Changing the Conversation: Beyond the Open House

Presenters:
Tyson Boylan  RPP, MCIP
Andrew Malcolm  RPP, MCIP
Presentation Outline

• Introduction
• 100K+ Conversations
• Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment
• Interactive Publishing
• Virtual Reality
• Conclusion

• Questions
Introduction

- Lethbridge is a City of nearly 100,000 located in southwest Alberta

- Community planning is increasingly influenced by new conversations in relation to changing environmental, social, cultural and economic realities

- To be resilient and well-adapted to these changes, community planners must be innovative in changing the conversation in order to engage with and respond to the needs of our dynamic City
Nearing a population of 100,000 offers a unique moment to reflect on how Lethbridge grows, protects the environment, celebrates the past and plans for the future.
100K+ Conversations

• The city is growing up both in terms of population and community needs

• This milestone has given the opportunity to look at future growth and community needs through the lens of becoming a big city

• Overarching public engagement tool to meaningful engage the community on a variety of long-range planning projects
100K+ Conversations

• Changes the conversation by flipping traditional public participation on its head by:
  • stretching residents thinking beyond themselves;
  • providing an accessible and inclusive approach to give feedback on topics residents care about; and
  • creating an integrated approach for various departments to work together.

• Includes all long-range planning projects, community events, facility openings, and corporate documents and messaging
100,000 Conversations

2016 2017 2018 2019

SSRP: 4 Years

MDP

CIP

IDP

- Analized feed
- Use of data
- Survey

H&G Show

Transit Master Plan

Projects & Planning Studies

- ARPs
- ASPs
- Public engagement opportunities

Operating Budget

Internal conversations: culture change

Corporate Citywide

Involvement of community

HR, Branding, Strategy

Talent, customer service, forward thinking, focused, together
Students add input to ‘100K’ conversation

Dave Mabell  
LETHBRIDGE HERALD  
dmabell@ lethbridgeherald.com

In 20 years, they’ll probably have families and careers. So Grade 4 students at a southside school were asked Friday what they’d hope to see in the Lethbridge of the future. More sports facilities, parks and hotels were among their recommendations — adding to the thousands of comments already heard formally and informally.

As Lethbridge closes in on a population of 100,000, city officials are seeking residents’ comments on their city of their future. Community planner Andrew Malcolm says more school visits are planned in coming weeks.

But residents of all ages are being urged to share their views, he says. They’re also being invited to join with their neighbours in “kitchen table conversations,” and then to share their thoughts on a section of the city’s website: www.lethbridge.ca.

That’s going well,” Malcolm says. “People can read what other groups are saying,”

Along with classroom teacher Allison Tadey, he heard Lakeview Elementary students share their visions of their city of the future, after working with their ideas in small groups.

Solar panels, wind power and more energy-efficient systems were high on the list. So were soccer and football fields. And many of the southside students predicted the city’s western communities would continue to be the focus of growth.

“We were looking 20 years ahead,” said Taha Shabib, the spokesperson for one of the groups of “city planners.”

“My job was to bring their ideas together.”

Their goal, he added, was to facilitate the economy while safeguarding the environment.

“They have a lot of good thoughts,” their teacher said.

“They don’t often have an opportunity to share them in the community.”

By Grade 4, said Tadey, “We’ve studied a lot about the environment.”

While there’s no official prediction about when Lethbridge will click over into a six-digit population, Malcolm said the community “100K” conversations will continue until 2018.
Let's talk about gardens.

Free money

Playground

Monument

What is the 1 thing missing from this park?

- Annual Petting Zoo
- Pool
- Splash Pad
- Food Stand
- Wi-Fi
- RV Parking
- 100k Lethbridge
- Kid's Splash Park
- Charging Station
- Lethbridge CAT
100K+ Day II Video
100K+ Conversations

32,717 Conversations To-date

>1300 Surveys Completed

24 Kitchen Table Conversations

7 Classrooms Visited

12 Chalkboard Locations

>30 Community Events and Engagements
100K+ Conversations

**Who?**

- Community Members
- Community Groups (Chinook Food Connect, Environment Lethbridge, SACPA, CLAN)
- Neighbouring Communities (Lethbridge County, ORRSC, First Nations, Residents)
- Council Committees (Environment, CIC, Finance, HPAC, CDC, MPC, YAC, Tourism)
  - Community Partners (UofL, ULSU, College, AHS, District 51, Holy Spirit)
  - Industry (CHBA, UDI, Chamber, EDL, ITE)
  - Government of Alberta
  - City Staff

**Where?**

- Events (Whoop-up Parade, Tour of Alberta, College Orientation, Home and Garden Show)
- City-run Engagements (100K Day, WARP, Transit MP, Cycling MP, West Lethbridge Growth)
  - Community Presentations / Exhibits (Galt, HSNC, UofL, Government of Alberta)
  - Elementary and Post-Secondary Schools Classrooms
  - Facility Openings (Henderson Pool, ATB Centre)
100K+ Conversations

• Effective and easy way to connect and have meaningful conversations with residents/visitors

• Moved residents from a personal and street-level focus towards their desires for their families and the entire community.

• More than just complaints

• Clear and concise messaging on how various plans and projects are inter-related and all work together to achieve well-planned growth

“Best way to connect with citizens since I have been with the City – for the first time they were able to think beyond themselves to the City progressing forward”
City of Lethbridge
Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment (TKUA)
Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment

• Lethbridge is located in the heart of Blackfoot traditional territory, is neighbours with the largest Reserve in Canada, and has an urban Indigenous population that is estimated to be as high as 15% of the total.

• One of the most comprehensive traditional knowledge studies ever undertaken by a municipality in Canada.
Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment

- Based on archival research, Elder interviews, and field work
- Conducted by the Consultation Departments and Elders from Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika Nations, and managed by Arrow Archaeology
- Developed in alignment with the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, which directs the City to consider:
  - Location of Aboriginal historic resources;
  - Potential land use conflicts;
  - How to protect historic resources; and
  - How to collaborate and build relationships with First Nations and Aboriginal Albertans.
- Grounded in truth and reconciliation through land use planning as identified through the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP
Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment

• Outcomes: mapping (sites), recommendations for protection, discussion of Rights, **gateway to opportunities (link to future collaboration)**

• When finalized, TKUA will be used to inform baseline and **considerations** in final report

• TKUA will also inform/support Relationship Strategy

• Changing the conversation by re-imagining the role of Indigenous Peoples and Knowledges within land use planning and by incorporating concepts such as Truth, Reconciliation and Inherent Rights into community plans
Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment

• **Build Trust:** There is a lot of distrust between First Nations and all levels of government, grounded in generations or broken promises and cultural genocide;

• **Know your History and your Neighbours:** It is impossible to understand the value of historical resources without first learning about the historical context within which those resources exist;

• **Understand why:** Don’t approach relationship building or Indigenous heritage just because you think you should or because it is now suddenly on the political agenda;
Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment

- **Be Collaborative:** Open up the process and the work to the Nations themselves. Too often relationship building with Indigenous peoples is based on an unequal power dynamic where one side (typically the non-Indigenous side) takes more than they put in (be it is resources or knowledge);

- **Value the Process as an Outcome:** The old cliché of the journey is worth more than the destination definitely applies here;

- **Implement:** Circling back to trust building, implementing the recommendations or outcomes that emerge from a TKUA-type project or relationship building exercise is crucial.
Interactive Publishing
Interactive Publishing

• **Initiative:**

  Interactive Publishing or Documents are typical planning documents or land use plans that are published in a digital format that allows the inclusion of interactive media, such as videos, photo galleries, audio and web links to add an extra layer of understanding for the reader.

  Increasingly used by the City of Lethbridge to make its statutory planning documents more accessible and engaging to the public across a number of platforms.

• Used in two recently approved Area Structure Plans:
  1. West Lethbridge Employment Centre ASP
  2. Southeast ASP
Interactive Publishing

- **New Reality**

- Area Structure Plans (ASPs) – Objectives and Policies for relatively large areas (300 ha – 600 ha gross) to be developed over a number of decades

- Can be very dry and technical

- Most plans are accessed digitally

Why not go the extra mile and make plans more engaging?

- With modern technology, WE HAVE THE POWER!
Interactive Publishing

- **West Leth Employment Centre ASP**
- Demonstrate the inefficiency of off-street parking and need for a maximum parking requirement
- Link to Strong Town’s #blackfridayparking on Twitter to show our argument in a visual manner

*Maximum Surface Parking Requirements*

Large format commercial development is often associated with large tracts of surface parking that present an unattractive expanse of concrete. This type of parking also discourages the forms of transportation other than the automobile, as it helps to create large distances between attractions that people want to visit in an area.

Despite the fact that these parking areas serve large businesses with many customers, they are almost always underutilized even during peak shopping seasons (i.e. Christmas season). Simply put, such large surface parking areas help to create unremarkable commercial nodes and are an inefficient use of land. This is what the University Drive Gateway Corridor seeks to avoid.

The existing Land Use Bylaw includes a minimum parking requirement that regulates the minimum number of parking stalls that must be provided in a development, which is often greatly exceeded in large format commercial sites. However, the Land Use Bylaw does not employ a maximum parking requirement that would limit the number of excess parking stalls that are provided on such a relatively new concept in Lethbridge, maximum parking requirements have been fully implemented elsewhere in North America.

*Black Friday is the busiest shopping day in terms of traffic in the United States. The amount of retail parking provided compared to the amount that is actually consumed on this day has been documented under the topic #blackfridayparking on Twitter.*

[Click to view this topic](#)
Interactive Publishing

• **West Leth Employment Centre ASP**

• Demonstrate other successful concepts in other locations

• Hyperlink to locations - Google Street View
Interactive Publishing

- **Southeast ASP**
- Explain an existing condition/constraint
- News Stories / Documentaries
  - First Special Services Force
  - Frederic Law Olmsted
- Embed videos directly into the document
  - Self Recorded
  - Conceptual Fly-Through
Interactive Publishing

- Southeast ASP
- Embed Photo Galleries
  - Real world examples
- Embed Audio
  - Podcasts – 99% Invisible
  - Music
- Used to Educate
- Make Planning Fun!
Interactive Publishing

• **Changing the Conversation:**
  • Makes long-range plans appealing and inclusive to broader audiences
    • Helps to democratize the language of plans
    • Goal is to have the plan that is used and not forgotten about

• Makes plans available across a variety of platforms
Interactive Publishing

• **Lessons Learned:**

  • Inexpensive / Low risk—Capital Cost under $1,000 per license, yearly maintenance fee of $250

  • Works well on numerous platforms- iOS, Android, PC, e-Readers

  • Flexible—HTML5, Flash, PDF, ePUB, download and print

  • Different amounts of interactive capability, depending upon authoring software
Interactive Publishing

• **Lessons Learned:**

  • New software always has a bit of a learning curve
  
  • Require occasional help from IT department
  
  • Does not allow much editing – purpose is to add interactive elements to existing documents
Virtual Reality
Virtual Reality

- **Initiative:**

  - Virtual Reality used in two recent projects for different purposes:

  1. Southeast Area Structure Plan

    - Convey what future development could look like

    - Wanted to bring attention to one of the highlights of the plan area
Virtual Reality

• **Initiative:**

  • Virtual Reality used in two recent projects for different purposes:

  2. **Efficient Land Use Strategy**

    • Potential redevelopment and densification of two existing corridors

    • Corridors chosen based on Density Mapping Exercise

    • Challenge public’s pre-conceived notions of increased density
      • Turn perceptions from − to +
Virtual Reality

- 13th Street North – Scenario C
Virtual Reality

- **New Reality:**
  - Part of our *Efficient Land Use Strategy*

- Inform our 2019 *Municipal Development Plan* Revision & Ensure we are in compliance with the recently adopted Regional Plan and amended Municipal Government Act
Virtual Reality

• **Changing the Conversation:**

• Using *Virtual Reality* technology to help public imagine and experience the realm of the possible in their neighbourhoods

• VR is being used to showcase future streetscapes and density increases in a way that is immersive and accessible

• VR is changing the conversation by attracting broader audiences

• **SEEING IS BELIEVEING!**
Virtual Reality

- Lessons Learned:
  - Easy to Implement
  - Relatively Inexpensive
    - Smart Phones
    - Google Cardboard
    - YouTube
    - Sketch Up
  - Increasing number of consultants can do this work
Virtual Reality

• **Lessons Learned:**

  • Keep the VR interaction relatively short
    • Depending upon the intended audience
  
  • Show VR presentation on a monitor and viewer
    • Attract an audience
  
  • Generational difference in reception
Conclusion

• These initiatives at the City of Lethbridge showcase not only how our community is evolving, but also how community planning and stakeholder/community engagement can evolve to stay current in an ever-changing world.
For Further Information…

• 100k+ Conversations - http://www.lethbridge.ca/City-Government/Get%20Involved/Pages/100K+.aspx

• West Lethbridge Employment Centre Interactive ASP - www.lethbridge.ca/_layouts/15/col/ebook/wlecaspfinal/html5

• Southeast Interactive ASP - www.lethbridge.ca/_layouts/15/col/ebook/seasp/

• Efficient Land Use Strategy VR - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpAyM0bmUDg&list=PLyd1E7WYwUz6JUIWKtYHcO8UKQm4ukdkX

• Arrow Archeology - www.arrowarchaeology.com

• Output Media – www.outputmedia.ca/360
GUESS WHO’S COMING TO THE MEETING

MEETING SPACES: IMPLICATIONS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CARLA BORSTAD KLASSEN, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

JUNE 2017

CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS CONFERENCE
OUTLINE

• Introduction to the Neighbourhood Action Evaluation
• Key literature and context
• Case study illustrations
• Implications & Recommendations
HAMILTON’S NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION STRATEGY BOUNDARIES
HOW DO WE KNOW? (METHODS)

• 11 community planning team meetings each month since 2013

• 11 focus groups in 2016 and 11 more underway & scheduled this summer (2017)

• 104 interviews: community developers, residents, service providers, councillors, city staff
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Citizenship in a civic community is marked by active participation in public affairs.
- Places/spaces can contribute to opportunities for civic conversations regarding attitudes and policies that relate to rights and outcomes that influence quality of life.
- Access to places/spaces by citizens is an important element for promoting full citizenship.
- Public spaces can enable civic conversations about the state of the world, and provide citizens, agencies of the state and the media with the opportunity to hear the views of others.

(Hracs & Massam, 2008)
INCLUSION AND ACCESS

• Civic engagement is more than electoral politics; it is how we come together to solve problems we need to solve. In communities of colour in particular, there are very few such spaces for that sort of civic engagement.

• Fundamentally, most space is exclusive: We need spaces in which people can come together to contest that exclusion.

• There are so few spaces that it is often difficult to create the opportunities for people to come together and do that level of civic engagement.

• (Wiley, & Shiffman, 2012)
COMMUNITY SPACE

- The creation of community centers was generally accepted as an attempt to create public spaces in which community members could get involved in governance and influence the course of community affairs (Glover, 2004).

- Community centres, village squares and town meetings, the public spaces that made democratic participation possible, have been replaced by privatized spaces (e.g. shopping malls) where we are permitted to enter as consumers and forbidden to enter as citizens (Hedges (2008) in Hracs, & Massam, 2008).
ROLE OF PHYSICAL SPACE

• The importance of place is also now being recognized by Canadian policy makers. Place goes beyond the social and the abstract; there is also evidence that a sense of place, based on local distinctiveness, provides an economic and social advantage to a community.

• (Dale, Ling, & Newman, 2008)
SIGNIFICANCE TO PLANNERS

- Based on the belief that social engagement, community involvement, and sense of community are on the decline in contemporary cities, promoting these dynamics has been a significant goal of the spatial planning agenda in recent decades.

(Jabareen & Zilberman 2016)
SIGNIFICANCE TO PLANNERS

• The challenge for planners and concerned citizens is to promote and increase access and use of places/spaces to promote civic conversations

• Planners have a responsibility to promote public spaces/places as sites for celebration, protest and for bearing witness, as well as for sharing social interactions and recreation

• Places/spaces can play significant roles as locations for citizens to gather and feel secure and able to share views about the world, and their wants and needs

• (Hracs, & Massam, 2008)
CONTEXT: COMMUNITY HUBS

- Ontario is working to support and enable the establishment and ongoing success of local community hubs in order to better serve Ontarians and their communities.

- Highlights of the 2016 report:
  - Community hubs provide the public with one central point of access for a range of services, such as health, social or education services, along with cultural and recreational spaces to nourish community life.
  - Supporting strong communities is part of the government's economic plan to build Ontario up and deliver on its number-one priority to grow the economy and create jobs.
  - Increasing the number of potential partners that can buy or lease surplus school property for community use before it gets circulated on the open market.
INADEQUACY OF CURRENT SPACES

• Elementary and high schools, which are evenly distributed city-wide, possess ideal facilities for a range of cultural uses, from rehearsals, meetings, and workshops to performances and community events. Unfortunately, costly permit fees and deteriorating facilities combine to render these spaces inaccessible to community groups that could most benefit from these spaces.

• Easily-accessible spaces in which the community can gather was expressed as a need in many wards. This space should accommodate a variety of cultural activities, from dance and music performances to cooking classes and fundraising events.

• (Making Space for Culture: Community Consultation summaries April 2014 City of Toronto)
WHY COMMUNITY MEETING SPACES MATTER

• Enable civic engagement and participation
• Create social and economic advantages
• Dwindling due to disrepair, inaccessibility
• Increasingly important to planners, policy makers, and citizens
CASE STUDY

HAMILTON’S NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION STRATEGY
EVERGREEN

LET'S BUILD BETTER CITIES.

Together we can change how we plan and design our cities.

We need new thinking.
But most of all we need action.

Visit evergreen.ca/cityworks
EVERGREEN

• Storefront community space in Jamesville
• Open all hours
• Requires no staff presence; key is left in lockbox, volunteers are trained for support
• Mixed use space; flexible room set-ups
• Many neighbourhoods wish they had an Evergreen community space
• Jamesville planning team does not meet there due to inaccessible washrooms, chose to meet in library where there are no walls around their meeting; noise is a challenge
CROWN POINT CHURCH CRAWL

• Crown Point planning team has been in 3 locations in the last year.
• They’ve occupied two churches and now a board room at a Labour Council.
• When a service provider or guest shares about a new project or space in the neighbourhood, Crown Point participants say “Do you have space for us? We need a home”.
• Blog is not up-to-date and changing locations means people who missed the last meeting may not know where the next meeting is, creating inconsistency.
• Participants identified that using religious space for secular purposes could be a barrier for participation and does not support their goals around inclusion.
McQUESTEN & BEASLEY
SOMETHING’S COOKING IN THE KITCHEN

• Beasley Neighbourhood Association
  • New community kitchen being built in community centre meant groups scrambled for new spaces to meet during renovations.
  • Community is ecstatic about kitchen opportunities.

• McQuesten Planning Team
  • Have a community kitchen used at each meeting to prepare a free meal for residents.
  • Meeting space located in repurposed school and school board expressed need for $16,000 annually to ensure space. Panic ensued. Funding was secured (for now).
SHERMAN: MOVING ON UP (TO THE NORTH SIDE)

- Sherman Hub Planning Team experienced lack of diversity on team.
- Socioeconomic divide in Hamilton among North/South border identified as barrier for participation.
- Planning team moved to North side, in a stadium community room.
- Service provider became gatekeeper to space, implying they could “hook you up” with the space instead of providing resident-empowered booking procedures.
Community planning teams are resident-led, but require dependent relationships on service providers and partners to access space that enables their civic engagement.

Service providers sometimes act like they are doing the community member a favour by making space available.

City staff – Community centre staff can present barriers for access, even when space is readily available.

Resident - Chairs of team become the conduit for any participant wishing to book a space, creating reliance and weakening resilience.
WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND
IMPLICATIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Accessibility
  • Availability and condition of spaces
  • Reduce or eliminate gatekeeping; use non-bureaucratic practices
  • Physical accessibility everywhere - including washrooms

• Inclusion
  • Locate in areas where participants may have the most barriers to participation
  • Include access to kitchens
  • Non-religious spaces
TAKE AWAY

- Inclusive community meeting spaces facilitate civic engagement
- The less we attend to making spaces inclusive and accessible, the less representative participation will be, the less relevant decisions and actions will be based on this
- The more we (can) get together, the happier democracy will be!
THANK YOU