Engaged, Inclusive Communities

Phase 1: Report

AURORA
You're in Good Company

EG
East Gwillimbury

NeighbourhoodNetwork
Building Better Communities Together

Newmarket

Table of Contents

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"Because it values and respects all its members, an inclusive municipality builds a society without fences, where everyone has an equal chance at participating in its economic, political, social, cultural and recreational life, and to thrive there."

UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities

Project Overview

Project Purpose

- To engage, build connections; build inclusion through collaborative approaches, initiatives, and dialogue for impact in partner municipalities.

- To help further communities where everyone feels a sense of belonging, connectedness, and are engaged meaningfully—with opportunities, access, and inclusion.

This project was initiated by Neighbourhood Network and is a collaborative approach across three municipalities (Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket) in northern York Region with Neighbourhood Network as Lead Community Partner. Leveraging the strength of Neighbourhood Network's leadership in engagement and understanding of our communities, while also building on the N6 communities' historical strength of collaboration on shared issues, while valuing and recognizing different needs in each. This initiative is:

- Looking at shared challenges and opportunities

- Taking an integrated approach to avoid duplication and find efficiencies

- Researching the specific needs of each individual community where growth, increased development, and change is rapid

Guiding Principles

Building Connections	Engagement	Community Building
Inclusion	Innovation	Alignment

Project Team

The Municipal Advisory Group (MAG) is a collaboration led by Community Partner Neighbourhood Network with an Advisory Group of representatives from each municipality and the Project Facilitator (gazelle & company). Additional Neighbourhood Network staff and other potential outsourced resources will be utilized as required.

The MAG consists of:

- **Community Partner:** Erin Cerenzia, Manager Neighbourhood Network

- **Aurora:** Mateusz Zawada, Accessibility Advisor & Techa Van Leeuwen, Director of Corporate Services

- **East Gwillimbury:** Michelle Collette, Director of Human Resources & Erin Smyth, Human Resources Coordinator

- **Newmarket:** Kiran Saini, Deputy Town Clerk, Legislative Services & Jennifer Rose, Healthy Workplace Program Specialist, Human Resources

- **York Region:** Lois Davies, Manager, Social Policy and Inclusion/Accessibility

- **Project Facilitator:** Kim Clark, Principal Consultant gazelle & company

The MAG members identified Municipal Staff and Committees/Task Forces within their municipality to be engaged in the community conversations process. Additionally, through team meetings (monthly since January 2021) the MAG provided guidance and input on project direction, process, and most recently, feedback to this report.

Context and Background

Our communities are evolving and there have been shifts both locally and beyond that have created opportunities for us to collectively reflect and take decisive action to better engage and create increased equity, belonging, and strength where we live, work, and play.

For the towns of Aurora, East Gwillimbury, and Newmarket, and Neighbourhood Network, this project provides an opportunity to explore a deeper understanding about what diversity looks like in our three communities. Our borders are porous and with many similarities, allowing for a collaborative investigation into how we currently engage within our communities and how we might do so more inclusively.

This work has already begun, and there are great examples locally in our municipal government and within community-based organizations of inclusive engagement. Additionally, the Regional Municipality of York has led some internationally recognized foundational work that local leadership and communities can build on (such as the Inclusion Charter for York Region). With the groundwork in place, and a committed network of community members and partners, the time is now to embrace the chance to engage and build better communities in newly imagined ways.

This report identifies key themes to further explore, and opportunities for local municipalities and community organizations like Neighbourhood Network to take action.

An increased understanding of and engagement within our communities leads to:

- Better connection, engagement, and relevance with constituents

- Increased effectiveness of policy and decision making

- Better informed programming

Source: Town of Newmarket

Considerations

The focus of this project is inclusive engagement as an opportunity to inform program and policy development, ensure reflective and inclusive communications, provide deeper connection and engagement, and encourage growth, economic opportunity, and a sense of community belonging.

The intention of this report is to provide a roadmap and a first step towards continued learning, with actions to follow in Phase 2 of this project. With this, it is also important to note:

- This is not a comprehensive process or policy review of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices in each municipality, which is important and crucial work. Rather, the report's focus on inclusive engagement compliments DEI work occurring in municipalities

- The community conversations serve as a snapshot, not a complete representation of the breadth and depth of community work, or community development and engagement.

- This was not a broad public engagement process, but an exercise in conversation within the three municipalities and with a cross-section of community partners. Those consulted work through an inclusion and diversity lens, and it is recommended that ongoing and deeper engagement with those consulted and the community at large continues.

- The focus of this report is not specifically anti-racism work, however this project has strived to take an anti-racism/anti-oppression view and recognizes the importance of the anti-racism and anti-Black racism work that needs to occur and is being led in our communities.

Project Phases

Proposal & Approvals

The Engaged, Inclusive Communities project was presented to each municipality with a request for their participation and approval during the Fall of 2019, specifically:

- Town of Aurora: November 5, 2019

- Town of East Gwillimbury: November 5, 2019

- Town of Newmarket: October 28, 2019

The project was approved in early 2020 and kicked off with a meeting between Mayors Mrakas (Aurora), Hackson (East Gwillimbury), and Taylor (Newmarket) on March 6, 2020, where MAG members were identified and the way forward was confirmed. Due to the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was delayed, and revised timelines were created. The projected project completion date is Fall 2021.

Phase 1: Review/Report

This initial phase focused on connecting and gathering information to gain understanding of how each municipality currently engages with and in our communities, and how to do this with an increased lens of inclusion, belonging, and diversity.

This work entailed two pieces: 1) a collection of conversations with municipal departments, local councillors, and local community organizational leaders (see Appendix 2), and 2) the development of a demographic snapshot of our communities.

This report is the outcome of these two elements and includes:

- Snapshot demographic information based on 2016 Census and reports provided by the Region of York related to inclusion and diversity

- A summary of findings including observations, themes, high level recommendations, and opportunities towards increased inclusive engagement -and more broadly Diversity,Equity and Inclusion (DEI) activities

- A breakout report for each individual municipality with a specific snapshot and observations for action/opportunities for engagement (Appendix 3)

- A recommended roadmap for Phase 2 building on the foundation from Phase 1 and focused on extending the engagement, learning, and driving action

Phase 2: Engage/Learn

This phase will focus on what was learned from the community conversations and how to engage around the key themes and opportunities identified in this report. This will include activities such as:

1. Development and delivery of workshops within each municipality – the intention of these workshops is to build concrete actions based on themes identified in this report

2. Institutional partner engagement – presenting the report to larger partner organizations (such as York Regional Police, Southlake Regional Health Centre, York Region Catholic/ District School Boards, Chippewas of Georgina Island) who were not part of Phase 1 community conversations and facilitating discussion to understand their work and uncover opportunities for collaboration, alignment, and shared learning/action

3. Developing a local organization listing leveraging existing resources like the Neighbourhood Network website and York Region's 211 database

4. Developing a workshop/presentation for Neighbourhood Network Partners – engaging on themes and encouraging specific action

A summary report building on the project's total findings and including specific actions identified will also be provided.

Summary

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"Urban policies guide the geographic, economic and social growth of cities. They have numerous articulations in municipal codes, official plans, orders, zoning by-laws, and ordinances. These policies are an invisible yet powerful force that shape the lives of all urban dwellers, in both positive and adverse ways. When this force isn't intentionally directed toward socially good outcomes, equity seeking groups are most impacted."

Engaging Black People and Power – a public engagement and urban policy primer
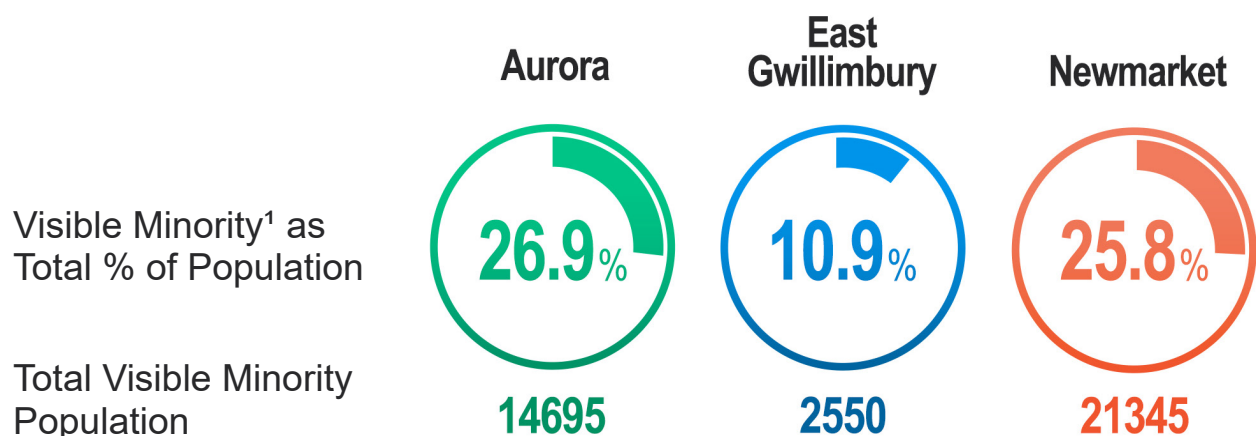
Source: Town of Aurora

Demographic Snapshot

The demographic snapshots are a high-level view of our community through different dimensions of diversity. Data and demographics are an important tool in how we make decisions. Ensuring we look at the data with an eye to the diversity in our communities is crucial.

While this is a snapshot, there are a variety of tools at the disposal of all York Region municipalities to leverage and utilize as they build policies, programs, plans, and strategies. This report encourages continued research for further learning. More detailed snapshots for each municipality are included in Appendix 1.

Visible Minority

	Aurora	East Gwillimbury	Newmarket
Visible Minority[1] as Total % of Population	26.9%	10.9%	25.8%
Total Visible Minority Population	14695	2550	21345

[1]From Census - Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons other than Aboriginal peoples who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese.

In 2016, 541,200 residents within York Region identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group, representing 49.2% of the total population.[2]

Top 5 Visible Minority Communities

Note: All data is taken from 2016 Census Profiles.

Aurora	East Gwillimbury	Newmarket
Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
West Asian	South Asian	South Asian
South Asian[3]	Black	Black
Black	West Asian[4]	South East Asian[5]
Filipino	Filipino	West Asian

2016 Population by Age[6]

	Aurora		East Gwillimbury		Newmarket	
	2016 Population	% Change Since 2011	2016 Population	% Change Since 2011	2016 Population	% Change Since 2011
0-4 years	2725	-8.0%	1275	14.0%	4335	-0.1%
5-14 years	7125	-0.4%	2840	7.0%	10,500	0.0%
15-24 years	7995	0.0%	3000	-0.7%	11935	0.0%
25-64 years	**30355**	4.0%	**13400**	5.0%	**45910**	4.0%
Age 65+	7240	**28.0%**	3480	**29.0%**	11545	**30.0%**

[2] Taken from York Region Census Release report – Population, Age and Sex
[3] From Census - For example: East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.
[4] From Census - For example: Afghan, Iranian, etc.
[5] From Census - For example: Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.
[6] Taken from York Region Census Release report – Population, Age and Sex

- Consistent across each municipality is that the largest share of population in 2016 is 25-64 years and largest percentage change from 2011 is over age 65+.

- In youth, the largest declines were in East Gwillimbury (-7.0%) and Georgina (-5.9%)[7]

  − The other five municipalities experienced growth of their youth population, with the largest increases occurring in Whitchurch-Stouffville (16.0%) and King (10.5%).

  − Both Aurora and Newmarket had the highest youth share of the total local municipal population, at 14.4% (8,000) and 14.2% (11,935) respectively.

- For preschool age between 2011 and 2016, the number of preschool children (0 to 4 years) decreased in Richmond Hill (-12.7%), Vaughan (-9.9%), Aurora (-8.2%) and Newmarket (-1.1%)[8]

- The growth rate of working-age residents was highest in King (22.7%) and Whitchurch-Stouffville (16.7%), and lowest in Richmond Hill (2.8%) and Newmarket (3.9%)[9]

- Despite the fact that the total working-age population increased across all local municipalities in York Region, the number of working-age adults aged 35 to 49 years decreased everywhere except in Whitchurch-Stouffville where there was a 20.5% increase and in King where there was an increase of 11.5%. The greatest declines were in Georgina (-14.4%) and Aurora (-9.5%)[10]

Households[11]

	Aurora	East Gwillimbury	Newmarket
Proportion of children (under 14) living with one parent	13.9%	10.7%	16.8%

[7] Taken from York Region Census Release report – Population, Age and Sex
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Taken from York Region Census Release Report – Population, Families, Households and Marital Status

In 2016, Georgina (18.0%) had the highest proportion of lone parent families, followed by Newmarket (17.3%). Georgina and Newmarket had the highest proportion of children under 14 years of age living with one parent, 20.6% and 16.8% respectively.

Community Conversations

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"Inclusive community engagement recognises that everyone has a role to play in public engagement. It provides people with opportunities to participate by reducing barriers, creating connections and engaging in meaningful and supportive ways."

[Capire - Inclusive Community Engagement: in a time of physical distancing](#)

Community conversations were the methodology utilized to uncover and explore themes and opportunities in each municipality. **The Themes and Observations/Opportunities presented in this report are all direct outcomes from these conversations.**

The community conversations were conducted in four ways:

1. Municipal Departments: Conversations with department leaders from each municipality in Communications, Customer Service, Economic Development, Human Resources, Libraries, Planning, and Recreation and Culture – 21 total interviews

2. Community Organizations: Conversations with leaders from community-based organizations, and partners of Neighbourhood Network – 14 total interviews

3. Conversations with Councillors and Mayors around preliminary themes identified and how they engage with their constituents

4. Presentations to related municipal committees and task forces for questions and input

Source: Town of East Gwillimbury

During these conversations, questions were asked to uncover themes, examples, and opportunities, such as:

- How do you (either municipal department or community organization) currently engage with community? When, how, why?

- How do you approach engagement through an inclusive lens?

- What are examples of successful inclusive engagement in the work you do, by other departments/organizations?

- What are opportunities to engage more inclusively? What might that look like? Where are there gaps?

- What role does partnership play in inclusive engagement?

Note: Refer to Appendix 2 for a list of Municipal Staff, Members of Council, Committees or Task Forces, and Community Organizations consulted in this process.

Themes

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"Embrace Change - In order for community engagement to flourish, officials must be open to change and willing to invite all groups to the table to participate. Before any outreach efforts, take some time to foster a culture of diversity within your agencies. In time, these changes will drive new decision-making processes that are more inclusive and transparent."

[Bang the Table - Inclusive Engagement – Why Knowing Your Audience Matters](#)

Theme 1: Meet people where they are

Often, traditional municipal and institutional engagement and communication strategies depend on participants "coming to them," either physically or online. This approach to engagement assumes that the community/participants/intended audience have access, feel included, do not have barriers to engagement, and are connected to their municipality, and therefore, have the ability to engage.

However, there is a risk of excluding segments of our communities if we only engage through these traditional channels. To combat this and engage more inclusively means exploring how we can:

- Go beyond traditional communication tactics

- Shift from expecting people to "come to us" to meeting people where they already are, both physically and online

- Use language that is inclusive and avoids jargon and/or technical language where possible. This includes translating key documents or providing translation services where possible.

Examples include:

- In addition to posting public engagement notices through a municipality's usual channels, towns should also share content for cross-promotion through community organizations (e.g., Neighbourhood Network, local charitable organizations), institutional partners (e.g., schools, libraries) to communicate and engage with their own community members.

- For public engagement activities relating to planning public space, policy, or programming, towns should go beyond traditional in-person channels (e.g., Town Hall meetings) and meet community members at grass roots locations (e.g., in parks, at community events).

- Consider the language used. Avoid technical and legislation-based language and use simple, concise wording and visual aids. For example, in the Planning process the language is very technical and legislative; find ways to simplify the language to de-mystify the process and develop deeper understanding and increased community involvement.

- Some communities use alternative social media or technical tools (e.g., Telegram and WeChat – Chinese communities in York Region broadly use the latter). Research and utilize these platforms to share and engage as much as possible.

Story of promise

In the East Gwillimbury Planning Department, an initiative was embarked on to simplify the Planning process to ensure it was more inclusive and to identify and eliminate potential barriers. This included steps such as:

- Changing the format of signage at development sites to make them more visual/ graphical and shifting the language away from technical to simple and meaningful language.

- Going beyond what is legislatively required to engage a broader cross-section of the affected community – in addition to sharing in formal/technical language onsite and in local papers, they provided an easy to understand/graphical communication through social media and in-person engagement.

Theme 2: Engage with intention

When developing communications and engagement around policy, programming, or strategies, municipalities need to ask, "how are we doing this through an inclusive lens?" The intention to specifically engage underrepresented groups needs to be imbedded in all engagement and program/policy development. This means:

- Reach out directly and specifically to underrepresented groups using their preferred method of communication to ensure they are engaged and that the municipality is being intentionally inclusive.

- Do not assume all community members are actively engaged in the same way with town initiatives, communications, or processes. Identify the gaps and barriers that might exist for each specific group prior to engagement and develop a strategy to combat this.

- Collaborate with community partners to share and engage (tied into 'meeting people where they are' theme). When municipalities find ways to work with community partners it shows a clear intent of inclusion, while also leveraging their communications and engagement channels and the ability to reach a new audience.

- Develop relationships with diverse community members and organizations. Shift the relationship building away from a transactional focus (e.g., only reaching out to an organization when support is needed for translation, rather than regularly and intentionally).

- Find ways to engage the community with a non-traditional, fun approach (e.g., through activities, games, or food). Ensure an inclusive approach to this engagement (e.g., use an accessible space, provide childcare/make child friendly, timing considerations to accommodate shift work, use visuals, translations, plain language, etc.)

Examples include:

- For municipal job postings, board/committee appointments, or public engagement opportunities identify community organizations and underrepresented groups and take a targeted approach by:

  - Providing content for social media, email newsletters, community boards
  - Finding opportunities to present at their events, trainings, or workshops

- For events where a municipality partners with another organization (e.g., awards ceremony) build in a requirement of the partner organization to demonstrate an intentional outreach and engagement strategy (e.g., if a partner organization wants to renew or start a contract to use municipal space, add a section to the town's registration form where the partner organization must outline their own internal inclusivity plan).

Story of promise

As the Town of Aurora embarked on public engagement for the development of Library Square, the team developed a Family Day event to go beyond traditional public engagement tactics. This event built fun and family into engagement. This provided an opportunity for people to participate in a new way that was inclusive and met people where they are by engaging with families already attending the event. There was intention – understanding that building something that allowed families to participate would allow for participation and also provide relevant and powerful feedback – through fun and non-traditional methods.

Source: Town of Aurora

Theme 3: Communicate the commitment

While at a broad level there is an understanding that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are priorities within the Region and local municipalities, how this is internally and externally communicated and articulated as a priority seems to be less clearly understood.

- Ensure the commitment to DEI and inclusive engagement is clearly articulated and understood internally by staff
  - Through leadership messaging
  - Organizational/departmental meetings and planning
  - Clearly articulated as a priority in performance measurement

- Speak to the importance of inclusion and diversity as a core in all work – not just as a silo for DEI initiatives or Human Resources. Reinforce this commitment in all communications with the community.
  - DEI should not be highlighted as a standalone priority, e.g., include messaging around inclusive Economic Development, Planning, Recreation & Culture, etc.

- Give clarity to staff across the organization and from leadership that working through an inclusive lens is a key priority
  - Make it a clear and measured expectation

Examples include

- Any communication of Strategic Priorities should broadly note a commitment to inclusion and diversity – even if this is not an identified priority
  - Find opportunities to highlight and reinforce the commitment in internal and external communications/engagement (e.g., staff Town Halls, speaking opportunities for leaders, messaging around Strategic or Master Planning)
  - Leverage Town's commitment to Inclusion Charter for York Region statements to articulate this commitment

- In job postings ensure that part of the role prioritizes a commitment to and understanding of inclusion/inclusive engagement and diversity

- Communicate the opportunities for residents to work on/explore DEI, create communities of belonging, participate in anti-racism/anti-Black racism initiatives, and other related areas to the community at large

Story of promise

An example of communicating the commitment is the messaging and communications around each municipality's Diversity and Anti-Racism/Anti-Black Racism Committees and Task Forces. Both the development of the committees and the broad communications of their existence is a positive first step to demonstrating this commitment. Ongoing focus, priority, and support of these Committees/Task Forces with communications on their progress and demonstrated action or impact will be crucial in continuing to showcase each municipality's ongoing commitment.

Source: Town of Newmarket

Theme 4: Make the informal, formal

Building on the theme of 'communicating the commitment' is how municipalities can make the informal, formal. It was observed in many conversations that beyond some specific DEI focused work, there was not a formalization or focused/intentional prioritization of inclusive engagement throughout the local municipalities. The opportunity is to examine how to:

- Embed this within all work – not just Inclusion and Diversity focused work (and/or Human Resources)

- Shift inclusive engagement and DEI away from the side of the desk to becoming ingrained in daily process and systems

- Articulate expectations of taking an inclusive lens to engagement both internally to staff, and externally to programming partners

Examples include:

- Examine the booking process for municipal owned space to ensure new groups get access. What role do "legacy" relationships play in creating exclusive practice?

- Building a dedicated, town-led inclusive engagement process rather than relying on a staff or leadership's personal initiative

- Formalizing process/policy for how grass roots community organizations can gain support (e.g., access to space, resource etc.) within the town

Story of promise

The Town of Newmarket developed a cross-functional DEI Working Group to look at internal opportunities to create increased focus and action on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion throughout the organization. This work has led to development of guiding tools such as the DEI Plan and Lens. The engagement of the Working Group and how it formed delivers a message of commitment to the work. For this to have continued impact, strength in how these tools are communicated, rolled out into action, and measured will be crucial. Having executive sponsorship and leadership in this will also be key.

Theme 5: Access – Who is invited? Who feels included? Where are there barriers?

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"If you don't eat hamburgers, you will be an audience not a participant."

Community organization leader

Accessibility speaks not only to physical access, but also to access of processes, programs, people, and place/space. It also deals with how we engage the communities we serve to make them feel welcome and encouraged to participate.

Process:

- Municipal processes are felt by some to be ambiguous and complex. Language is key to accessing municipal processes and programs:
  - Placing importance on using plain, inclusive, and accessible language
  - Providing translations or translation support services
  - Utilizing visuals to simplify the messaging

Programs:

- Are Recreation and Culture programs accessible and inclusive? Are there potential barriers built into the programs that are designed and delivered? If people don't see themselves or their needs/differences addressed in programming, it can be hard to participate.

- When developing programs, ask questions such as:

    - Are there housing, transit, and income considerations that may impact access to programs – e.g., are programs affordable, easy to get to?

    - Are there cultural considerations to consider, like:
        - Timing of events, food served, language used, speakers/performances included

    - Are there physical barriers in the program space that need to be considered?

People:

- There is a need to examine the barriers to building relationships with municipalities and municipal leaders

    - Who has access to these individuals? How are these relationships formed? Is there preferential treatment based on existing relationships? Municipal leaders should be encouraged to take a proactive approach to extend and broaden their network with an inclusive lens.

- How do community organizations form partnerships with their municipalities?

    - Formalize and build systems for community organizations to engage – develop a clear and communicated path

- There is an opportunity to explore who are the leaders in our community (formal and informal) and how they are identified. Tied to this, looking at who gets recognized and what stories get shared.

- Where opportunities present themselves, municipalities and community organizations should amplify and share stories of community members less represented (i.e. what businesses get profiled by economic development, what recreation or culture partner stories get amplified)

Place/Space:

- Are there physical barriers to public spaces? Such as:

    - For those with mobility differences – ramps, walkways

    - For those with cognitive differences – signage

    - For those with language issues – translated signage, interpretation

    - As it relates to gender identity – non-gendered washrooms

- Explore the concept of a "welcoming community" and what this means. What provides a sense of community? How do we name our communities – "this is a multicultural

community," "this is a diverse community," – what is the impact of these statements? How do they exclude people? How do they re-enforce privilege? And do diverse individuals truly feel "welcomed?"

- There is an opportunity to look at where people live, where they shop, and where they play. Ask questions like:

  - Do people feel driven into certain areas?

  - Where do people feel safe and why?

  - What are push and pull factors?

  - Are there physical barriers?

  - What role does NIMBYism play in our space and place making possibilities in our communities? How is NIMBYism/resistance to community change at times rooted in racism and other forms of discrimination?

NIMBYism
(Not In My Backyard) . The behaviour of someone who does not want something to be built or done near where they live, although it does need to be built or done somewhere.

Source: Cambridge Dictionary

Examples include:

- Town permit systems are perceived by some as confusing and hard to navigate, with highly technical language

- Cultural events and programming is seen as being focused on "established" community members' needs and/or legacy programs/events

- Are by-laws enforcing (or even re-enforcing) NIMBYism through a lens of exclusion of what is new or different from pre-existing/established norms?

  - e.g., Accessory dwelling and residential street parking might be necessary to accommodate multi-generational families of specific cultural backgrounds, but are not permitted due to existing town bylaws.

- Are town events and third party and/or partner events being intentionally welcoming to newer populations?

  - e.g., Do Farmers' Markets include a focus on cultural food events, youth engagement, or food security? Do local business awards include a broad cross-section of diversity and take an equity and inclusion lens? Does the Magna Hoedown encourage participation of all residents?

- Do certain neighbourhoods have specific "reputations" and why? What impact does this reputation have?

Source: Town of Newmarket

Story of promise

The Aurora Public Library embarked on an extensive engagement process with the 2SLGBTQ+ communities to find ways to better reflect, welcome, and work together. This process was multi-phased and as a result new programming was created, partnerships formed, and deepened trust and opportunities to enrich the Library experience for 2SLGBTQ+ communities and all Library customers.

Theme 6: Engage meaningfully

At times, the ways in which we communicate and engage can themselves become barriers. There is an opportunity to examine how, when, and why we engage and how we can do it with an intention towards creating meaning, trust, and relationships.

The relationships we build

- Focus on creating reciprocal relationships where there is benefit for both the diverse community and the municipality

- Move beyond festivals to engage with community members – while it is important to celebrate, communities want to participate more fully in all aspects of community building and civic activity (e.g., to engage in Planning processes, sit on committees, be informed and engaged around town activities)

- Proactively create opportunities for inclusion – municipalities should not wait for the invitation to engage, and instead create the opportunity for inclusive engagement

- When engaging with a specific community, also ask the question of how the municipality can help develop capacity for that organization or community members

- Conversations emphasized that relationships and trust building work is key and crucial within all levels of government. It is important for municipal leaders to not only attend events, but to think about who and how they are networking with (e.g., invitations to lunch or coffee), and extend that beyond their established networks.

The words we use

- Inclusive language without demonstrated action is hollow and can do more harm than good – e.g., "[saying] we are a welcoming town without clear and demonstrated action to create a community of belonging and welcome." – Community organization leader

The ways we engage and expectation mismatch

- There is a lack of funding and investment in community work (at all levels)
  - Often times funding opportunities are set up so local community organizations are competing

- Leaders from underrepresented communities are at times being asked to do "unpaid" work by municipal staff, councillors, or municipalities themselves (e.g., translation, community engagement – online and offline, event planning)

- Community volunteers are often doing the heavy lifting, most often without compensation, and often without recognition

- Work gets put on marginalized communities to bear the burden of helping leaders and organizations learn – "[We are] seen as the human Google for dominant white culture, for [the] privileged to learn – learning of dominant and privileged should not be on the shoulders of marginalized communities – this is also dehumanizing – especially when it is undervalued and not compensated." – Community organization leader

• Explore how to engage without doing damage, how to collaboratively learn in a way that is respectful and also builds a community up

- What are the models of compensation and recognition?

- How can the town formalize this informal work?

- How can we work to further deepen and develop capacity and resources for organizations working with and for marginalized communities?

Story of promise

All three municipalities have engaged in various ways with Black-led community organizations NACCA – Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association and Aurora Black Community for Black History Month (BHM) programming and events. The partnership with the Town of Newmarket and NACCA has crossed multiple departments and created powerful cultural programming and events both during and beyond BHM. This provides some insight as well as to how municipalities can support grass-roots organizations in building capacity and supporting their work.

Source: Town of Aurora

Observations/Opportunities

Highlights

While below there are some specific areas of observations and opportunities that broadly apply, and through Appendix 3 each municipality is provided with locally specific details, these highlights are generalized observations, threads, and questions to consider when approaching inclusive engagement.

- Being proactive vs. reactive

- Is there anyone missing at the table?

- In order to dismantle barriers effectively, there must be an ongoing examination of how colonization, privilege, and systemic racism and other forms of discrimination are articulated in our organizations.

- Fears of excluding or not including everyone can sometimes be used as a reason for not engaging with anyone

- Have we been intentional in our engagement and in the communications we use?

- What are the opportunities to use a community development model to engagement and building community?

- Building relationships with trust at the core is key

- The work cannot be superficial – it's not enough to have a "check box," an inclusion and equity lens needs to be embedded in all that is done

- Do not dance around the fact that differences exist

  - "[People] need to accept there are differences and create policies around that" and "engage difference – don't ignore that difference exists." – Community organization leader

  - What does inclusion mean? It is often different for people of colour, other marginalized communities

- Look at intersections of identity and experience e.g., how does age intersect with culture/race? Income/housing and gender identity/sexual orientation?

- Leverage online public engagement/participation tools (e.g., surveys, Hey Newmarket, Engage Aurora)

  - It is not enough to utilize a public engagement tool; individuals need to know what the tools are, when to use them, and how to use it (awareness campaigns for public

and civic engagement tools)

- Formalize and centralize community engagement as a priority

  - Coordinate engagement to avoid engagement fatigue and to leverage knowledge and experience across organizations

  - Explore integrated and collaborative approaches to engagement across departments (e.g. an engagement fair event that several departments participate in)

- Engaging generations – engaging youth and elders in various communities

Areas of Opportunity

Community Leadership

Looking at both formal and informal leadership in our communities we can ask questions like:

- Who are our leaders?

- Who is at the decision-making tables?

- How do we identify leaders?

Municipal Leadership

Municipal Committees and Task Forces

- How do we broaden participation on committees and have increased diversity i.e. avoiding "the same old people and that all people look the same or have similar experiences?" – Community organization leader

  - Ensure those with lived experience are invited to be at the table

  - Actively recruit from underrepresented groups

    - Leverage community partners knowledge, experience, and networks

    - Utilize data and demographic tools to deepen understanding of the community

    - Look to best practice and existing programs to inform and support such as:

      - [OnBoard Canada](#) (formerly DiverseCity on Board and being revamped)

      - [Girls on Boards](#)

      - [Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) Get On Board program](#)

  - Examine who gets "tapped on the shoulder" to join a committee

- Examine the application process to identify barriers (e.g., language, does it take too long, are the requirements restrictive?)

- Leverage community organizations to broaden reach for communicating opportunities

- If possible, include community members in selection process for town committees

Municipal Leadership Team (Staff)

- Examine recruitment, hiring, promotion, and successions policies and strategies to ensure a DEI lens is embedded in all

- Develop specific plans to eliminate barriers for marginalized applicants and increase access

- Share stories of success and profile leaders who represent the diversity of communities

  - Who are the leaders whose voices and stories are shared?

  - Who are the public faces of the organization?

Municipal Leadership – Elected

- What can local municipalities do to encourage and support the development of increased diversity in those running for public office?

- What opportunities are there for community-based organizations to develop leaders and encourage their participation?

- Are there barriers to entry that can be addressed, such as:

  - Financial capital (funding)

  - Social capital (network/relationships)

  - How the elections process is communicated

  - Who is informally encouraged to participate by current Members of Council

Broad Community Leadership Development

- Explore the idea of a "Community Leadership Development" program in the 3 municipalities and potentially N6 – focused on developing a pipeline of leaders:

  - Future philanthropic leaders who sit on boards, raise money for local charities, etc.

  - Future board/committee members for community organizations and municipalities

  - Future municipal elected leaders

- Future community builders

- Local business leaders and large local businesses can play a significant role in supporting the development of future leaders

- Municipalities could create/support a local plan for developing new and diverse leaders in our communities

Municipalities as a Leader, Champion, and Catalyst for Change

Local municipalities have an opportunity to take an increased leadership role through activities such as:

- Being proactive in ensuring an inclusion lens is built into all future engagements

- Asking all programing and community partners to provide diversity/inclusive engagement plans

- Municipal leaders becoming active allies, champions, and ambassadors for all members of the community

- Taking the power of York Region's Inclusion Charter and each town's commitment and pushing it forward to action oriented and measurable statements of impact that are across functions (e.g., inclusive Economic Development commitments related to COVID recovery for those disproportionally affected like women, youth, Black and Indigenous, and other communities of colour, and imbedding the commitments into planning and measurement.)

Partnership

Who do we partner with and why? This speaks to the themes of 'meeting people where they are' and 'engaging with intention.' Whether for broad communications strategies or specific engagement opportunities, creating a partnership strategy through an inclusive lens will help ensure more reflective and inclusive involvement:

- Schools and school boards have been identified as a potential key partner for sharing information, collaborative programs/initiatives, and working through language barriers

- Community organizations are eager to partner but a lack of clarity in the process or understanding on what partnership looks like makes this difficult to navigate

- Utilize sports and culture as an entry point to new communities for engagement

  - e.g., Culture Bridge Initiatives' Cricket in Schools program could be grown through partnership (as an example the [City of Toronto - Mayor's Cup tournament](#))

- Build on existing engagement activities around food but ensure the foods being served or showcased represent all cultures and address issues surrounding food security

  – The food being served at an event can unintentionally suggest certain groups are not welcome (e.g., due to cultural dietary restrictions that might not have been considered). What food is being served sends an important message about who comes, who is included, and who feels welcome.

Leveraging and Building on Existing Work

There is a significant and powerful amount of work on inclusive engagement that already exists. Through partnership and conversations municipalities can find ways to build on this work, collaborate, and avoid duplication.

- Build on and connect to existing York Region initiatives:

  – Community Health and Wellbeing

  – York Region Inclusion Charter – all 3 municipalities are partner organizations, but what does that mean, where are the actions and accountability plans?

  – Examples like the Just Recovery Plan or the Food Access Table in cross-sectoral tables around COVID-19 recovery

Building capacity for community

Similar to partnerships, for many grass roots organizations and members of marginalized communities there is a lack of clarity on how to engage with their municipalities, what the opportunities are, and the protocols for engagement. Municipalities should strive to demystify these things with actions such as:

- Sessions with partners on complex municipal programs/projects

  – How to navigate the Planning process

  – How to get a permit

  – How to engage with your Mayor or Councillor

- Formalizing a process (or clearly sharing if already in place) for community organizations to engage with towns on items like:

  – Access to space (using board rooms, town address for mailing purposes, etc.)

  – Articulate a clear process for promotion and information sharing

  – Clarity on the availability of and access to funding or town resources

– Provide opportunities for capacity building (e.g., marketing support)

Additionally, it is a great step forward to see committees and task forces focused on Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism. It is important to ensure these committees and task forces are provided sufficient support and capacity for them to be effective and successful. The level of support should align with what is given to other committees/task forces that are similar in scope and terms of reference.

Support for committees and task forces should include:

1. Funding – to execute on plans

2. Capacity building – on how to manage and run effectively and navigate municipal systems

3. Resources – either through funding or town resources – i.e. expertise, strategic guidance

4. Access – to decision makers in Municipal Leadership and the community

Stories – Breaking Through with Stories

There are incredible stories of impact and potential in our communities. What role can local municipalities play in amplifying and prioritizing these voices?

- Opportunities for municipalities to highlight the diversity of voices and stories of inclusion include:
  - Economic Development/Chambers of Commerce/Business Improvement Areas – elevating the business profile of diverse owners across platforms and sharing these with media
  - Media engagement – what stories are actively promoted or shared with media and how can municipalities amplify the voices of marginalized communities?
  - Social media – who and what is profiled on which platforms (e.g., official town pages, by individual Members of Council) and is there an inclusive lens to social media posts beyond an acknowledgement of cultural holidays or celebrations?
- Some examples of local projects of storytelling:
  - Blue Door – [Out of the Blue](#): Weekly podcast sharing stories about gaps in systems around housing and homelessness
  - [Social Planning Council Hidden Stories of York Region](#): "A podcast about disrupting the dominant narratives by sharing stories about lived realities, community issues & solutions in York Region"

- Media engagement
    - How can local media be engaged around these themes?
        - Explore presenting report findings to local media (not as a story pitch, but as a "workshop" or information sharing purpose to inform their work)
        - Involving media in Neighbourhood Network engagement on project in further phases

Creating Spaces and Opportunities for Conversations

As noted in the themes, it is important to look at how and where we engage as a lever for change.

- Leveraging both formal and informal opportunities, thinking and acting with intention on who is invited and how
    - E.g., Town Halls, lunch meetings, coffees, committees, etc.
    - Thinking beyond the traditional or current models of engagement
- As demonstrated by many programs and partnerships, local libraries are a key community hub and a pathway to creating inclusion and belonging. How can municipalities continue to build on this?
    - Consider activities like:
        - Mayor's/Councillor monthly kids "story time" at library or in a park in partnership with a community organization and tied to inclusion
        - Mayor's/Councillor community conversation – drop in to meet the Mayor
- Explore ways to use the power of parks:
    - Planners in the parks – asking questions, engaging community, demystifying planning
    - Bringing libraries into parks
    - Bringing specific projects to parks – Main Street comes to you, Library Square in the park, meet your Farmer's Market farmers in the park
    - Councillor and Mayor park drop in days
    - Walks with partners in the parks throughout towns (e.g., York Regional Police, business leaders, Southlake Regional Health Centre, etc.)

Measuring Success:

Traditional areas of measurement (e.g., the total number of event attendees) can be a barrier to creating inclusive programming as our communities change. Considering other measures of impact for programming tied to creating a sense of belonging and inclusion (as opposed to audience numbers) may allow for reflective and diverse programming to build and grow. Such as:

- Did the event/program engage new partner(s) from a DEI perspective?

- Does the event/program further and deepen relationship with a community traditionally underserved in our programming/engagement?

- Will this event/program lead to possible increased opportunities in the future for the Town (and community)?

- Does the event/program offer the potential to share information about other Town events/initiatives to encourage broader participation in Town activities?

Collaborative Opportunities

There were two places where the Community Conversations identified a resource gap that community members and staff are currently expected to fill: translation and community development/building/awareness. Although there are gaps, these identify a potential for collaboration amongst this project's partners and with other local partners:

- Explore how to best engage translation services for municipalities and organizations and be intentional not to rely on staff where this is not their core duty, or on community volunteers where the expectation of unpaid labour adds an extra burden.

- Explore the development of specific Community Navigators/Community Developer/ Community Partnership staff roles, which could be a shared role across all 3 municipalities, to create relationships and grow partnerships.

Next Steps

Throughout the month of June, findings from the Phase 1 report will be presented to all 3 municipalities, Neighbourhood Network team members, and designates from the Region of York. Following these presentations to respective Councils, a Phase 2 workplan and implementation will begin:

Phase 2: Engage/Learn

This phase will focus on learning (towards action) and engaging around the key themes and opportunities identified in this report. This will include activities such as:

1. Development and delivery of workshops to senior leaders within each municipality based on themes and driven to specific action

2. Institutional partner engagement – presenting the report and facilitating conversation to understand their work and uncover opportunities for collaboration, alignment, and shared learning/action

3. Developing a process for local organization listings – leveraging and building on 211 as recommended by York Region, Neighbourhood Network, and identifying possibilities for specific local needs

4. Engaging on themes through Neighbourhood Network partners and communities

Following the delivery of these activities, a final summary report, building on the project's total findings, will also be provided upon completion of Phase 2 (planning under way).

Source: Town of East Gwillimbury

Appendix 1: Demographic Snapshot

	Aurora		East Gwillmbury		Newmarket	
Total Population[1]	55445		23991		84224	
% growth since 2011 (york.ca)	4.2%		6.8%		5.3%	
Gender[2]						
Male	26945	**49%**	12000	**50%**	40470	**48%**
Female	28500	**51%**	11990	**50%**	43755	**52%**

Age[3]	% of Population	% of Population	% of Population
0 to 14 years	17.8	17.1	17.6
15 to 64 years	69.2	68.3	68.7
65 years and over	13.1	14.5	13.7
85 years and over	1.8	1.4	2

2016 Population by Age	Population	% Change Since 2011	Population	% Change Since 2011	Population	% Change Since 2011
0-4 years	2725	-8.0%	1275	14.0%	4335	-0.1%
5-14 years	7125	-0.4%	2840	7.0%	10500	0.0%
15-24 years	7995	0.0%	3000	-0.7%	11935	0.0%
25-64 years	30355	4.0%	**13400**	5.0%	**45910**	4.0%
Age 65+	7240	**28.0%**	3480	**29.0%**	11545	**30.0%**

	Aurora	East Gwillmbury	Newmarket
Average age of the population	39.6	40.6	40.6
Median age of the population	41.5	42.8	42.8

[1] 2016 census population view for each municipality

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

	Aurora		East Gwillmbury		Newmarket	
Indigenous (population)[4]	405	0.74% (% of population)	455	1.94 (% of population)%	1290	1.56% (% of population)
Visible Minority[5] - Total % Population		26.9%		10.9%		25.8%
Total Visible Minority Population		14695		2550		21345

Aurora			
Top 5	**Total Population**	**% of Population**	**% of Visible Minority**
Chinese	5555	10.2%	37.8%
West Asian	1885	3.4%	12.8%
South Asian	1845	3.4%	12.6%
Black	1205	2.2%	8.20%
Filipino	915	1.7%	6.23%
East Gwillmbury			
Chinese	700	3%	27.5%
South Asian	455	1.90%	17.8%
Black	340	1.50%	13.3%
West Asian	265	1.10%	10.4%
Filipino	145	0.6%	5.7%
Newmarket			
Chinese	5590	6.8%	26.2%
South Asian	3295	4.0%	15.4%
Black	2310	2.8%	10.8%
South East Asian	2255	2.7%	10.6%
West Asian	1955	2.4%	9.2%

[4] 2016 census Aboriginal view for each municipality
[5] 2016 census visable minority view for each municipality

	Aurora	East Gwillmbury	Newmarket
Recent Immigrants[6]	1855	280	2295
Recent Immigrants % of Population	3.3%	1.2%	2.7%
% growth Recent Immigrants since 2006	44%	144%	16%
% total population growth since 2006	16%	14%	13%
Recent Immigrant Place of Birth **(Top 3)**	China	China	China
	Iran	Phillipines	Iran
	Phillippines	Moldova	Phillipines
Recent Immigrant - Languages **(Top 5)[7]** Top non-official languages spoken most often at home by recent immigrants	Mandarin	Mandarin	Mandarin
	Russian	Hebrew	Russian
	Persian	Romanian	Persian (Farsi)
	Cantonese	Russian	Korean
	Tagalog	Persian (Farsi)	Tagalog
Income[8]			
Median total income in 2015	40382	40571	36197
Median total income in 2015 Men	49697	49178	44128
Median total income in 2015 Women	34106	34088	30518
Low Income 2018 % of population low income[9,10]	13.7%	13.8%	13.9%

[6] Taken From - Snapshot of Recent Immigrants in York Region's Nine Local Municipality report Based on 2016 Census

[7] Ibid.

[8] 2016 Census Income View

[9] Low income data from York Region Low Income Trend report

[10] Low income is numbers based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT) - a fixed percentage (50%) of the median after-tax census family income. A person is consdered to be in low income when their family is at or below the CFLIM-AT threshold associated with their family size. This is just one measure that looks at low income indicators - there are others to give a fuller picture, but shared here as a snapshot.

	Aurora		East Gwillmbury		Newmarket	
Housing - Private households[10]		18850		8075		28675
Ownership	15815	84%	7225	89.5%	22800	79.5%
Rental	3035	16%	850	10.5%	5875	20.5%

Household, families[11]			
Proportion of children (under 14 living with one parent)	13.9%	10.7%	16.8%

Total - Private households by household size	18850	8075	28675
1 person	3085	1115	5120
2 persons	5300	2715	8140
3 persons	3865	1510	5570
4 persons	4455	1765	6340
5 or more persons	2140	975	3505

[10] From Census 2016 Income and Housing views
[11] Link from york.ca

Appendix 2: Listing of Community Conversations

Aurora

Municipal Staff
Communications:

- Eliza Bennett, Manager of Communications
- Michelle Outar, Senior Communications Advisor

Customer Service

- Customer Service Supervisor, Nicole Allison

Human Resources:

- Demetre Rigakos, Human Resources Manager

Libraries:

- Phil Rose, Manager, Library Square
- Reccia Mandelcorn, Manager of Community Collaboration, Aurora Public Library

Planning:

- Anna Henriques, Senior Planner Development
- Michael Logue, Senior Policy Planner/Growth Management

Recreation & Culture:

- Lisa Warth, Recreation Manager
- John Firman, Manager of Business Support
- Shawna White, Curator at the Town of Aurora

Members of Council

- Mayor Mrakas
- Councillor Humfryes
- Councillor Gilliland

Town Committees and/or Task Forces

- Aurora Anti-Racism and Anti-Black Racism Committee

- Aurora Accessibility Committee

- Aurora Community Advisory Committee

East Gwillimbury

Municipal Staff
Communications:

- Laura Hanna, Director of Communications and Customer Service

Economic Development:

- Margot Begin, Economic Development Manager

Human Resources:

- Michelle Collette, Director of Human Resources

Planning:

- Lawrence Kuk, Manager of Planning

Recreation & Culture:

- Rhonda Pogue, Manager, Recreation, Community Engagement and Events

Members of Council

- Mayor Hackson

- Councillor Crone

- Councillor Morton

- Councillor Roy-DiClemente

- Councillor Persechini

- Councillor Carruthers

- Councillor Foster

Town Committees and/or Task Forces

- East Gwillimbury Diversity Committee

Newmarket

Municipal Staff

Communications:

- Cassandra Papas, Corporate Communications Coordinator

Economic Development:

- Elizabeth Bryan, Business Development Specialist

Human Resources:

- Jennifer Rose Healthy Workplace Program Specialist

Newmarket Public Library:

- Jennifer Leveridge, Manager of Library Services

Planning:

- Adrian Cammaert, Manager, Planning Services

Recreation & Culture:

- Laura Schembri, Supervisor, Recreation & Culture
- Meaghan Graham, Supervisor, Programs
- Pat McIntosh, Recreation Programmer

Members of Council

- Mayor Taylor
- Councillor Vegh
- Councillor Woodhouse
- Councillor Twinney
- Councillor Morrison
- Councillor Kwapis
- Councillor Bisanz

Town Committees and/or Task Forces

- Newmarket Anti-Black Racism Task Force

- Internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group

Community Organizations

Neighbourhood Network identified Community Organizations within their Partner Database who lead Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work across the three to be engaged in the Community Conversations process.

- 108 Health Promotions

- Aurora Black Community

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of York

- Blue Door

- CAYR Community Connections

- Character Community

- CHATS – Community & Home Assistance to Seniors

- Community Living Central York

- Culture Bridge Initiatives

- Global Intersections

- NACCA – Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association

- Social Planning Council of York Region

- York Pride

- Families of York Region

Appendix 3: Further Town Analysis

Town of Newmarket Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) activities (formal and informal)

Below is a summary of DEI and inclusive engagement activities shared and observed through the Phase 1 process. This list may not include all activities related to DEI, as this was not a formal audit of DEI activities in the Town of Newmarket.

- The Town is part of York Region's internationally recognized (UNITAR) Inclusion Charter – an expression of "commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities"

- The Town initiated an internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group (DEIWG) in July 2018. This internal team is a cross-section of staff and departments, and acts as a guiding group to inform DEI gaps, opportunities, and work.

  - The DEIWG "…is comprised of a multifaceted group of staff from all levels within the organization, who share a common interest which contributes to the success of the Working Group. The Group's members volunteer their time to educate and build diversity, equity, and inclusion awareness within the Corporation. This group has been formed to develop, implement, evaluate, and update the Plan which supports the Town's mission of "Making Newmarket Even Better" and the Employee Value Proposition of "Building our community together".

- The Town's Human Resources team, in consultation with staff and the DEIWG, has developed a Workforce Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan that outlines both commitment to DEI practice and learning, as well as suggestions for specific action and measurement of activity

- Based on feedback from community, the Recreation & Culture Department changed its approach to the selection of images in Recreation Guides to be more reflective of diversity in our communities

- The Town partners with community organizations such as Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association (NACCA) to deliver programs that are culturally relevant and connected to the community.

  - The collaboration with NACCA extends beyond "celebration" events in Black History Month to partnered programming throughout the year, support through resources, and shared learning opportunities such as:

    - NACCA delivering an Anti-Black Racism Workshop to Council in 2020
    - Town of Newmarket supporting NACCA's growth

      ‣ Through event partnership support (resources and expertise)

      ‣ Utilization of space and municipal location as address

      ‣ Communications and event support

- In 2017, York Pride Festival was welcomed to the Town of Newmarket as the host community for the festival and parade. The impact has been far reaching in the Town, leading to increased community and local business engagement in Pride Month celebrations.

- In 2020, the Town launched the Anti-Black Racism Task Force (ABR Task Force).

- As with the municipality as a whole, the Newmarket Public Library has leveraged partnerships with community based organizations to deliver programming through a DEI perspective such as the [Ancestral Voices series](#)

- Town of Newmarket staff are involved on York Region's Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group (MDIG).

- In 2020, the Town of Newmarket Council engaged in this Engaged Inclusive Communities Project.

- The Town installed an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement plaque with consultation and collaboration from Indigenous leaders in the Region.

- Internally, staff launched a cultural celebrations calendar and initiated a review of the information collected through Town forms.

- A Diversity and Inclusion page on the Town website has been launched.

Observations and Opportunities

Below are observations and opportunities that were identified during the process of Phase 1 community conversations, from online resources (websites and social media), or from media articles based on Themes identified in the larger report. These are meant to further demonstrate through examples how the report Themes could come to life. It is important to note that this is not a full or conclusive list, nor are these observations and opportunities identified as a judgement of current activities.

- There is a strong municipal leadership commitment to DEI. The Town can continue to find ways to build on this through engaging leaders internally and externally.

- As the community continues to grow and change the Town can maintain and evolve the existing focus to engage inclusively

  - Don't wait for community members to come to the Town with opportunities for inclusive engagement. Instead, explore ways to actively seek out existing events,

develop relationships, and build collaboratively.

- Ensure plans related to DEI work (such as the Workforce Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan, DI Lens, and where inclusive engagement/DEI is embedded in other strategic plans and work plans) are action oriented versus suggestions, and identify accountabilities

  - How do plans and the commitment to the York Region Inclusion Charter drive down to specific and measured departmental actions and plans?

  - How are these specific actions tied into municipal planning and performance measurement processes?

  - Develop an annual process review through an inclusion and equity lens (beyond Human Resources)

EIC Themes

The themes identified in the larger report are explored further here with a focus on local Newmarket specifics. This is through two ways:

1. Examples of Action: These are examples that were shared or observed through community conversations and are noted here to create context and examples. Note: This is not exhaustive, and we acknowledge there are likely many other examples that exist.

2. Areas of Opportunity: A larger focus has been placed here. These are both based on feedback from community conversations as well as observations made during the project process.

Theme 1: Meet people where they are

Examples of Action

- The communications department effectively uses social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram

- Several councillors noted that they leverage the strength of social media to engage and specifically utilize social media tools frequently used by specific communities (e.g., WeChat and Telegram)

- Councillor's engagement at events in the community

- Town-partnered events like Black History Month and Asian History Month

Areas of Opportunity

- Town Halls and Town events are great – but to increase inclusive engagement leaders (elected and municipal departments) must get out into communities. Some suggestions based on community conversations include:

  - Planner in the park (idea from Town staff) – have a rolling weekend program where planners go out into community parks across Town to meet people, talk about their hopes and vision for the Town, as well as share details/information about specific developments and priorities for the Town.

    - This could apply to other departments – i.e., send Recreation & Culture staff out into parks to talk to community members.

  - Are there ways for councillors to engage in school fun fairs and events (many already do)

  - Find ways to share social media content and messaging for key Town initiatives and priorities on community pages, through community leaders/organizations, and platforms they use:

    - With community organizations including Neighbourhood Network

    - Using tools like WeChat and Telegram

  - Meet the Mayor/Deputy Mayor and Regional Councillor/Councillors in the park, at the library – scheduled regularly

Theme 2: Engage with intention

Examples of Action

- Members of Council have engaged within Wards and communities in a variety of ways – both proactively and by invitation

- Communications and engagement for the Anti-Black Racism Task Force survey

- Participation and partnership with community events by Councillors and municipal staff

- Newmarket Public Library has a community program/partnership focus to much of it's programming

Areas of Opportunity

- Build increased inclusion in the planning process

  - e.g., The engagement process for Mulock Farm was very comprehensive. How was an inclusion and equity lens applied to the process?

- There were multiple Council workshops and Facebook live events that were virtual and widely publicized. Was there an intentional outreach to underrepresented groups to ensure awareness and encourage participation?

- Explore ways to better leverage and increase participation in online engagement platform (HeyNewmarket). There should be engagement around this platform to get people more familiar so its use increases.

  - Explore whether there is a way to use it in fun, ongoing ways rather than just to gather specific feedback. e.g., tie the platform into social media with a quiz of the month around a community building theme following an interview of the month with a community leader

- Be intentional in programming to be inclusive and bring a more diverse and representative audience:

  - There was a marked difference in the audience of events for the 2019 TD Music Series at Riverwalk event versus 2019 Toronto Raptors Finals screened at Riverwalk. While these events are different in focus and audience, it demonstrates that what we program drives who engages.

Theme 3: Communicate the commitment

Examples of Action

- Endorsing the Inclusion Charter for York Region (and communications of it)

- Communication and Task Force member recruitment activities for Anti-Black Racism Task Force

- Social media celebrations around key holidays, events, and activities that are reflective of dimensions of diversity in our community

Areas of Opportunity

- Consider giving the diversity page on the Town's website more prominence and articulate the commitment in other communications materials, documents, and tactics

- Provide key messaging to Members of Council to consider for all public speaking engagement (regardless of focus) that articulates the Town's commitment to DEI

  - e.g., if you are speaking to a business event, include a message about the importance of DEI in our community and the role businesses and business leaders can make in building inclusive communities and belonging

- Ownership of this work needs to continue to be at the highest level and have

clarity of priority from the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Regional Councillor, and Chief Administrative Officer

- Examine how this commitment articulated consistently from Senior Leadership – internally and externally

Theme 4: Make the informal, formal

Examples of Action

- Anti-Black Racism Task Force work

- DEIWG formation

- DEI Plan and Lens development

- Inclusion Charter for York Region

Areas of Opportunity

- Ensure an inclusive lens is placed in all planning and strategy processes and plans. For example:
  - In the new Economic Development plan consider the following:
    - Where speaking to COVID-19 impacts, the plan could have noted the broadly acknowledged disproportional impacts on women and racialized communities (both businesses and employees).
    - More broadly there was no analysis from a gendered or inclusion lens – support for women and racialized business owners is an opportunity for growth.
    - The word Diversity appears 8 times and appears to speak to diversity of the types of businesses in Newmarket vs. the commitment to inclusion/equity in economic development.
    - Inclusion doesn't appear in the plan – how can you speak to community vibrancy, urbanization, "there is a place for you here" without explicit expression of equity and inclusion as a part of the plan?
  - Recently, a reminder of [Council Strategic Priorities](#) and a way to track process was shared.
    - The 3rd stated priority is: "[Extraordinary Places and Spaces](#) - Creating the environment for an engaged, accessible, and inclusive community". In this, the examples provided speak to creating space and environment – but not inclusion. Consider adding activities like ABR task force, the Indigenous land acknowledgment, others

- Additionally, articulating how an inclusion lens is applied to all priorities and stated as a an overarching commitment more broadly in current and future communication around council priorities

- Explore developing/re-launching a community DEI advisory group looking at inclusion more broadly in the community (complimenting Anti-Black racism work, but looking at dimensions of diversity more broadly)

Theme 5: Access

Examples of Action

- The development of the Anti-Black Racism Task Force

- Annual Open House (pre-COVID)

- Council local community engagement activities such as:

  - Community picnics/BBQs, events
  - Council member participation in community events

Areas of Opportunity

- In the focus on making Main Street more accessible ensure an inclusion lens. Work with the Main Street BIA and other key downtown partners/stakeholders to develop plans for more inclusive programming

  - Some feedback was received that the downtown core doesn't feel welcoming to all:

    - "Downtown is not a welcoming place, not a welcoming atmosphere. People don't want to go where they don't feel invited. People need to feel included, welcome seen and also feel safe." – Quote from a community conversation and echoed by others

    - We heard that from a diversity, inclusion, and community perspective

      ‣ Fairy Lake Park feels very different from parks in newer communities like Environmental Park

      ‣ Upper Canada Mall feels very different than downtown

- Exploring how leaders (elected and municipal departments) develop community and stakeholder engagement relationships and strategies

  - e.g., Mayor does community safety walk with York Regional Police, what about doing similar walk with others – such as youth, with members of the Black community, 2SLGBTQ+, those experiencing homelessness, the disability community, etc.

- Consider the impact that the intersections of dimensions of diversity have when planning programming

    - As an example - We heard from a community organization leader in relation to programming the Town offers for seniors (such as dances) that there are limitations to how inclusive they are. "If you don't square dance and eat hamburgers, you will be an audience not a participant."

Theme 6: Engage meaningfully

Examples of Action

- The Recreation & Culture department and Town Hall staff have developed a meaningful and reciprocal relationships with NACCA, diverse artists, and community leaders

- Members of Council all have developed strong relationships within the community, with an increased focus on inclusive lens

Areas of Opportunity

- Continue to look beyond "festivals" and engaging with diverse communities beyond discussions of diversity alone

    - Include different community leaders in informal/formal community and stakeholder engagement

    - Invite and include members of diverse communities with intention – e.g. when planning for the new Skate Park, consult 2SLGBTQ+ youth intentionally for input on how to build it so they feel safe and included.