CityLAB invited a number of guests with experience conducting engagement in the City of Hamilton to share advice and answer questions. The following individuals presented to the CityLAB SiR students and greatly aided in the development of this project with their insight and knowledge on engagement.

CINDY MUTCH

On September 18th, Community Engagement Senior Manager, Cindy Mutch presented ways to successfully engage the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. She suggested a three-stage framework for engagement based on her work with Our Future Hamilton that consists of:

- Sharing the vision - we want to hear from you
- Shaping the vision - we heard you, we want your feedback, and are we hearing you correctly?
- Confirming the vision - this is what we heard, what do we need to change? (Mutch, 2020)

She also suggested the benefits of using the Engage Hamilton website to host surveys, store virtual vision cards, and allow people to share stories and photos on a particular subject (Mutch, 2020).



LIZ MCHARDY

Liz McHardy is a project manager from the LURA consulting firm. She spoke at CityLAB in November to discuss her firm's approach to engagement and lessons learned from engaging the public during the pandemic. Liz was adamantly against meetings as the primary method to engage considering them large time commitments and inaccessible (McHardy, 2020). Alternatively, she proposed a mix of high touch and low touch engagement tools.

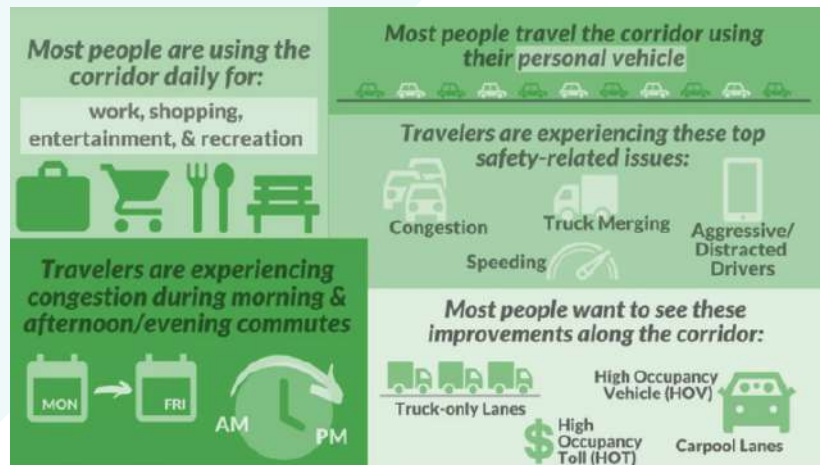
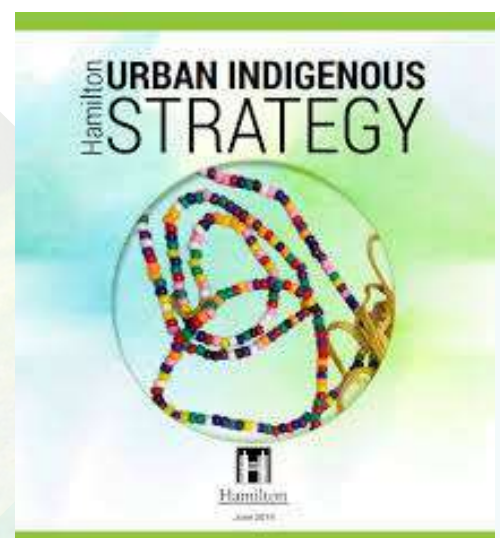


Figure 3: Example of a vision board derived from a traffic engagement initiative (McHardy, 2020).

Postcards, virtual whiteboards, one-on-one drop in periods, and online street tours were a few examples of high touch items (McHardy, 2020). Some low touch items include social media, emails, newsletters and videos that promoted the high touch tools (McHardy, 2020). For analyzing data collected with such engagement tools, she recommended using vision boards (pictured in Figure 3) and summary reports that could be sent to the public to build transparency and trust (McHardy, 2020).

SHELLY HILL

Shelly Hill pioneered the Urban Indigenous Strategy as senior project manager for the Urban Indigenous Strategy—an initiative developed to strengthen the City's relationship with the Indigenous community (Hill, 2020). The strategy will ultimately promote a better understanding among all residents about Indigenous histories, cultures, experiences and contributions (Hill, 2020). A project of this magnitude requires extensive, on-going engagement and the Urban Indigenous Strategy is a model for building relationships with Indigenous communities. They partnered with the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, hosted a number of community circles with experiential learning tools and attended relevant events in the Hamilton area. Shelly Hill mentioned in her presentation how they were able to tell a story of their progress through naming phases after the harvesting process (2020). She also explained how the project team utilized beads to represent each connection made through the development of the strategy (Hill, 2020).



6.0 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The Parks Master Plan student group faced many limitations and challenges during the semester including **lack of project clarity, COVID-19 restrictions, and lack of participation.**

6.1. LACK OF PROJECT CLARITY

The biggest limitation for the project was the lack of project clarity at the project's outset. The first two weeks were tumultuous, as the student group had to navigate conflicting ideas of what the term project would look like. There had been some miscommunication prior to the beginning of the Semester in Residence, so the project as presented to the student group by the city staff partners was quite different from the CityLAB project management instructor's vision.

Once the discrepancy was noted, the group quickly arranged a conference with the Project Manager instructor and city staff partners. While the project's new course required the revision of preliminary project agreements, which delayed progress, the student group overcame these obstacles to produce high quality work throughout the rest of the semester.



6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, the project group encountered logistical difficulties. Different time-zones, schedules, and internet connectivity problems proved inconvenient realities. One group member living in Vancouver had to adjust to meet the EST schedule in order to attend lectures and group meetings.

Social distancing measures meant that all lectures had to take place online. To combat this fatigue, the group took frequent breaks between meetings and tried to keep these meetings as efficient as possible.

As is inevitable in these stressful times, difficult challenges arose in most members' personal lives. The group made an effort to prioritize supporting one another during this challenging period. For example, if a group member had medical issues, club meetings, or family commitments, the rest of the group was happy to accommodate them. The key to combating many of the COVID-19-related issues experienced was peer support. Group members were supportive and understanding with each other in every aspect.

COVID-19 also directly impacted the project. As the student group's work centered around developing strategic engagement recommendations, they had to consider the implications of social distancing guidelines and public gathering restrictions. As a result, they had the additional task of modifying engagement strategies to satisfy the new COVID-19 guidelines.

Lastly, technical difficulties such as poor internet connectivity and microphone malfunctions were small nuisances easily addressed. Detailed meeting notes proved useful when these difficulties arose.

6.3. UNAVAILABILITY OF PARTICIPANTS

Before hosting dialogue sessions, the project group contacted many Hamilton staff to participate; however, they only received a handful of responses back. The initial lack of response was discouraging, but after consulting with the project management instructor, they were advised to send more personalized emails to encourage more responses. Although they did receive more responses, they were primarily notifications that they would be unable to attend. Fewer participants attended than anticipated, which the group feared would result in subpar feedback. Despite the small number of participants, the intimate dialogue sessions worked incredibly well. The smaller sessions were personal, detailed, and provided in-depth responses that may have not produced had the groups been larger. The dialogue sessions were ultimately highly successful, and informed a large portion of the final recommendations.



7.0 DESIGN DETAILS

While the project did not require much in physical or visual design, the student group practiced design thinking to empathize with stakeholders, redefine problems, and identify alternative strategies and solutions.

The surveys, distributed to organizations with vested interests in green spaces and internal Hamilton city staff, were put together with the reality of “survey fatigue” in mind. The number of questions was reduced while still optimizing the amount of useful and relevant information received. By making the surveys as succinct as possible, the student group reached a 100% response rate. An example of this survey can be found in Appendix E.

Dialogue sessions and virtual workshops were also planned to reduce fatigue and low energy among participants. Often, the design of a virtual session can be the difference between becoming easily distracted or losing interest. The dialogue sessions were conversational and casual to energize participants. This strategy allowed more insightful observations to come to the forefront. Using Jamboard, a free online virtual whiteboard, had multiple benefits as well. The sticky note function on Jamboard played an important role in organizing findings, as all of the participants’ suggestions were colour coded for easy organization. Additionally, Jamboard allows for non-intrusive participation. That is, if a participant feels uncomfortable speaking up or has an idea but does not want to interrupt a fellow session attendee, they can discreetly post their comment.

Future work for the Parks Master Plan will be part of a greater human-centered design. When the engagement plan is initiated by the City, the City will begin empathizing with the public. As the engagement progresses and reports are drafted, reviewed, and finalized, the City will also move through the define, ideate, prototype, and test stages.



8.0 DIALOGUE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The student group's community dialogues and surveys were informed by lessons learned in our dialogue course and the community engagement principles. The following sections outline how the student group incorporated these lessons and principles into their work. For a full description of each principle, see Appendix D.

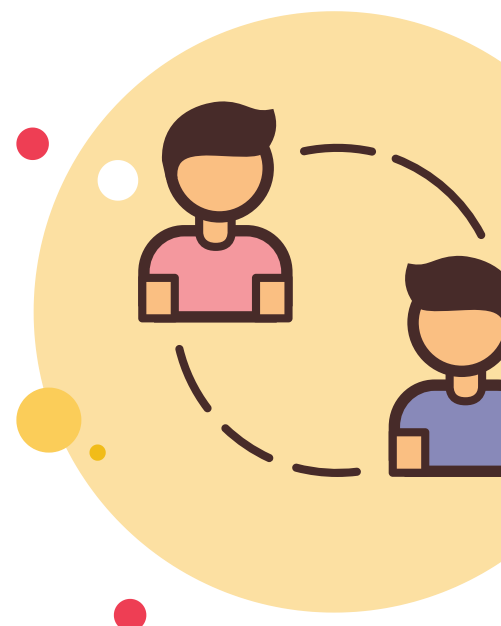
8.1 RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Maintaining respectful relationships is essential for building trust with citizens and conducting effective community engagement. A primary quality of maintaining respectful relationships is timeliness. This means beginning and ending meetings and discussions on time, and ensuring all deadlines are met and information is shared within a short period of time following dialogues.

Another crucial step in building respectful relationships is encouraging contributions by practicing active listening, transparency, and maintaining open lines of communication. This can be done by making contact information readily available and addressing all queries as they arise. Furthermore, developing regular patterns of communication can help keep stakeholders up to date as well as create an image of trustworthiness and reliability. The student group established regular patterns of communication through weekly or bi-weekly updates to inform stakeholders on the project's progress. These practices all work to encourage enthusiastic engagement and demonstrate that engagement is not a burden.

8.2 RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity involves working towards mutually beneficial outcomes and offering reciprocal support. In short, this means that engagement is not a one-way street. The dialogue sessions were meant to foster knowledge sharing from both parties – both the student team and city planners would learn and make use of information from sessions. The student group promoted reciprocity by allocating a period of time in the dialogues in which consultees could ask the student group questions. Following the dialogue sessions, the student group made their contact information readily available so that they could be reached should any questions arise.



8.3 EQUITY

Equity is an essential principle for the development of a representational Parks Master Plan. Traditional engagement methods are highly successful at engaging particular demographics, but conducting truly inclusive engagement requires looking beyond traditional methods. The student team aimed to achieve equity in our engagement strategy recommendations by ensuring that these proposed engagement methods were accessible and innovative in reaching all demographics.



8.4 CONTINUITY

Creating continuity means that engagement does not end when a survey is submitted or a dialogue session ends. In order to achieve continuity, the team worked to clearly and effectively communicate lessons learned from this preliminary engagement study to those executing the official Parks Master Plan consultation phase. This involves the creation of a transition report, as well as this academic report.

It is also necessary for the engagement participants from this project to be kept up to date if they so choose. Therefore, the team has ensured that those with whom they have engaged thus far are informed on how to stay connected to the Parks Master Plan project development. In addition, the team has corresponded with project leaders John Vandriel and Cynthia Graham about receiving updates on engagement efforts following the completion of CityLAB Semester in Residence.



8.5 OPENNESS TO LEARNING

Fostering an openness to learning requires creating environments to ensure participants feel comfortable contributing and sharing ideas. These environments are most effectively achieved through the formation of small dialogue groups with few participants. Having fewer participants in the dialogue sessions enabled intimate and honest discussion to take place, which improved the overall quality of engagement. Additionally, allotting time for feedback, critiques, and questions in the agenda further demonstrated an openness to learn. Conducting engagement in settings like this is incredibly important for mitigating the “soundboard” effect, where only one opinion is voiced and minimal learning occurs.



8.6 COMMITMENT TO ACT

Following up with engagement participants is a key aspect of demonstrating our commitment to act. This is done by informing those with whom the team consulted of what was done with the information they provided. Interest was gauged with surveys distributed to everyone who participated in the consultation process.

8.7 APPLICATION OF DIALOGUE LESSONS

Countless invaluable lessons were learned in the CMTYENGA 4A06 course at McMaster University, also known as the Design and Dialogue components of the CityLAB Semester in Residence. Two lectures that were particularly influential in shaping how the student group envisioned a truly equitable and just engagement strategy covered the topics of critical reflexivity and cultural humility.

Incorporating the principle of critical reflexivity requires that the engagement team critically examine the very nature of the engagement to gain an understanding of what is and is not said. For example, having translators at town hall events for non-native English speakers theoretically encourages equitable engagement from the ESL community; however, one participant indicated that these popular events can often be intimidating for non-native English speakers so their turnout, and subsequently their representation, is disproportionately low. Cultural humility includes the “recognition and changing of power imbalances” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

Cultural humility suggests that cultural customs cannot be accurately understood by reading about them; rather, collaboration is necessary for people to meaningfully learn from one another. In accordance with this principle, the student team built collaboration and engagement methods into the engagement recommendations that will incorporate cultural humility into the consultation process. These methods include consulting various stakeholder groups, utilizing interactive and collaborative engagement tools, and acknowledging the fact that many demographics interact with parkland differently by encouraging feedback from all Hamiltonians.



9.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RELEVANCE TO CITY'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

9.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

HAMILTON'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

The Parks Master Plan engagement coincides with many aspects of the Public Engagement Charter (described in section 5.1). In fact, each of the Charter's Core Principles of Public Engagement can be tied to the recommendations described in the report. Below, the Parks Master Plan engagement strategy will be linked to a select number of the Principles as an illustration.

Recommendations under Principle 1: Transparency and Trust, **ensure the City gives residents early and ongoing opportunities to engage and make decisions while also publicly sharing information in a variety of ways** (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015). This principle is linked to the Parks Master Plan engagement strategy which suggests virtual, paper, and in-person methods of sharing information. The project's proposed feedback loop between the City and the public will also keep information accurate and demonstrate the City's capacity to listen.

As highlighted in the literature review, **upholding inclusion and diversity, Principle 3 under the Charter, is not fully achieved in most parks engagement** (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015). While many underrepresented groups are identified and engaged, **more needs to be done to reach people with disabilities, those living in poverty, and Black and Indigenous communities**. The plan to target these groups in this report will not only provide more opportunities to share these unique voices, but will also strengthen the City's relationship with them.

Lastly, the establishment of this report demonstrates the City's desire to learn from evidence-based engagement practices, which falls under Principle 7: Learning Reflection and Evaluation of the Charter (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015).

CITY OF HAMILTON PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

This is the official policy that applies to all City of Hamilton Departments and staff, and all initiatives that may have an impact on the public. It recognizes that public engagement is fundamental to living in a democratic society and is committed to creating an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government (Hamilton Engagement Committee, 2015). Since the Hamilton Public Engagement Policy is based on the Public Engagement Charter, the Parks Master Plan's adherence to the Charter (as described earlier in this section), is adherence to the Hamilton Public Engagement Policy.

ONTARIO'S PLANNING ACT

This legislation mandates that public engagement must occur in every planning process under Chapter 23, Section 9 of the Planning Act (2006). More specifically, the City should ensure that “the prescribed public bodies are consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information”; that “adequate information and material, including a copy of the current proposed plan is made to the public; and that “at least one public meeting is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to make representations in respect of the current proposed plan” (Planning Act, 2006). The engagement strategy proposed by the student group in this report exceeds what is required under this piece of legislation—moving beyond informing and consulting to involve, collaborate and empower citizens.

9.2 RELEVANCE TO CITY'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The City of Hamilton's Strategic Priorities were derived from the Our Future Hamilton Project and were created to fulfill residents' vision for Hamilton's future: to be the best place to raise a child and age successfully (City of Hamilton, 2018, p.2). The Parks Master Plan project aligns with four of the strategic priorities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

This priority is defined as “a collaborative space where: people can work together and make a positive impact on the community; citizens are consulted and involved in making the decisions that impact them; and a passion and sense of pride for the city exists among residents” (City of Hamilton, 2020). Hamilton wants an approach to community engagement that empowers all citizens to be involved in their community (City of Hamilton, 2020). The Parks Master Plan engagement strategy is an opportunity to instill a sense of passion and pride in public infrastructure in the community. By the end of the engagement, citizens should be able to look at the summary reports, the final master plan, and eventually their own neighbourhood parks with the knowledge that they had a say in City decision-making. By creating this confidence and relationship with the public, the Parks Master Plan project aligns with the Community Engagement and Participation priority.



HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

The desired outcome of this priority is to establish Hamilton as a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy and have a high quality of life (City of Hamilton, 2020). City parks and recreation services provide the support for citizens to be healthy and active. Having a well-designed community engagement strategy for the Parks Master Plan will result in designs that are highly reflective of all Hamiltonians' visions. Thus, the usage of parks and recreation services will likely increase and the health of the community will also improve.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Under this priority, “public spaces are well maintained and vibrant, with greenspace and attractions for residents and visitors” (City of Hamilton, 2020). The most attractive public spaces are the ones that are designed by the community. As mentioned in the sub-section above, a well-designed engagement strategy will lead to creating a built environment that will connect Hamilton and create a dynamic city.



CLEAN AND GREEN

The Clean and Green priority focuses on environmental sustainability and protecting the natural environment to enrich the quality of life for community members (City of Hamilton, 2020). City beautification is a focus area under this priority and if the City can engage people in the design of these natural environments, people will have a deeper understanding of and respect for green spaces. An engagement strategy that empowers and involves residents will further increase this understanding and respect.



10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Trends found in our research and dialogue session feedback were identified and used to inform the following recommendations

1

USE A PHASED APPROACH FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THAT INCORPORATES MULTIPLE FEEDBACK LOOPS.

This phased approach should be structured around at least three phases, similar to those done in the Our Future Hamilton engagement strategy allowing people to: 1) share their vision, 2) shape the vision, and 3) confirm the vision (Mutch, 2020). Right from the start, **the City should be transparent about project scope, budget, limitations and objectives.** After presenting these items, big ideas and priority setting should start the conversation. Keep the questions big and let the public express their issues and vision — this builds the capacity to engage. In the second phase, loopback with the public about the insight gained from the first phase using vision boards and summary reports, for example. Engagement in the second phase should dive deeper into the vision and refine it. The final phase should further test and refine the draft directions for the master plan. **Empower the public by making them the principle decision-makers and having them vote on final drafts.** Throughout each of these phases, people get a chance to engage and make adjustments. Transparency and trust are also built when people know how their feedback is being used. Gamifying each phase through the use of progress bars and completion badges can be used to mark the development of the project, while also making it more entertaining for participants to view.

2

USE A MIX OF VIRTUAL, IN-PERSON AND PAPER ENGAGEMENT METHODS THAT CORRESPOND TO EACH LEVEL OF THE IAP2 SPECTRUM.

Engagement will be far-reaching if a variety of engagement methods are used. This report recommends using Figure 4 to pick virtual, in-person and paper methods from each level of engagement.



Figure 4: Spectrum of Engagement Tools

3

LEVERAGE EXISTING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION THAT HAVE A LARGE FOLLOWING.

This recommendation stems from a common theme from the dialogues with the city planners. In their past engagement efforts, they created social media pages and accounts for their projects, however, these channels failed to attract residents. **Thus, the CityLAB student group should use established City of Hamilton accounts to share their progress and engagement opportunities.** These accounts can be linked to the Engage Hamilton platform, which this report recommends using as a platform to house all Parks Master Plan-related content and engagement. In addition to social media, **the City should utilize their partnerships with the Hamilton Spectator and CHCH to reach older audiences.** Money should be invested in advertising through social media, television and newspaper advertisements.

4

DO AN INTERNAL SCAN OF OTHER ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS CONDUCTED BY THE CITY.

By doing an internal scan of other similar engagement projects, the Parks Master Plan engagement team will understand what questions still need to be asked. Asking the same questions answered in a previous engagement project shows that the City did not listen the first time around, which can frustrate the public. Instead, **incorporate the responses to these previously-asked questions in the draft plan.**

5

ENGAGE UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES EARLY, ASKING THEM HOW THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE ENGAGED THROUGH THE USE OF LOCAL CHAMPIONS.

According to dialogues with city planners, typical engagement efforts tend to reach older, white, middle-class audiences. Reaching underrepresented groups requires engaging them early and asking them how they want to be engaged. Findings from the research in this report indicate that **community liaisons or local champions are the key to bridging the relationship between the City and these groups.** These champions should be from or involved with the community the City is seeking to engage and should be compensated for their involvement. Often these local champions are hired from relevant organizations. Specific groups the City should focus on reaching are: newcomers, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, youth, people living in poverty and Black and Indigenous people. **Engagement with underrepresented communities should also provide space to address barriers to accessing parks and any trauma associated with parkspace.** If language barriers exist, ensure that engagement methods, such as surveys and vision cards, are translated into a variety of languages.

6

MODIFY ENGAGEMENT METHODS TO WORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Any of the above items in Figure 4 under recommendation 1) can be modified to suit COVID-19 guidelines. While technology has enabled the City to ramp up website presence and online versions of meetings, pin-mapping, and storytelling, not all Hamiltonians have access to the internet. Thus, **users without access to the internet become a unique group of underrepresented people in light of this pandemic.** To address this barrier, phone and mail-in engagement methods should be tailored to do more than merely inform. For instance, any virtual public meeting must also offer dial-in options. If permitted under COVID-19 guidelines, the City should continue to host walking tours and booths at municipal hubs with physical-distancing and PPE in effect. City staff implementing the engagement methods must be aware that community members have additional stress in their lives because of COVID-19. **It is crucial that every engagement method must allow people to talk about how they are doing under these particularly difficult circumstances.** Given the additional planning and disruption caused by the pandemic, the City should invest more money in the promotion of the engagement than in the engagement itself.

7

CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

The City should utilize these principles outlined in Section 8 of the report as a guide for conducting community engagement. **Share these principles with members of the consulting team who are unfamiliar with them.**

8

SHARE FINDINGS FROM THIS REPORT AND THE PARKS MASTER PLAN 2021 ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER HAMILTON CITY STAFF WORKING ON ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS.

These recommendations are not only true for the Hamilton Parks Master Plan, but can be applied elsewhere in the City. **Inter-departmental collaboration allows for continuous learning and sharing of best practices ensures that the City has a strong, uniform approach to engagement.** If the engagement of the Parks Master Plan project proves fruitful, then intentional sharing of those results is also recommended.

11.0 CONCLUSION

Parkland is a common good that ties our communities, neighbourhoods, and cities together. Our parks are where we **play as children, relax as adults, and spend time in our old age.** As a public good that benefits everyone, it is paramount that everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard. Unfortunately, traditional methods of community engagement have poor track records of engaging with many demographics, such as minorities, seniors, and non-middle class individuals. Furthermore, the social distancing measures imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic mean even more demographics may be **excluded** from the increasingly virtual engagement process. In order to ensure that Hamilton's Parks Master Plan is **truly inclusive**, the CityLAB student group has worked hard to develop both in-person and virtual strategic recommendations that are focused on achieving **equitable and representational engagement.**



11.0 CONCLUSION CONTINUED

By conducting research in the form of a **literature review, distributed surveys, dialogue sessions, and virtual workshops**, the CityLAB student group has prioritized gathering qualitative and quantitative data to inform their recommendations. The semester-long research period has produced the **following recommendations** to be passed along to the incumbent Parks Master Plan consultation team:

Employ a tiered engagement approach consisting of three phases: share the vision, shape the vision, and confirm the vision;

Conduct a multifaceted engagement strategy that incorporates in-person, virtual, and tangible consultation methods to reach a wide audience;

Leverage existing and trusted communication channels;

Make use of resources and information collected from previous and ongoing engagement processes in other city departments;


Engage underrepresented communities and encourage the appointment of community champions to streamline communication;

Engage in accordance with the principles of community engagement as outlined in Section 8 of this document.

11.0 CONCLUSION CONTINUED

A transition report will be drafted to crystallize this knowledge and convey any other pertinent information to the team that will eventually execute the process of engagement. The transition report will also contain an **overview of the actions taken** throughout this process and a recommendation on **maintaining continuity** for those who have been **involved thus far**.

The process of developing recommendations for the upcoming Parks Master Plan consultation period has been an **enlightening period of growth** for everyone in the CityLAB student group. The students hope the research conducted and presented in this document will serve to **advise the City of Hamilton** on how to develop a Parks Master Plan that accommodates all Hamiltonians and truly makes Hamilton a **great place** to raise a child and age successfully.



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Appendices

APPENDIX A: DIALOGUE SESSION SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Dialogue Session with Hamilton City Staff, November 17th, 2020.

Who Was the Target Audience?	What Engagement Strategies Were Used?	What Worked?	What Did Not?	What Could Have Been Done Differently?
18-29 Age Bracket		The project team had to develop and employ the survey functions in a unique way and effectively engage with young people.	General public meetings/news-paper advertisements; do not engage with young people, so there was an over-representation of 40+ demographics.	Launch events at different times and have more regular meetings to increase accessibility and feedback opportunities; Marketing: use multi-tiered advertisement strategy; Know what engagement is vs. what consultation is; Be deliberate and transparent with methods.
Adult (10-64) and Seniors (65+)	Public information centers; Engage Hamilton (FAQ boards, survey, etc.)	Conventional approach that was not time costly.	Lack of budget for more interactive-based and time-heavy engagement.	Begin engagement earlier and employ more interactive-based engagement methods.
Sam Lawrence Park Master Plan: Engaged with the Greater Hamilton Public and Local Residents Near Parkland	Social media (CoH, Twitter, Facebook); Flyers in local Cafes; Newspaper advertisements and flyers.	Social media and local Cafe advertisements attracted a younger crowd; Analogue-based methods attracted older crowds; Project team capitalized off local festivals.	Did not manage expectations.	Important to know what you want to get out of events; Need to create target questions; Have more pointed inquiry rather than general questions.
Centennial Neighbourhood Plan (Eastgate Mall, LRT Line)	Went to local parks for soccer games to engage with families and kids; Held general public information session and workshops for people to attend; Hosted interactive focus groups with different themes; Organized pop-up events; Paid ads (targeted Google ads, YouTube ads); Attended Festivals, Farmer's Markets, Ribfest (etc.) to tap into existing networks.	Were able to develop relationships with individuals and groups; Timing workshops to coincide with the target audience schedules; Online presence increase exposure to online tools; More interaction (both virtual and in-person) influenced more participation;	Attempted to provide translation services at larger events but no one had experience using them; Aspects of the methods employed were inaccessible and hard to engage with; Lack of engagement and representation of marginalized communities; COVID: Some people don't have access to necessary tech., this segment of the population is unable to engage with virtual-based methods.	Need to design specific methods to target marginalized populations; COVID: Need to ramp up online presence and make sure people can easily access websites and virtual materials; Make mail-in and other analogue-based engagement options available; Budget for additional advertisement ads; Consider how to collect data from demographics who do not commonly engage to ensure cross-section of the population is consulted.
Children on Playground		Letting kids show what they want using stickers.		Need to be aware of engagement fatigue and manage expectations (i.e., project outcomes); Meaningful engagement needs to be integrated throughout the whole project/post-project; Be aware of agendas; Use City Champions to increase engagement with "hard-to-reach" populations; Make sure methods are digestible & simple.

Table 2: Dialogue Session with Hamilton City Staff, November 17th, 2020.

Who Was the Target Audience?	What Engagement Strategies Were Used?	What Worked?	What Did Not?	What Could Have Been Done Differently?
Community groups (cyclists association, community sports leagues, etc.); School boards (primary school, middle school, etc.); Commonly forgotten groups (park maintenance department, etc.)	Booths/panels on the street; Booths/panels at community centers; Set up booths at malls; Identified highest attendance events and set up booths (Farmers Markets, festivals, etc.); Cold calling residents and community members; Surveys (translated into different languages for immigrant communities).	Panels/booths engaged a wide-range of residents and community members; Translated survey got a high response rate from immigrant community; Keeping engagement as brief as possible to reduce the burden of contribution; By budgeting a large amount of money towards advertisement it increased overall participation.	Booths at community centers had to be set up twice per year to engage different sports leagues (summer/winter); Cold calling never worked; Unable to show how other participants responded to engagement; Unclear at communicating what we are actually asking/what questions we want answered;	Consulting with people who have engagement experience; Try engage the quieter participants to avoid disproportionate feedback from the louder ones; Build trust with community and government by being transparent about objectives, scope and project goals; Clear communication from the start so participants know the frame that they are working within;

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Table 3: Dialogue Session with Hamilton City Staff, November 17th, 2020.

Who Was the Target Audience?	What Engagement Strategies Were Used?	What Worked?	What Did Not?	What Could Have Been Done Differently?
Hard to reach populations (newcomer and ethnic populations) Homeless population	Worked alongside community organizations and Local Champions who could communicate and engage in consultation with their communities.	Did not experience survey fatigue (received a lot of responses through online surveys); Engaged hard-to-reach populations at the beginning of the project; Having Local Champions was effective because they did not experience a language barrier; Typical engagement strategies work well to engage white, middle class people; Identified hard-to-reach audiences and offered honorarium for participating in engagement.	Difficulty getting people the money during the pandemic.	Use cash when paying homeless people for their time; Ask people how they have been treated in parks; Address trauma of public space when engaging with minority groups that have been oppressed and marginalized in those space (i.e., over-policing in parks);
Small municipality that wanted to target seasonal residents and businesses; First Nations communities.	Used online polls; Social media posts; Drop-ins to the community centers; Ask the First Nations band to nominate a representative.	Engaged with people on their own time; Set enough time to gain feedback; Offered honorarium for First Nations representatives.	Made a social media page that did not get enough attention; Engagement period was time-consuming.	Reach people through pre-established channels; Tap into pre-existing, well-followed social media accounts; Utilize social media ads.
General public (large scale).	Used neighbourhood liaisons.	Neighbourhood liaisons are the key to the community; Provided honorarium for liaisons; Committed a large amount of time to get good results; Be "non-City" in the approach and let people touch on issues that were never under the City's radar.	Asked questions that people could not meaningfully engage with or answer; Initially lacked an accurate representation of the community due to only white, middle-class people participating in engagement; Budgeted too much time and the engagement was costing more than it was worth; Had a budget and built up an expectation amongst the people that they were engaging that they had entirely free reign.	Don't engage for the sake of engaging; Hired a parks engagement associate who is First Nations and will be talking to Indigenous communities about barriers in using public spaces; Be transparent with the public about project objectives, scope, and goals; Define engagement questions before engaging.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Survey Responses from Hamilton City Staff and Green Space Groups.

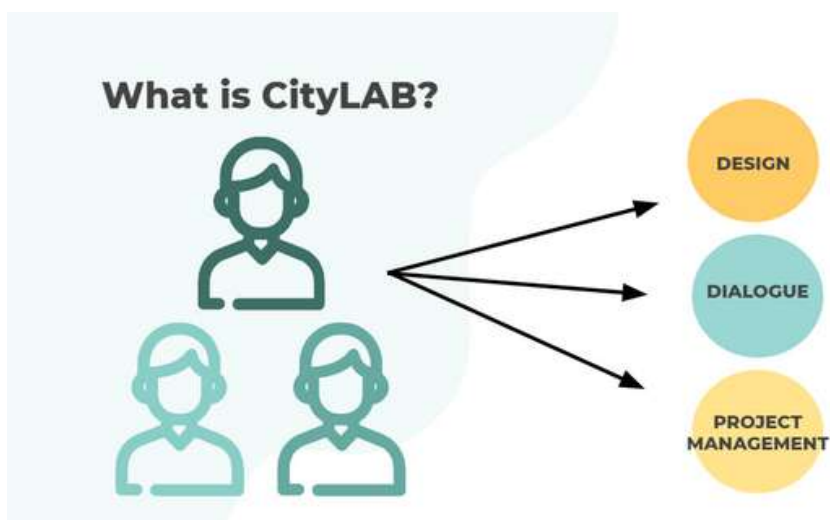
Who Was the Target Audience?	What Engagement Strategies Were Used?	What Worked?	What Did Not?	What Could Have Been Done Differently?
Youth (under 12); Youth (between 12 and 18); Adult (18-64); Older Adults (65+); Rural residents; Suburban residents; Urban residents; New Canadians.	Online surveys; Workshops; Having children look at images of parks and place stickers on the components that they wish to see in the replacement structures; Hosting volunteer planting events; Hosting educational workshops and providing an expert to answer questions (i.e., Having botanists and/or gardening experts to answer questions about gardening for nature); Adopt-A-Park program.	Smaller group with efficient discussions; Staff targeted the park that was due for the replacement and set up panels for a dotmocracy approach; Pay stickers were successful, the adults and children seemed to appreciate the engagement; Social media was most effective in Urban Hamilton; Neighborhood champions build trust between Hamilton and communities; Pop-up events and virtual events are most effective; Feedback from engaged stakeholders allows a broad target audience reach; Providing hands-on opportunities were successful and provided citizens an opportunity to become part of the solution; Public open houses are interpersonal and people can interact with staff. Generally online provides the broadest feedback; Workshops/scenario modelling are useful for solution development.	Public information sessions should not be relied on as primary engagement due to low attendance; Public information centers often have limited attendance and skew results to the "squeaky wheel" bias; Public meetings are generally not effective, except when discussing a site specific issue; Notice boards and posters are not very effective as they once were; Strategies that involve going to people with a completed plan does not work because people want to feel that their input is being valued; Where there are time constraints, poor acoustics; PIC's rarely bring in people unless there is an issue that relates to them.	Taking time for group to know one another; Translation services are beneficial; Wish there were more resources; Use existing organizations; Setting expectations upfront and being transparent about objectives and scope; Keeping things simple and digestible but knowledgeable.

Appendices

APPENDIX C: DIALOGUE SESSION SLIDESHOW SLIDES .



Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

Appendices

As CityLAB Sir Students

- In charge of the “pre-Plan” stage
- Investigating the best in-person and virtual methods of engagement
- Ensure that the engagement strategy can be implemented safely during the COVID-19 pandemic



Slide 4

What we have found so far...

Common Engagement Methods

- Surveys
- Pop-up booths at busy areas
- Public forums
- Focus groups
- Stakeholder advisory groups

Key Considerations

- Bring the project to the people
- Ensure that call-in options are an available alternative to video-conferencing
- Link engagement opportunities to one another
- Have continuous meetings with public to show that your work is consistent with their vision
- Make all of your information transparent and visible through a website
- Utilize virtual brainstorming tools
- Partner with schools to garner young children's interest

Slide 5

Why are you here today?

Knowledge sharing: Provide a space for city staff to share ideas and learn from one another.

Networking: Provide a space where Hamilton city staff and students can form relationships.

Mobilize knowledge into action: Apply findings to the Parks Master Plan engagement strategy.

Slide 6


Appendices

APPENDIX D: MCMASTER UNIVERSITY'S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Respectful Relationships	We can not have community without relationships- these are the connections that build community. Any successful partnership must be built on trusting and respectful relationships guided by integrity.
Reciprocity	From design, to participation, to the outcomes of a project, we strive to work together for mutual benefit.
Equity	We are conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities.
Continuity	Acknowledging that different communities work on different timelines and schedules, we strive to consider both the short and long-term implications of our work together.
Openness to Learning	We are committed to continually learn from and evaluate our work together, reflecting on sharing both our successes and failures to grow as individuals, partnerships, and communities.
Commitment to Act	We aspire to make a positive difference in our community by sharing and acting on our knowledge to contribute to the greater social good.

Retrieved from McMaster's Principles of Community Engagement 2019.

APPENDIX E: SURVEY PREVIEW



Engagement Questionnaire

Hello! Thanks for agreeing to fill out our engagement questionnaire! We are a group of Semester in Residence students at CityLAB Hamilton. We are tasked with researching and developing engagement strategies that the City of Hamilton can use to ask residents about their park use. Ultimately, the Parks Master plan will use this engagement to develop a park network that meets residents' needs and guides locations for future park acquisition. Below are the questions we have about your past and current engagement work. We will use these questions to inform the engagement for the Hamilton Parks Master Plan. If you have any questions or concerns for us, feel free to contact wargo171@mcmaster.ca for assistance. Thank you!

*** Required**

Name *
First and last name
Your answer

Email *
Your answer

What organization do you represent? *
Your answer

When answering the following questions, please think of a project that required community engagement. For the purposes of this survey, community engagement is defined as informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, or empowering groups of people to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people.

What types of demographics have you engaged? (Check all that apply) *

- ☐ Youth (under 12)
- ☐ Youth (between 12 and 18)
- ☐ Adult (18-64)
- ☐ Older Adults (65+)
- ☐ Rural residents
- ☐ Suburban residents
- ☐ Urban residents
- ☐ New Canadians
- ☐ People living in high rise complexes
- ☐ Other: _____

Appendices

What engagement methods did you employ? (check all that apply) *

- ☐ Public Open Houses
- ☐ Focus/Youth Groups
- ☐ Workshops
- ☐ Online Surveys/Questionnaires
- ☐ Door-to-Door Consultation/Flyer Drop-off
- ☐ Pop-Up Consultation Booths
- ☐ Feedback Through Project Website
- ☐ Posters or Pamphlets
- ☐ Notice boards
- ☐ Other: _____

Which engagement strategies worked best? Why? (250 words max.) *

Your answer _____

Which engagement strategies didn't work? Why? (250 words max.) *

Your answer _____

Based on your past experience engaging with citizens and stakeholders, what would you change about your engagement work? (250 words max.) *

Your answer _____

How have you modified your engagement strategies to meet COVID-19 gathering and distancing guidelines? If you have not modified your strategies to meet COVID-19 regulations, how might you? (250 words max.) *

Your answer _____

If you had one piece of advice for city staff who are initiating a public engagement project, what would it be? (250 words max.) *

Your answer _____

If you have any additional comments, please add them here.

Your answer _____

Submit

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Taanishi (hello)! My name is Sage Hartmann, and I am a fourth-year Indigenous student majoring in Psychology Neuroscience and Behavior at McMaster University. In my spare time, I drink lots of coffee and enjoy making small talk in Zoom breakout rooms



Hi! My name is Clare McGall a fourth year Health Sciences student at McMaster University. This semester has been the most enriching semester of my undergraduate career and I am grateful for the three friendships I have formed over Microsoft Teams!



My name is Graeme Fishman and I am currently in the Arts & Science program at McMaster University. CityLAB SiR has been a remarkable and insightful experience that has left me with many lessons - and friendships - that I will carry with me wherever I go.



Hello Friends! My name is Stephanie Wang and I am currently studying Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour at McMaster University. I wouldn't have gotten through this semester without my amazing group mates. Thanks y'all.