CIVIC ACCESS GUELPH: EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This report highlights findings on educational strategies that municipalities and community-based organizations are implementing to further citizen understanding about civic processes and engagement opportunities. The purpose is to assist the City of Guelph in beginning the process of developing an educational strategy for civic engagement in conjunction with the Guelph Community Wellbeing Initiative and broader community collaborators.

RESEARCH GOALS

- To identify what other municipalities are doing to educate residents on the use of the tools the city offers to access information and services.
- To identify what non-profit groups are doing to engage and empower residents to participate in local governance.
- To report findings on components of civics educational materials and events, and where information is available: strategies/activities to engage residents in developing a curriculum; budget and timelines; lessons learned; and impact in the community and how it has been evaluated.

BACKGROUND

The City of Guelph Community Engagement and Social Services Department recognized the opportunity to initiate a process for developing educational materials that would introduce citizens to the basics of municipal government, and promote the various ways that people can become engaged in municipal processes. Some municipalities and community-based organizations have developed courses, events, guides and curriculums as part of broader community engagement strategies. These are often referred to as “Civics 101” courses and guides, playing on college-level introductory course naming. For the purposes of this report, we will refer to the development of “Civics 101” or “Civic Access” materials for Guelph and partners, recognizing that a different name may be developed at a later stage.

Three ongoing City initiatives call for continued strengthening of civic engagement and support the implementation of an educational strategy for Guelph: 1) Open Government Framework and Action Plan; 2) Community Engagement Framework; and 3) Community Wellbeing Initiative. This report is a first step in a civic engagement educational strategy for Guelph.
METHODS

For this study, a quick online scan approach was used to gather information about the ways in which municipalities and community organizations engage with residents to educate them about accessing information and participating in local governance.

MUNICIPAL SCAN METHOD

To determine what municipal models are already developed, we used a list of comparable municipalities in Ontario provided by the City of Guelph. We conducted a scan of 34 municipal websites, asking: “If I were a resident of this municipality, what information and educational resources about civic engagement could I find on the website within a short period of time (e.g. approximately 10 minutes)?”

Appendix 1 details our findings from the scan of Municipal websites. Findings are organized by:

- City Hall: What basic information is available about city government, council, meetings and speaking at meetings?
- Services: Are there any special guides or webpages developed about municipal services (e.g. for students, seniors, newcomers)?
- Planning: How does the planning department encourage engagement opportunities or communicate what it does?
- General Engagement and Information: How does the municipality promote engagement in general? Does it have a Civics 101-type guide, similar information available on the website, or an Engagement Strategy available online?

Appendix 1 highlights resources and includes links that may be useful for Guelph and partners to develop their own educational strategy and materials. We comment on information availability and how easy it is to find or access. We also note where the tone of the material stood out as more or less encouraging of civic engagement.

MUNICIPAL SOURCES

34 municipal websites scanned: Ajax, Barrie, Brampton, Brantford, Burlington, Cambridge, Chatham-Kent, Halton Region, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener, London, Markham, Mississauga, Niagara Falls, Oakville, Oshawa, Ottawa, Peel Region, Pickering, Richmond Hill, St. Catharines, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Vaughan, Waterloo, Waterloo Region, Wellington County, Whitby, Windsor, Calgary, Toronto, Vancouver,
and Amarillo, Texas (which turned up in a google search for: municipality civic 101, although we did not conduct an extensive search beyond these Ontario municipalities).

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SCAN METHOD

In the case of community organizations, a comprehensive online search was done, looking for initiatives related to empowering residents in participating more in local governance. The scan included both Canadian and American organizations. Findings are aggregated in table and point form in Appendix 2.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SOURCES

- 20 community organization websites scanned: Citizenbridge, Civic Camp, Civic Access, Open North, TV Ontario (TVO), Montreal Ouvert Civic Hackathon, Hackdays, Tamarack, Youth in Action, Institute for local government, Mikva challenge, Transparency camp, the White House’s Open Government initiative, e-democracy.org, the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, American Association of State Colleges and Universities – Civic Engagement in Action Series, Civic Evolution, the Interactivity Foundation, Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy, and Mindmixer.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

MUNICIPAL SCAN FINDINGS

The amount of educational materials that municipalities make available on their websites ranges considerably. In this section we highlight findings from municipalities that have developed educational materials, or who have excellent educational information available on their webpage, and that can be seen as models for developing Guelph’s own strategy. Toronto, Kitchener, and Amarillo, Texas have developed Civics 101 guides and/or courses. Toronto ran a six-week course in 2009, and Amarillo is running an eight-week course this fall. Kitchener does not appear to have offered a course, but provides a guidebook focusing on City Hall, committees and general volunteering. Pickering’s Community Engagement Strategy action items include developing an annual four to six-week introductory civics course for residents that they consider will also be helpful for improving staff communication skills; however, these materials are not available on the website and may not be developed yet. The City of Calgary partnered with community organizations Civic Camp and the “we should
know…” event organizers to run a one-day “We Should Know City Hall” event that is a useful model for a relatively simple, creative event that sounded both informative and enjoyable.

Educational Guides & Courses Key Components

Based on the municipalities highlighted above and the general scan of comparator municipality websites, we find the most common and useful components of Civics and City Hall 101 guides and courses are:

- **Basic information on City Hall and Council**: what Council is, who Councilors are, the local election process, explanation of the division of powers (local, provincial, federal, First Nations), division of responsibilities in the municipal departments, boards and committees, how council meetings work/run, how to find information about meetings (dates, agendas, minutes), how to speak at a council meeting and an explanation of the different terms like “delegation” or “deputation”. We Should Know City Hall in Calgary included a tour of Council Chambers during a meeting break, then stayed for part of the meeting so participants could observe typical meeting content and protocol.

- **Planning and Growth Management**: what planning is, how neighborhoods or wards are divided within the municipality, what the vision and guiding principles are for the municipality, where growth is happening, what an official plan is, special secondary plans and/or design projects, and hot topics for that municipality like: environmental issues, bike lanes, condo heights, front yard parking, affordable housing, big box, wheelchair accessibility, etc.

- **History**: Basic municipal history, highlight museums and places where people can find further historical information, heritage protection policies and by-laws. Toronto combined this with their first introductory session.

- **Budgeting and Financials**: Overview of city budget, taxes/where the revenue comes from, discussion on fiscal sustainability and strategy. Toronto did a mock budgeting exercise with participants.

- **Public Works and Services**: city department organization, water and wastewater considerations, waste management (which many municipalities highlight as one of the most popular topics residents look for information about online), transit and road planning and works. Amarillo’s civics course gives participants the opportunity drive a bus and a garbage truck!

- **Other topics that could be included**: Parks, Recreation and Safety (Amarillo), neighborhood organizations and festivals (Kitchener), details about getting involved in school boards, health boards, libraries, etc. (Toronto and Vancouver).
- Toronto highlighted issues around gender and power in their session on Council and Decision Making.

Models for Educational Materials about City Hall, Council & Council Meetings

Brampton and Thunder Bay do not have “Civics 101” type guides, but the information available on their websites covers most of the same topics in a positive, welcoming tone, and are useful as models. The Vancouver Youth initiative also has some comprehensive and easy to understand webpages highlighting how to get involved at City Hall, that would be useful as models for everyone, not just youth.

Models for Educational Materials about Services

Many municipalities have service portals in addition to the more common tabs and links targeted towards residents, although not all portals were easier to use or navigate than regular tabs/pages. Some municipalities had resources that were specifically aimed at population groups like newcomers to the municipality or country, homeowners, seniors, youth and college and university students. Kingston’s and Ottawa’s resources for people new to the municipality and students provide helpful information about settlement services, and basics about waste management, and transit. We recommend caution and sensitivity if putting together educational materials for specific groups so as to not make broad assumptions about the behavior or knowledge of identified groups of people (e.g. students, newcomers).

Models for Educational Materials about Planning

Kingston, London, and Peel Region stand out for having informative and educational webpages about planning and how residents can become involved. London has a Planning 101 guide, and FAQs about city planning. Kingston’s Planning & Development page has clear links to information, plans, forms and FAQs. We find that some municipalities gear their planning and development pages towards the business and development industries, and in doing so may miss the opportunity to highlight the opportunities for residents to get involved in engagement opportunities for Official Plan reviews and other projects. Peel Region has a brief but clear description about planning basics and organizes information into “for residents” and “for business”, thereby highlighting opportunities for residents, while at the same time educating about how planning impacts neighbourhoods, the larger economy and development industries. Whitby, London and Toronto include links to the “Citizen’s Guide to Planning” developed by Ontario’s Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
Community Organization Scan Findings

We were able to find 8 Canadian and 12 American organizations, which have implemented programs aimed to encourage citizens in participating in local governance.

Canadian Organizations
Organizations such as CitizenBridge, Civic Camp, Open North, Hackdays, civic hackathons (such as Montreal ouvert), provide online platforms to encourage civic participation in local governance, to inform about how local governments work, the role of civil servants, the role and use of technology in improving access to government information and in bringing down barriers for civic participation. “Civic hacking” generally refers to non-government (but sometimes government-partnered) development of computer and mobile applications, programs, datasets, visualizations, maps and infographics. The purpose of civic hacking is to improve public access to information, make open access data more useful, and promote government transparency.

TVO has a specific program called “Civics 101” where the Ontario political process is explained with videos, pdfs, graphics and slides. Open North has projects like “citizen budget”, “mycityhall.ca”, and “open 511”.

Other organizations such as Civic Access and Tamarack bring citizens together to build capacity from a grassroots perspective. They act as facilitating agents and promoters, so that residents can gather to learn, voice an opinion, seek solutions or propose initiatives for the benefit of the community. Other projects are aimed specifically to civil servants in an effort to build capacity within local governments to engage and interact with the community.

American Organizations
There are a few organizations that have an exclusively online presence, such as E-democracy, Civic Evolution, and MindMixer.

E-democracy focuses on providing online tools to support participation in public life. Civic Evolution provides a platform to propose, discuss, and share ideas and projects. MindMixer facilitates online discussions related to how to make better communities together.

Other organizations such as Youth in Action, Mikva Challenge focus on youth empowerment to participate in governance and public life.
Transparency Camp and the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation are repositories of best practices, resources, and discussions about local governance, public policy, community engagement, and civil society in general.

Other organizations such as the Interactivity Foundation provide a space to enhance public participation and governance through project discussions, public discussions, and classroom discussions.

Interestingly, civil participation in governance seems to be engraved in government policy and higher education institutions. The White House, for instance, has an “Open Government Initiative”, which recognizes the most civic-innovative people in the United States in different categories. The category presented here is for “civic hacking champions of change”, recognizing outstanding people doing work in improving governance, community/social innovation, and civic hacking.

The California State Association of Counties, and the League of California Cities have come together to create the Institute for Local Government, which is an independent organization dedicated to enhance civic participation; one of the programs is “Local Government 101”, it counts with many resources.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities counts with a series called “Civic Engagement in Action” and a specific initiative called “eCitizenship”, which provides “new tools, new strategies, and new spaces” for civic participation.

Community Organizations General Remarks
Information about operating budgets for programs and projects was not available online, neither was it possible to find clearly spelled the kinds of relationships/partnerships between the organizations and their local governments.

There are a few initiatives that may be of particular interest to Guelph:

- The functionality of Citizens Bridge webpage.
- TVO’s Civics 101 program and the resources found there.
- The mycityhall.ca initiative by Open North, which soon will be available online.
- The variety of training programs offered by Tamarack.
- The idea of supporting youth in becoming more vocal and participatory in local governance (Mikva Challenge, Youth in Action).
The idea of the local government encouraging citizens to engage in proposals for better governance through fostering open government initiatives, i.e., the White House’s “Civic Hacking Champions of Change”

CONCLUSIONS

Guelph’s interest in establishing an educational civics course and materials with its community partners is innovative, particularly for a city of its size and in this region. This presents the opportunity for creative approaches and leadership among local municipalities; however, it also means that there are limited models. We recommend establishing direct contact with municipalities and organizations with civics educational strategies and courses, in both Canada and the US, as they may have useful advice from their distinct experiences.

LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

- The Municipal scan focused on websites, and was thus limited to information available online. Further, we only reviewed the list of comparable Ontario municipalities, and a few others in Canada and the US where they turned up in online searches for key terms.
- The Community Organizations scan is not a comprehensive list of organizations doing work in community engagement and local governance worldwide; the scan was circumscribed to North America and the organizations with visible online presence in Google searches.
- Ontario secondary schools teach civics in the classroom, and while this report does not cover the curriculum taught in those courses, it would be useful to communicate with educators about curriculum content, useful resources, and where there may be important gaps in knowledge to fill. While some Guelph residents will have this educational background, certainly not all will, and thus a civics course organized by Guelph and community partners should still cover the basics.
- Further follow up with experienced municipalities and organizations could provide additional information on strategies/activities to engage residents in developing curriculums, guidebooks and course outline; budget and timelines; lessons learned; and impact in the community and how it has been evaluated. It may also be worthwhile to follow up with Pickering to see what progress they have made in developing their own Civics course.
FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR GUELPH’S OWN EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY

Further discussion with municipalities and organizations that have developed civics educational courses and guides will provide direct advice from “lessons learned”. From the website scans we can glean some lessons learned that can inform the development of an educational strategy for civic engagement in Guelph.

- First, although Guelph would be implementing a unique Civic educational strategy, we need not completely reinvent the wheel. There are some useful resources, tools and examples available through the other guides, provincial departments, and especially links on the Toronto Civics 101 website, which could be used as models for City of Guelph staff and community organizations.
- Second, Guelph will need to consider resources available, preferred size of group, location and format (e.g. lecture or seminar). In the Toronto experience, there were many more participants than they were able to accommodate in the course they had designed. Over 900 people applied, and they randomly selected 175 people to participate. The Amarillo model is much smaller, with groups of only 15 participants.
- Third, some of the educational materials we reviewed were stronger than others in terms of their cultural sensitivity and breadth of information. For example, some information about the division of government powers did not recognize First Nations. Developing the educational guide and course outline in partnership with a range of local organizations, staff and citizens should help make the educational strategy respectful and inclusive.
- Fourth, tone of voice matters in educational and engagement materials. Some municipal websites emphasize the rules and protocols required when speaking at council meetings. Others were more welcoming, non-intimidating and encouraged citizens to speak at meetings and get involved more generally.
- Fifth, evaluation of the content and usefulness of an educational civics course and/or event should be designed in advance. Participants can complete questionnaires and evaluation forms. Municipalities and community organizations that have run similar courses/events may also be able to offer other evaluation examples.
- Finally, developing an educational civics course and materials offers an opportunity to engage citizens in a fun and interactive way at a high level (i.e. a venue apart from meetings focused on a specific issue). Toronto ended their course with a panel discussion and Q&A with “city watchers” like journalists. We Should Know City Hall in Calgary started with a walking tour and ended more casually talking about engagement successes over drinks. Incorporating creative
aspects to the course and materials can encourage participation in the civics course, which could potentially lead to wider understanding and more meaningful engagement in the community.
REFERENCES

See tables in Appendices 1 & 2 for links to the municipal and community organization websites referenced.
APPENDIX I: MUNICIPALITY COMPARATOR LIST SCAN

Note: Information for city hall, services, planning, general engagement and information was not available for all municipalities.

AJAX

City Hall
- “About the Legislative Process” covers how to appear before council, but this is not in the main links from the “Inside the Town Hall” tab, it is several webpages in.

Services
- Has “Service Ajax” Portal that links back to the main website, or provides specific email links to contact for specific inquiries or complaints. Mostly service information about specific issues like boulevard trees, garbage, minor variances, and even some links to outside of the municipality (e.g. “how do I apply for a passport”).

Planning
- Planning department webpage has a contact us link, and links to documents and plans, could have more information on general involvement in planning.

General Engagement & Information
- Could have more information on general access to council and engagement more generally.

BARRIE

City Hall
“Communicating with City Council Guide” (April 2013) developed by the City Clerks office outlines:

- The basics of Council committees, the calendar where meetings are posted, how to reach councilors by mail, how to make a submission to the circulation list, how to speak at a public meeting, how to request a deputation at a city council meeting, how to make a presentation at a council meeting, and how to address a committee as an open delegation. Includes forms for deputations, presentations, and open delegations.
• [http://www.barrie.ca/City%20Hall/MayorCouncil/Documents/GUIDE%20TO%20COMMUNICATING%20WITH%20COUNCIL2013.pdf](http://www.barrie.ca/City%20Hall/MayorCouncil/Documents/GUIDE%20TO%20COMMUNICATING%20WITH%20COUNCIL2013.pdf)

**Services**

• Website in general is very easy to navigate with many popular topics about living in the city, doing business, recreation, and other services highlighted and easy to find.

**Planning**

• Planning section has reports, plans and guides for development, but could have more info on how to give community input more generally.

**General Engagement & Information**

• Information guide and forms are also on the website as well as in the guide.

**BRAMPTON**

**City Hall**

City Hall webpage home emphasizes “Get involved: Make a difference in your community! Join a committee, attend a Council meeting and share your point of view. Be part of the decision-making process at City Hall - learn how!” clicking there links to a page titled: “Be a part of the Process” and explicitly states that Brampton encourages public participation in decision-making. [http://www.brampton.ca/EN/City-Hall/HowToGetInvolved/Pages/Welcome.aspx](http://www.brampton.ca/EN/City-Hall/HowToGetInvolved/Pages/Welcome.aspx)

• Can click on a link to “local government responsibilities”, a helpful page that lists the division of powers (local, provincial, federal) and lists local responsibilities with links to other aspects of city services and departments

• Easy to find links to notices (then to documents/reports), agendas, and FAQs about presenting at Council, and form to speak as a delegation at a meeting. The info here non-intimidating and brief, but includes important details.
Services
- Customer service links to multilingual services, and brochures in several languages on topics like emergency preparations, snow clearing, traffic, tax, transit, and small business.
- Has webpage with links for newcomers to Brampton and Ontario.
- Has a page called “homeowner responsibilities” that highlights things from the minimum maintenance by-law
- Has InfoCentre webpage with a range of FAQs on city services and bylaws, no general engagement info here.

Planning
- Planning webpage has large, clear link to official plan review documents, and encourages feedback: “Have your say in city building: participate in Brampton’s Official Plan Review”, twitter link, in addition to standard contact info.

General Engagement & Information
- “Citizen Engagement” link off main webpage, which links to these: Calendar of Events, Council and Committee Meetings, Safe City, Brampton Clean City
- Very good information available throughout the website, and general non-intimidating tone encouraging involvement. Could be useful for seeing an example of how civic involvement basics are presented, even if it’s not in a cohesive “Civics 101” document or guidebook.

BRANTFORD

City Hall
- “Your Government” page has links to explain/introduce structure, councillors and key staff members.
- Delegation request page is rules-based, and could be more encouraging.
- Lists of committees, citizens can get involved in, but could be more encouraging.
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Services
- Has services portal: mybrantford.ca, “how can we help you?”, popular search result links, drop down menus for services for residents, business, government services, ways to subscribe to updates

Planning
- Planning page could include more general information about planning and explanations of the various bylaws, projects, etc. Official Plan explanation is clear.

General Engagement & Information
- Website generally good, and a clear service orientation. Could have more information explaining how government works and how citizens can be involved in processes, projects and decision-making.

BURLINGTON

City Hall
- City Hall and council pages lists wards and councilors, or links to things like documents and agendas, without any introductory or explanatory information.
- “Register to Speak at Committee and Council” has encouraging tone, describing local government as “hands on” and relying on residents to keep council on track and informed. Says that speaking to Council is easier than you think, and has forms and phone numbers to call. There is also information on this page about the basics of a committee, delegation, registering to speak, etc. Tone is generally encouraging, not rule-based. http://cms.burlington.ca/Page2941.aspx

Services
- “Moving to Burlington Page” has useful links to city services and resources.
- Archived newsletters, but no information on topics covered in each, as it is organized by date only.

Planning
- Good info here, and organized by ward, and city-wide. Clear links. Could have more general info on how to be involved in the wider projects.
General Engagement & Information

- Webpages are in general heavy on lists, and light on explanation and introductory text.

- “I want to” dropdown tab on main menu bar (every page) has useful links to services, and on how to speak to Council.

CAMBRIDGE

City Hall

- Has brochure called “Participation in the Council and Committee System” [also referred to as the Guide to Delegations]:

- Two-page brochure with the basics of council, committee and how to speak. Brochure is basic and other municipalities have more informative pages on how government works, and how to get involved, including speaking at meetings.

Services, General Engagement, & Information

- In general, the website has a lot of information, but could have a more user-friendly layout. Relies heavily on left-hand sidebar lists, that are kind of overwhelming, and do not highlight certain information/content over others. It takes time to locate information about getting involved in city processes.

CHATHAM-KENT

City Hall

- On the Council page there is “Speaking to Council” link with info on how to appear as a deputation.

- Basic Council information and calendar, but could have more in terms of explanation of general governance and engagement.

Services

- Basic services available by drop downs from top menu.

Planning, General Engagement, & Information

- Could have more information on how to get involved in planning processes. Mostly includes a link to an outside consultant.
HALTON REGION

City Hall
- “Have your say / Get Involved” page has links to a guide for delegates, principles for public consultation and notification, guide on agencies, boards and committees. Basic, but generally encouraging.

Services
- Basic service information available.

Planning
- Planning page has a lot of information and links to reports, but no general intro/educational material.

General Engagement & Information
- Could be more educational material on how the region interacts with the local municipalities.
- Emphasis on social media (twitter, facebook)

HAMILTON

City Hall
- There is a link off the main page to “Request to speak to City Council”, but tone is not very encouraging. City Council page could have more information on how Council works and how to access Councillors and committees.

Services
- Most popular services listed on home page and city services tab alphabetically organized.

Planning
- Publications list has brochures on things like planning, and there is a list of resources for business and developers, but one would have to know what they were looking for (e.g. know what a committee of adjustment is and when needed).
- The post-amalgamation planning framework in Hamilton is quite complex and could be better explained on the website, including how all the documents function together, and which take precedent.
General Engagement & Information
- General website design is not as strong, clear, or easy to navigate as some other municipalities in this list.

KINGSTON

City Hall
- “About City Hall” page very informative, includes information on city history, and the historic city hall building, sidebar tab links to City Council page, with information like “How does council make decisions, how can you get involved, are council meetings open to the public”
- “Get involved page” links to committees and boards with volunteer opportunities, and a couple of surveys

Services
- “I’d like to” drop down menu from top on every page is a nice feature linking to popular topics/resources (marriage license, garbage, parking ticket payment, etc.).

Planning
- Planning & Development page has good information on it, clear links to forms, application fees, studies, plans, bylaws, and other publications, FAQs. Overview of core services.

General Engagement & Information
- Has “New to Kingston” page, with immigration and settlement specific links, as well as other links to city services (waste sorting, garbage collection, transit, other community services).
- Has “Students” page, specifically geared towards Queens University students, with info on waste, utilities and transit, with some other links to city events pages and calendars.
KITCHENER

City Hall

City Hall 101 Guidebook explains:

- how municipal government impacts on our daily lives
- how City of Kitchener Council, staff and community members interact and work together
- how decisions are made in municipal politics
- how community members can be involved in their local government and in building their own community” (p. 3)

The City Hall 101 Guidebook covers city history, basics of local, provincial and federal government structure and the relationship between Council, city staff and residents. It includes how to run for council, includes a ward map, explains committees of council and how to volunteer or bring an issue to a committee. There is a section on how to be a delegation at Council and certain committee meetings. Guide also highlights some recreation programs, community grants, and events. Numerous appendices with more information on guidelines on things like licensing for special events, special event planning tips, neighbourhood association policies, and sports team affiliation information.

- The Guidebook is informative and has a generally encouraging tone. Covers the basics and is accessible for people with little background in local politics and governance structures.

- **Would be useful as a sample** for Guelph and community partners to review in developing their own.


Planning
- Information on how to get involved in general planning processes seems to be thin in the guidebook. The department website has links to documents explaining some bylaws, but it could use a general explanation on how planning fits into the overarching governance framework.

Services, General Engagement, & Information
- Website in general is quite good, with a lot of information available.

LONDON

City Hall
- City Hall tab covers some basics of city government, and which meetings are open to the public.
- Sidebar tabs have links to things like Council, committees, public participation meetings, strategic plan, budget
- Accessing city council: appearing as a delegation information included, and although informative, not encouraging.

Services
- Residents tab highlights services.

Planning
- Planning page has quite a bit of information on it, and has a “Participate!” page, with links to many resources (developed by the city and links to some provincial resources)
- FAQs about zoning and bylaws: http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/Planning_and_Development/zonebylaw.htm
General Engagement & Information
- Website is generally easy to navigate and cross-references top menu bar and drop down tabs with left-hand sidebar tabs.
- London Free Press developed Civics 101 videos prior to the 2010 municipal election (e.g. what does the mayor do, what does city council do), however, the links do not appear to work: http://test.lfpress.com/news/civicelection2010/civics101/

MARKHAM

City Hall
- “About Municipal Government” (a main left-hand sidebar tab & one click in from the homepage, or from the top menu tabs) explains basics of municipal government and some key services, with links to more info (e.g. garbage, snow, fire, libraries, parks & rec, planning and building). Brief compared to some other municipality’s explanations.

Services
- “How can we help” is the top choice, which links to the city services portal, which is easy to navigate and only a couple of clicks in from the homepage.

Planning
- Info is well-organized. Like many municipalities it’s geared towards developers and business, and less oriented towards informing citizens about what planning is or how to get involved.
- http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/MunicipalGovernment/AboutMunicipalGovernment/ut/p/a1/04_Sj9CPyksyy0xPLMnMz0vMAfGjzOJN_N2dnX3CLAKNgkwMDDw9XcJM_VwCDX2NzlAKIoEKnN0dPUzMfQwMDELdXQw8zQOdQv19vY0NPM2I02-AAzgaENIfh-FT4mFqREBBYGmUAX4_ABWgMeRBbmhEQaZnukA0ZFBBQ!!/dl5/d5/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS80SmFL1o2XzRPR0NDTFY4UTJSNDAwSUJEVjVORFExOEU1/

General Engagement & Information
- Lots of links to things like major city projects, tax and budget information, permits and licenses, volunteer and employment.
MISSISSAUGA

City Hall
- City Hall webpage has links to “Government Relations” where there are links to other federal, provincial and regional politicians.

Services & Planning
- All basic information there about services and planning, but could have more information about how to get involved, and could have more educational information about government processes.

NIAGARA FALLS

City Hall
- City Hall page could have more explanatory text rather than what is currently heavy on a list of links.

Planning
- Planning has FAQs, but could have more information on the homepage about how to get involved more generally.

General Engagement & Information
- Could have more explanatory text in addition to the lists of services and links to other departments.

OAKVILLE

City Hall
- Town Hall index could have more general info on accessing city hall, but does have a webpage on how to make a presentation or be a delegate at a council meeting. This page states that council welcomes and encourages public input. Info here is clear, but limited to council meetings and could include broader info about connecting with the municipality.

Services
- Find Town Services webpage is clear and comprehensive.

Planning
- Planning page could specify what planning is, and include more information on how citizens can get involved.
OSHAWA

City Hall
- Basic info on how to contact council, and links to agendas and minutes, pdfs with lists of board members.
- Had consultant put together a Customer Service strategy, and there is also a Customer Service strategic plan.

Services
- Living in Oshawa tab has link to various services like fire, library, parking, and links for seniors and students.

Planning
- A general planning page difficult to find – directs to building and permits page. Could have more high-level info explaining what planning is and how to be involved. OP takes time to find.

General Engagement & Information
- Could include more info on getting involved or how to speak at a council meeting.

OTTAWA

City Hall
- City Hall webpage links to Councillor pages, but I cannot find info there on how to speak at council meetings.
Services

- “Residents” page well-organized and with clear links to services and information. Has link to “public engagement strategy and consultations”, which could include more information and/or FAQs, and a link to the “get to know your city page” (see below), prior to directing people to contact city staff and Council.

- Service Ottawa page highlights things like parking tickets, classes, garbage.

- Student webpage is welcoming and informative: http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/college-and-university-students

General Engagement & Information

- “Get to know your city” webpage has links to volunteer pages, neighbourhood planning and improvement, community development, maps and stats, info on public spaces: http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/get-know-your-city

PEEL REGION

City Hall

- Links to watch or listen to council meeting, agendas, minutes and reports clearly available. Have “Guide for Delegates page”: http://www.peelregion.ca/council/location.htm. Could be more informative at a basic level, e.g. using the language of speaking at council before launching right into ‘delegate’ language.

Services

- Regional services highlighted right on the main page.

Planning

- Planning page organized very well. Clear links to key documents. Further links to planning info divided into “for residents” and “for business”, this is good because even doing that educates residents about how planning impacts them/how they can impact planning. Some good basic, brief info on “about planning”: http://www.peelregion.ca/planning/about/

General Engagement & Information

- On the homepage they highlight upcoming events, including a planning study where citizens are encouraged to ‘have your say!’
PICKERING

City Hall
- Informative, welcoming tone set on the main city hall webpage. Customer service orientation. “our door is always open” with links to contact the city. Delegation request info there, but could have more info on what it means to be a “delegation”.

Services
- Listed under living. Also link on main page to ‘eservices’ available.

Planning
- Some useful intro words on main webpage, many links to studies, publications, the OP and other plans.

General Engagement & Information
- Community engagement identified as a corporate priority.
- Developing CIVICS COURSE for residents is on the City’s to-do list as part of it’s Community Engagement Strategy: “Develop and offer an annual introductory civics course to Pickering residents” … “…The program would have the dual benefit of assisting staff to become more skilled at presenting technical information in lay terms and knowledge-sharing. Held annually, the four to six session course would increase residents’ knowledge of City issues, and provide more residents with an on-ramp to access City Hall and become more involved in local government.” (see page 28-29, bold added, “Together and Towards: A report to support the development of an engagement strategy for Pickering”): http://www.pickering.ca/en/cityhall/resources/EngagementStrategyReport.pdf

RICHMOND HILL

City Hall
- On “Town Hall” page there are too many lists, not enough explanation or text around the lists. “Council” page is more helpful. There is a “So… you want to speak to Council?” page that sets out some basics, starting with talk to your councilor, and then moves to being a delegation at a Council meeting. Forms are available here. http://www.town.richmond-hill.on.ca/subpage.asp?textonly=&pageid=council_delegation_appearance
CIVIC ACCESS GUELPH: EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Services
- Webpage highlights “eServices”, others are found under leisure and community info.

Planning
- Planning and building pages have some basic info on what they do, but it is heavy on lists, and there could be more here about what it means for residents/general members of the public.

General Engagement & Information
- Could have more general info. Volunteer info appears geared towards secondary school students.

ST. CATHARINES

City Hall
- “Govern in” page has all the general info. “Appointments to address city council” is written in policy language of “shall”, etc, that is not very accessible or encouraging in tone. Has History of City webpage.

Services
- Listed under “live in” page, highlights the usual waste, water and parking.

Planning
- Useful preamble on planning page on what planning is about, explains what a building permit is, and when it is needed, links to OP and other docs and plans are off on another tab and could have additional explanation.

General Engagement & Information
- Could have more general information readily apparent about how to be involved at the city level, or what the city’s engagement strategy is. Maybe it is located in the plan and document section, but not clear navigation back to that page.

SUDBURY

City Hall
- Educational info on the Council tab, but could include a link from the main page. Have a 2-pg delegations guide: http://www.greatersudbury.ca/sudburyen/assets/File/Community%20Delegations%20Nov%202011(1).pdf
Services
- Easy to find under “living” tab

Planning
- Some good basic info about planning on the main page, located under city hall websection.
- Have homeowners guides: http://www.greatersudbury.ca/inside-city-hall/land-use-planning/homeowners-guide/

General Engagement & Information
- Easy to find information, and some educational resources, but could do more/have something more comprehensive.

THUNDER BAY

City Hall
- A lot of good information here, easily organized. Decision making process is explained, and how to provide input is outlined/welcomed. Deputation info available: http://www.thunderbay.ca/City_Government/City_Council_Meetings/Deputations_to_Council.htm

Services
- Very clear and easy to find.

Planning
- Some basic info on what the planning division does and links to key docs.

General Engagement & Information
- “Get involved in your city” brochure, highlights committees and boards people can sit on, information sources and newsletters people can sign up for, and general contact for volunteer opportunities: http://www.thunderbay.ca/Assets/City+Government/Get+Involved+In+Your+City/Get+Involved+in+Your+City+brochure.pdf
- “Have your say” page highlights ongoing consultations, and has reports on surveys from years past: http://www.thunderbay.ca/City_Government/Have_Your_Say.htm
VAUGHAN

City Hall
- Many lists, could have more general educational information or information on how to speak at council.

Services
- Info is there, but not as easy to find as in other municipalities websites.

Planning
- Planning is organized under bylaws and is heavy on the lists, and could have more educational explanation.

General Engagement & Information
- “Access Vaughan” is the city’s contact hub, and highlights accessibility services.
- Website is not as user-friendly to navigate compared to other municipal websites. The top tabs could present more information quicker than having to click through them all left to right.

WATERLOO

City Hall
- Some educational info here about Council, and what they do. Delegation registration page is generally encouraging in tone, and also highlights talking to councilors and staff as a way of reaching Council members or addressing concerns: http://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/delegationregistration.asp

Services
- Easily found through the “living” tab, or “getting active” tab that highlights recreation services

Planning
- OP link, but otherwise the city highlights bylaws (listed), or building services. Could have more info on broader planning projects, visioning or wider planning engagement.
General Engagement & Information
- Cannot quickly find engagement plan or strategy. More general information on the municipalities approach to engagement would be useful.

WATERLOO REGION

City Hall
- Basic info on what regional Council is, and who the councilors are. Cannot find info on speaking at a council meeting, though agendas are available, and committees are listed.

Services
- Easily found along top tab. Includes info on newcomers to Canada, the region, and students, seniors and persons with disabilities.

Planning
- Basic info only.

General Engagement & Information
- Cannot quickly find engagement plan or strategy, or general info on how to get involved.

WELLINGTON COUNTY

City Hall
- Calendar, agenda, minutes and list of council available, but info on delegations/speaking to council is not easy or quick to locate.

Services
- Clear, and organized.

Planning
- Contacts available. Could have more general/education information about planning and permits. Some educational background provided on the OP review page.

General Engagement & Information
- Volunteer info available, but could have more easily-located information generally promoting engagement.
WHITBY

City Hall
- Some basic background info, and how to appear before council, form available, could be more education oriented.

Services
- Clearly organized

Planning
- Clearly organized

General Engagement & Information

WINDSOR

City Hall
- A lot of links to pages here, Could have less/more grouped tabs and links to click.
- “Who’s who at city council meetings”: http://www.citywindsor.ca/cityhall/City-Council-Meetings/About-Council-Meetings/Pages/Who-is-Who-at-City-Council-Meetings.aspx, with left sidebar tabs to educational info on how council meeting agendas and order of business are organized + a glossary of terms. However, unable to find information on how to be a delegate, or what that means in their glossary.

Services
- Clearly organized under residents, business and eservices

Planning
- Some good info, but divided up from bylaws and other related info and could be easier/quicker to find.
- Planning FAQs: http://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/planning/Planning-News-and-Information/Pages/FAQ.aspx
CALGARY

- City of Calgary has a “get involved” page listing all the current ongoing engagement opportunities. “Get involved with Council” has a brief explanation on what council does, explaining that Council meetings are open and links to docs with more information about presenting to council, and meeting protocol. [http://www.calgary.ca/CA/City-Clerks/Pages/Get-Involved-with-City-Council.aspx](http://www.calgary.ca/CA/City-Clerks/Pages/Get-Involved-with-City-Council.aspx) tone is welcoming and encouraging.

- CIVIC CAMP (see also community organization notes) [http://www.civiccamp.org](http://www.civiccamp.org)
  - Citizen-run NGO, but city is a partner on some initiatives
  - Useful: “We Should Know City Hall” event, which Civic Camp was a partner on:
  - Workshop was from 3-7pm and divided into 3 parts. First was an 1.25hr tour of Council chambers during a Council meeting break, then continued in observance of part of the meeting. Second was a “Working with City Hall” presentations by representatives from the clerks office, the mayors office and administration. Third part was more informal over drinks talking about successes in civic engagement.

TORONTO

- Toronto Civics 101
  - Toronto ran six sessions of Civics 101 in Spring 2009 as part of a special learning series. The materials area online, but it doesn’t seem to be an ongoing workshop/course. More demand than they had space to accommodate.

- Session One focused on the city’s history and basics of local government including: local government in Ontario (powerpoints on the webpage), also link to handout with an explanation of the division of powers (local, provincial, federal), and the division within the City of Toronto.

- Session Two focused on Planning. Topics covered included basics and guides to planning (lots of material on the webpage), neighbourhood planning within the City (and maps), planning and environmental issues, hot topics like bike lanes, condo heights, front yard parking, affordable housing, big box, wheelchair accessibility. Links to citizens guide to planning put together by Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (also on that provincial website).
• Session Three focused on Council and Decision-making. Topics included contrasting the city governance with provincial government, how community council works and about committees of council.

• Session Four focused on Budgeting and Financials. Budgeting was overviewed, then they went through a mock budgeting exercise. Discussion on fiscal sustainability and strategy.

• Session Five focused on elections and voting for council and school board. General discussion about elections, and special section on women in politics.

• Session Six was a wrap up with the mayor and panelists. The mayor delivered remarks, and there was a panel discussion of “city watchers” like journalists and professors, Q&A, plus break out group discussions.

• Civic Engagement website has many resources and learning materials, guides, and links to current projects.

• Would be useful as a sample for Guelph and community partners to review in developing their own. Also many links to other resources that Guelph and partners could also use as background information/samples.

• General current site: http://www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement/index.htm

• Civics 101 site: http://www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement/civics101/index.htm

• Civics 101 old Blog kept up until 2010: http://torontocivics101.blogspot.ca

VANCOUVER

• Vancouver Youth, is an initiative of the City that has a useful resource on How municipal government works, Present to Council, sit on a committee, and other general ways to interact with city hall:
  http://www.vancouveryouth.ca/how_municipal_govt_works

• http://www.vancouveryouth.ca/present_to_council

• This is a good model for accessible language and clear presentation for any municipality, not just geared towards youth.
AMARILLO, TEXAS (turned up in a google search for: municipality civic 101)

- Amarillo is running an 8-week Civic 101 course this fall 2013, they have two sections (Tuesday nights and Saturdays), and enrollment is limited to 15 participants. The first session covers the basics of City Hall and government, the second session focuses on Public Works, and participants are allowed to drive a garbage truck and bus! The third session is about budget and finances. The fourth is about planning and growth management. The fifth session is on the water and wastewater utilities. Public health, animal control and community development are the focus of the sixth session. The seventh session is about parks and rec, and the eighth session is about safety and police.

APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SCAN: ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

CITIZENBRIDGE

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- It’s a “platform that makes it easier to navigate through relevant information regarding the legislature at all 3 levels of government, keep updated on the activities of elected officials, and begin a conversation between all of us where the issues can be resolved”

CIVIC CAMP (http://www.civiccamp.org/about/about-civiccamp/)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Through a variety of initiatives: “we should know city hall”, “municipal elections”, “get stuff done”, a dedicated web page to “navigate city hall”, etc.

Lessons Learned
- Issues and news are posted on a blog page, that includes lessons learned

CIVIC ACCESS (http://civicaccess.ca/)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Group of citizens that “believes that all levels of government should make civic information and data accessible at no cost in open formats to their citizens”
CIVIC ACCESS GUELPH: EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

OPENNORTH (http://opennorth.ca/about/)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- “Canadian non-profit that creates online tools to educate and empower citizens to participate actively in Canadian democracy… developing tools for civil society and governments to reduce the barriers to effective participation… by improving access to government information, and making participation easy, fun, and meaningful”

Impact in the Community & How it Has Been Evaluated
- A variety of projects presented in detail at http://opennorth.ca/work/, i.e. citizen budget, open511, mycityhall.ca, and other community initiatives and new ideas being experimented in ‘labs’


Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Civics 101 project: Ontario’s political process explained with videos, pdfs, graphics, slides

MONTREAL OUVERT CIVIC HACKATHON (http://montrealouvert.net/a-propos/?lang=en)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Citizen initiative that promotes open access to civic information… data increases civic engagement

HACKDAYS.CA (http://hackdays.ca/about/)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Gathering of geeks in cities across Canada to hack and create applications using local APIs (application program interfaces)

TAMARACK (http://tamarackcommunity.ca/about.html)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Learning resources for civil society: http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s4_2.html
Impact in the Community & How it Has Been Evaluated

- Tamarack’s impact by the numbers:
  http://tamarackcommunity.ca/about_numbers.html

United States

YOUTH IN ACTION (http://www.youthinactionri.org/about)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum

- Incorporating in their values “youth engaged in arenas of leadership”, which includes politics and government among other areas of influence.

- Through specific programs such as “the youth for change challenge”, the “next generation media”

Impact in the Community & How it Has Been Evaluated

- As per accomplishments section: “Since 1997, YIA’s 700+ members have changed the landscape of Providence by reaching more than 10,000 of their peers with violence prevention programing, health education, multi-cultural events, arts programming and community renovation projects”

INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (http://www.ca-ilg.org/)

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum

- ILG is the “research and education affiliate of the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities

- Counts with a specific program “Local Government 101” with many resources http://www.ca-ilg.org/local-government-101

Lessons Learned

- Report “Lessons learned about civic participation among immigrants” http://www.tapartnership.org/docs/lessonsLearnedCivicParticipation.pdf, pg. 15 "learning from other civic participation efforts"


**Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum**

TRANSPARENCY CAMP ([http://transparencycamp.org/about/](http://transparencycamp.org/about/))

**Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum**
- An “unconference” held every year with the intent of sharing knowledge about how to use new technologies and policies to make governments really work for the people, and to help people work smarter with their governments

WHITE HOUSE’S OPEN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE; HONORING OPEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC HACKING CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE ([http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/blog](http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/blog))

**Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum**
- 2-hour video portraying 14 of the most civic-innovative people in the United States, most of them doing work in improving governance, community/social innovation, and civic hacking

E-DEMOCRACY ([http://forums.e-democracy.org/about/](http://forums.e-democracy.org/about/))

**Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum**
- Builds online public space to harness the power of online tools to support participation in public life. How it works [http://forums.e-democracy.org/about/about_issues_forums/](http://forums.e-democracy.org/about/about_issues_forums/)

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR DIALOGUE & DELIBERATION ([http://ncdd.org/about](http://ncdd.org/about))

**Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum**
- “Clearing house for thousands of resources and best practices”.
- Building a culture of participation: [http://ncdd.org/rc/item/7737](http://ncdd.org/rc/item/7737)
- Dialogue and deliberation success stories: [http://ncdd.org/rc/item/2370](http://ncdd.org/rc/item/2370)
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES – CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION SERIES

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum

CIVIC EVOLUTION ([http://civicevolution.org/](http://civicevolution.org/))

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Online platform to propose, discuss and share ideas and projects, example [http://2029.civicevolution.org/](http://2029.civicevolution.org/)

THE INTERACTIVITY FOUNDATION ([http://www.interactivityfoundation.org/about-if/](http://www.interactivityfoundation.org/about-if/))

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Enhancing public participation and governance through a) project discussions, b) public discussions, and c) classroom discussions

Impact in the Community & How it Has Been Evaluated

INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC DISCOURSE AND DEMOCRACY ([http://icdd.k-state.edu/about](http://icdd.k-state.edu/about))

Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Their mission is to build community capacity for informed, engaged, civil deliberation. One focus area is education: [http://icdd.k-state.edu/educate](http://icdd.k-state.edu/educate)


Strategies/Activities to Engage Residents in Developing a Curriculum
- Online platform that facilitates discussions. “Start a conversation, find out what it means to make your community better, together”
Impact in the Community & How it Has Been Evaluated

- Every conversation is transformed into a webpage that is monitored and produces automatically a reading of the 'impact' the campaign is having in the community.