

# DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

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**Title:** Youth Engagement Action Team Report

**Date Prepared:** October 7, 2020

**Report To:** Committee of the Whole

**Councillor and Role:** Councillor Maggie Burton, Planning & Development

**Ward:** N/A

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**Decision/Direction Required:** Review and approve recommendations coming from the Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT) to advance a Youth Engagement Strategy which can improve the way young people engage with the City of St. John's.

**Discussion – Background and Current Status:**

The City's Strategic Plan, [Our City, Our Future](#), sets out a direction to create a Connected City with a goal to increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the city. This goal and direction help drive the city's vision to be progressive and a place where people want to live and feel they belong. Improving youth engagement is one way the City can do this.

To advance the development of a youth engagement strategy, Council approved the establishment of a short-term Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT) in June 2019. More than 50 young people expressed interest and 25 were selected to work with City staff to review such things as: the city's approach to engagement, City communications to youth, issues/topics of interest to youth, how to best maximize the role of the existing Youth Advisory Committee as a voice for youth, identify barriers to youth participation, and ultimately to make recommendations to address these issues.

YEAT began its work in Oct. 2019. The group met a number of times (in-person and virtually), held a familiarization session with Council and staff, and undertook a public engagement survey and outreach activities to gather perspectives from the demographic. A [What we Heard document](#) was released in June 2020. Since that time, Organizational Performance and Strategy staff have been working with the YEAT and consulting with members of the Youth Advisory Committee, Recreation, and Marketing and Communications staff to develop a series of recommendations which are included in this final report.

It is clear from the work YEAT has completed that not enough young people are currently actively engaging with the City on key policy/decision matters. What we heard was that:

- There are barriers to participation in civic engagement, the biggest ones being awareness of opportunities and time to participate.
- Current city committee structures are not working effectively for youth. There is limited awareness of YAC and not enough youth involved in other City committees.

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- There is a low level of awareness generally of the opportunities to engage and be involved; currently youth feel they need to follow everything the city does to learn about engagement.
- Youth are interested in a variety of topics – things that impact them and their city and want to contribute their ideas.
- There is a view that the city does not make it easy for youth to engage – public meetings are a challenge for many and not a preferred approach for most.
- Youth want variety and ease of participation and notification. There is a desire for things to be quick and simple so they can have their say.

This report outlines several recommendations to improve youth engagement. Details around each of the below can be found in the report.

- Improve tools to create awareness and provide easier options to allow them to participate
- Change the way we use committees/youth involvement to better meet their needs/respect their time
- Use tools to engage, such as online youth panels, that allow direct contact and ease of participation on topics of interest
- Build on current city-school interactions to add more real time opportunities for feedback on projects/programs
- Create a more welcoming environment for youth at Council meetings

### **Key Considerations/Implications:**

1. Budget/Financial Implications:  
The addition of apps and other engagement tools will need to consider budget.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:  
There are many youth serving organizations and partners in the community who can work with City staff to help advance some of these recommendations.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:  
Strategic Direction: Connected City, GOAL: Increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the City  
Initiative: Undertake a Youth Engagement Strategy to improve youth participation in City engagement efforts
4. Legal or Policy Implications:  
N/A
5. Privacy Implications:  
Any new projects would have to follow ATIPPA legislation.

6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:  
Implementation of recommendations should improve how youth engage with the City. This report will be shared and discussed with YEAT and YAC and with other city departments who connect with youth/engage with the public.
7. Human Resource Implications:  
If approved, the full extent of these recommendations will have to be prioritized and delivered based on existing budgeted resources.
8. Procurement Implications:  
Any procurement activity would need to follow the city's Purchasing Policy and provincial legislation.
9. Information Technology Implications:  
Should the city pursue the app recommendation, an RFP would need to be prepared with Information Services.
10. Other Implications: There is a need to create mechanisms to check the implementation/effectiveness using continuous improvement thinking and tools. We will need to try things and get feedback.

**Recommendation:**

That Council review the report and its recommendations and consider which ones they want to prioritize to improve youth engagement.

**Prepared by: Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance and Strategy**

**Approved by: Derek Coffey, Deputy City Manager, Finance and Administration**

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	Youth Engagement Action Team Report.docx
Attachments:	- 1 FINAL REPORT YEAT COTW.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 8, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Derek Coffey - Oct 8, 2020 - 11:41 AM**