

CITIZEN
PARTICIPATION
POLICY
Town of Rosemère

Adopted on May 14, 2018



Rosemère's
Citizen
Participation Policy



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1. Policy's context

The Town of Rosemère wishes to adopt a Citizen Participation Policy that sets forth, in a public document, the Town's approach in this area. In addition to making the process predictable to the community as a whole, this policy is a tool that will guide municipal and elected officials in the development and implementation of participatory processes. More specifically, this policy provides a framework for municipal issues of general interest. It will apply to situations where the stakes are of concern to Rosemère's population as a whole.

With its Citizen Participation Policy, the Town of Rosemère seeks to implement a simple, flexible, transparent and credible process that reflects the best practices and objectives in the area of public participation, thereby allowing citizens to express their opinions on policies, by-laws, projects and actions likely to have an impact on their living environment.

Educating and raising awareness among all stakeholders (citizens, elected officials, municipal employees, etc.) of the basic principles of public participation are elements essential to the successful implementation of this policy. The latter results from ongoing learning and commitment of various parties, elected officials and municipal employees with regards to the development of a public participation culture in the Town of Rosemère.

2. Participatory process leading to the policy's development

In order to identify the community's needs and facilitate adherence to the new policy adapted to local realities, the Town sought to develop this document in collaboration with its citizens and partners, by implementing a participatory process.

To this end, the Town of Rosemère tapped the services of a team experienced in the area of public participation, at the Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM), an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to increase citizen participation in democratic life.

The participatory process sought to:

- identify the concerns of citizens, partners, municipal employees and elected officials with regards to public participation
- determine the best means for increasing the participation of Rosemère residents in democratic life
- define conditions for the success and implementation of the Citizen Participation Policy.

Steps in the process

The participatory process involved three steps:

Information and convocation: In this first step, an information document was produced then unveiled at a public event on May 30, 2017.

Participation: The second participatory step included an online information survey, three citizen coffee klatches, three consultative meetings with key stakeholders (commercial and community stakeholders, municipal employees and elected officials). In order to reach young families, pollster with tablets obtained their points of view at Rosemère's Citizens Day on August 19, 2017, asking them questions drawn from the opinion survey. Finally, a specialized polling firm also developed an abridged version of the opinion survey in order to validate results with a representative sampling of Rosemère's population.

Drafting and enhancement of the policy: Comments obtained from these activities provided the basis for the drafting of the policy, which was subsequently enriched at a meeting with an advisory committee on the enhancement of the Citizen Participation Policy. In order to ensure a variety of viewpoints, this committee consisted of:

- Six Rosemère citizens
- A representative of Rosemère's business community
- A representative of a Rosemère community group
- Two municipal employees.

The selection of candidates was carried out by the INM's project team based on demographic criteria (gender equity, age group, number of years of residency in Rosemère). The selection was made by random draw from candidates retained in each demographic category.

The committee's meeting was moderated by a representative of the INM in order to obtain participants' comments following an initial presentation of the highlights of the consultation report and policy project. The IMN then proceeded to enhance the policy project for final submission to the Town.

The process unfolded from May 30 to September 19, 2017: 645 persons contributed to it.

3. Definition of terms

This section provides the definitions of terms useful to an understanding and appropriation of the policy.

Citizen participation



Citizen participation is the exercise and expression of citizenship through the practice of **public participation**, social participation and electoral participation.

Source: Institut du Nouveau Monde

Public participation

Generally speaking, public participation can be defined as “the involvement of individuals and groups, positively or negatively affected or concerned by a proposed intervention (ex.: a project, program, plan, policy) subjected to a decision-making process”¹.

In this policy, the term “**public participation**” refers more specifically to **the involvement** of citizens and civil society groups **in the decision-making process surrounding projects or policies under municipal jurisdiction**.

Depending on the issue at hand and its context, the manner in which to contribute to collective decision-making is subject to a framework that spells out expectations from targeted audiences, conditions, and participation activities as well as the way in which results influence a decision and are communicated.

Participant

In this policy, participant refers to **any person or organization** (association, company, community group, merchant, etc.), **concerned or likely to be affected** by the result of a participatory process. They are given the title of “participant” when they take part in a public participation process.

¹ André, P., B. Enserink, D. Connor, and P. Croal 2006 “Public Participation, International Best Practice Principles.” Special Publication Series No. 4. Fargo, USA: International Association for Impact Assessment. From the report of the Task Force providing a reference framework on participatory urban planning (2017)

Project

In this policy, the term **project** is **used in its broadest sense**, to designate any project of general interest that a Town submits to a public participation process, whether it is a by-law, planning document, program, public policy, real estate development, etc.².

Decision-making process

The decision-making process refers to **the set of steps involved in a project**, from the time it is brought to the Town's attention to its adoption by the proper authorities (often, the municipal council)³.

Participation process

The participation process refers to **the set of participation measures**, which the Town of Rosemère offers its citizens with regard to a given project, within the decision-making process.⁴

Participation measure

A participation measure refers to **an activity or means**, within a participation process, that **allows citizens to be involved** in the decisions that fall under the management of the Town of Rosemère's municipal affairs. It can be an information, consultation or active participation event (ex.: citizen coffee klatch, online or telephone survey, etc.).⁵

4. Values guiding public participation in Rosemère

In order to be credible and useful to the decision-making process, public participation relies on the values that guide the behaviour and actions of those responsible for the process as well as the participants themselves. In light of this, four basic values inspired by Québec and international documentation and the experience of recent years⁶, are proposed.

Accessibility

Intent on maintaining close ties with the population, the **inclusive character and diversity of the participation measures used** ensure that the public participation process is accessible to anyone interested in or affected by an issue. In addition, the language used in a participation process must be accessible, clear and involving, regardless of the level of commitment to the process.

² Based on the report of the Groupe de travail pour un cadre de référence en matière d'urbanisme participatif (2017).

³ Idem.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Idem.

⁶ Institut du Nouveau Monde, Les huit règles de l'art de la participation publique, 2013 and Diagnostic des pratiques de participation publique dans la Ville de Québec, 2017; Government of Québec, Cadre de référence gouvernemental sur la participation publique, 2016; Union des Villes du Québec, Guide pour l'élaboration d'une politique d'information et de consultation publique municipale, 2012; Ville de Sherbrooke, Politique de consultation citoyenne, 2009; Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Occupation du territoire, La participation publique, <http://www.mamot.gouv.qc.ca/municipalite-durable/entreprendre-une-demarche/participation-publique/>.

Transparency

Reasons for introducing the process and its objectives are clearly presented. Those responsible for the process communicate, in a proactive manner, all information required for useful and enlightened participation, at every stage of the process, including decision-making.

Commitment

Citizens, elected officials, municipal employees, social groups, organizers, developers and other participants **take part in good faith, respecting the opinions of others, and in a spirit of collaboration, dialogue, attentiveness and openness.** Participation processes must foster the contribution of the largest number of citizens concerned with a project, ensuring that the latter is as representative as possible of the Town's residents.

Coherence

The **means and human, financial and material resources** allocated to the process **are consistent with the objectives of the process** and take into account the realities of the context and the needs of participants.

5. Policy's objectives

The development of the Citizen Participation Policy is an initiative reflecting the will of the Town of Rosemère. In order to be consistent with good practices in this area, the Town of Rosemère subscribes to the nine objectives basic to this frame of reference

These objectives are broadly inspired by those proposed in the "*Rapport sur la participation citoyenne en matière d'aménagement et de développement du territoire* (L'Allier report — Report on Citizen Participation in terms of territorial planning and development") and the INM's public participation practices.

1. Transparency of the decision-making process

The different steps in the decision-making process, including proposed participation conditions, must be clearly explained when the participation process is announced and must then be respected. Citizens' role and expected level of participation in the process must be explicitly set out (see table on page 14).

2. Citizen consultation prior to decision-making

Citizens are involved early in the process, before important decisions are made, i.e., at a stage when they can influence the project. This approach makes it possible to build citizens' confidence in the Town and creates a favourable framework for the definition of constructive proposals.

3. The dissemination of complete and understandable information adapted to the situation

Information provided to citizens must be clear and easy to understand. It must avoid the use of overly technical or legal language and be supported by visuals. Citizens must have easy access to this information in various forms. The information provided on the project under study must be objective.

4. Ensuring citizens have a true ability to influence

A public participation exercise must provide citizens with a genuine opportunity to influence the project submitted to them. This reinforces the credibility of the Town's process since citizens are ensured that their concerns and suggestions are truly taken into account.

5. The active presence of elected officials in the consultative process

The public participation process must ensure that the opinions and comments expressed are transmitted to the elected officials, as they are the ones responsible for making the final decision on projects subjected to the participation process. This does not mean, however, that the elected officials are responsible for planning and leading participation measures.

6. Based on circumstances, establishing an adequate timeframe for citizens to appropriate the information

The Town must inform citizens of a public participation process within a reasonable timeframe. It must provide citizens with enough time to take in the information on the project and make a significant contribution to the participation process.

7. The implementation of procedures allowing all viewpoints to be expressed and fostering the conciliation of different interests

The process favours the participation of the largest number of citizens concerned by a project. All points of view are received with an open mind. The process also fosters cooperation, the quest for solutions and, if possible, the achievement of a consensus, allowing the legitimate and constructive expression of divergent points of view.

8. Adapting rules based, notably, on the purpose of the amendment, citizen participation or the nature of comments made

Participation processes are adapted to the context and objectives as well as the Town's constraints, and established based on the scope of the projects, the degree of consensus achieved or any other relevant issue. Several complementary approaches can be included, for example, resorting to a mix of participation measures, as well as the communication means adapted to the context, the tone of the participation process during the course of its implementation, etc.

9. The implementation of a reporting mechanism at the end of the process

The Town implements tracking mechanisms and, in the wake of the process, reporting to citizens on its results and showing that citizens' input has been taken into account. This further reinforces the credibility and importance of the participation processes.

6. Policy's fields of application

6.1 Legislative and regulatory framework

This policy is consistent with the current legislative and regulatory framework.

Excerpts of laws and by-laws cited hereafter set forth provisions related to citizen participation.

Act respecting land use planning and development (LAU)

The *Act respecting land use planning and development* calls for towns to implement public consultation processes related to the following:

- The adoption, revision or modification of an urban development plan, including the modification of a plan to include a specific urban development program.
- The adoption, replacement or modification of an urban development by-law involving both prescriptive and discretionary by-laws.
- The adoption of a resolution applied to certain urban planning by-laws of a discretionary nature.

The Town does not intend to circumvent the referendum approval process provided for by the *Act respecting land use planning and development*.

6.2 Matters subject to the Citizen Participation Policy

This section lists the different categories that the Town of Rosemère intends to submit to public participation processes in addition to those provided for in the *Act respecting land use planning and development*. While citizens have clearly indicated that they would like greater consultation on the Town's **urban planning and development files**, other matters could be subject to public participation processes. The ones listed below are inspired by the results of the consultative process:

- Culture, recreation, community activities and parks
ex.: municipal policy on sports and physical activity
- Local economic development
ex.: economic development plan
- The environment
ex.: sustainable development plan
- Health, nuisance, and safety
ex.: residual waste management plan
- Transportation
ex.: local transportation plan
- Town's management and administration
ex.: strategic vision, municipal budget, etc.
- Any other issue deemed to be relevant by the municipal council, in keeping with its fields of competence.

6.3 Alternative measure for requesting a public participation process

When an issue is not included in this policy, the Town of Rosemère could provide **alternative public participation measures** such as:

- The establishment of **advisory committees** to deal with specific matters.
- The **creation of a forum** allowing elected officials to meet with citizens regularly to discuss issues relating to their living environment (ex.: Mayor's Breakfasts).
- The establishment of platforms managed by the Town to encourage citizens to express their opinions (ex.: plenary session prior to municipal council meetings).

These measures could be effective means for meeting the participation needs of citizens while allowing them to express their concerns. The decision to resort to any one of these alternative measures is taken by the municipal council.

7. Triggering a public participation process

Evaluation

An **evaluation of each project, from its initial development**, must be carried out in order to determine the relevance of submitting it to a public participation process. This evaluation is conducted by municipal employees at the request of elected officials.

- The following lists key questions allowing the Town of Rosemère to carry out an overall evaluation of a project and the relevance of calling for a public participation process:
- Does the project have an impact on the quality of life of citizens, from a social, environmental or economic standpoint?
- Is citizens' level of opposition high?
- Is the Town's population as a whole concerned about the issue or project?
- Has the project or issue generated many requests for information from concerned citizens?
- Is there a large number of groups wishing to intervene? Are they representative of citizens' interests?
- What is the scope of media coverage given to the issue or project?

Recommendation

Once the evaluation has been completed, the municipal employees or elected officials, as the case may be, submit an argued recommendation to the municipal council on the relevance, or lack thereof, of introducing a public participation process, as well as the period when participatory activities should be carried out.

Process introduction and planning

Based on the initial evaluation of the process, parties responsible for implementing the participation process start planning it in keeping with the steps described in the following section.

8. Steps in a public participation process

This section describes the different steps, which the Town commits to planning and implementing when introducing a participation process. These steps must be based on good practices and the application of implementation criteria consistent with the Town's circumstances and available resources.

1. Information and convocation

This step calls for the Town to inform citizens, as soon as the participation process is announced, of the key steps in the decision-making process and the public participation measures it intends to implement at each step.

- The Town expresses its expectations with regards to the level of participation that citizens will be called to play in the decision-making process.
- Citizens are invited to public participation activities within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the scope of the project and the volume of information involved. **A minimum period of 14 days must be provided between the official announcement of a participation process and the start of planned activities.**
- Subject to exceptions, the Town provides access to documents useful in the participation seven days prior to activities.

2. Public participation activities

These allow citizens to formulate comments and suggestions, either verbally or in writing, and submit them via various channels.

- The Town favours the participation of families, youths and seniors in each public participation process, ensuring that the project is as representative as possible of the Town's residents.
- The public participation process must recognize the expertise of citizens and allow them to submit their comments **up to seven days after an activity** at which citizens had been invited to express themselves.

3. Production of a public consultation report

This calls for the establishment of systematic tracking measures for reporting to citizens on the results of various participation measures and subsequent steps. These feedback measures should be applied to the different steps in the process and include, at the very least, an **easily accessible written public report**. When writing reports on participation processes, the Town should use clear and accessible everyday language in both French and English.

4. Communication of the decision taken by the municipal council

The Town must publicly communicate the decision taken by the municipal council in the wake of a participation process. This communication announces the decision as well as subsequent steps.

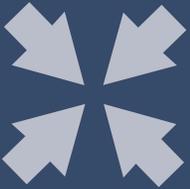
9. Criteria for determining public participation measures to be implemented and citizens' level of involvement

The different projects submitted to the policy do not all involve the same participation requirements. The Town of Rosemère adapts **participation measures to circumstances**.

Examples of criteria that could help determine participation measures to be implemented in a participation process of general interest include:

- Project's objectives
- Type of issue
- Steps in the process
- Types of public likely to be concerned with the project
- Number of persons likely to be concerned with the project
- Level of citizen mobilization around the project
- Project's scope as well as its social, environmental and economic impact, and timeframe for its execution.
- Municipality's objectives.

Furthermore, a public participation process can include several **levels of participant involvement** at different steps in the process, based on the participation measures selected. The selection of one method over another determines the type of participation retained and the role that the participant is invited to play. There are three levels of involvement: information, consultation and active participation, as described in the following table:

DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION	DESCRIPTION
<p data-bbox="201 331 358 363">Information</p> 	<p data-bbox="818 331 1128 363">One-way communication</p> <p data-bbox="477 405 1382 527">Information is the first condition for any citizen participation process. It calls for providing citizens with the information and documents that will allow them to understand the issues, the broad outlines, and relevance of matters subject to consultation.</p> <p data-bbox="477 554 1442 615">This does not preclude the possibility for citizens to ask questions about the elements presented.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="477 663 1354 724"><i>Examples of information vehicles: pamphlets, public notices in newspapers, online information, information sessions.</i></p>
<p data-bbox="201 779 358 810">Consultation</p> 	<p data-bbox="607 779 1339 810">Two-way communication with the exchange of information</p> <p data-bbox="477 852 1382 913">Citizens can ask questions, express their concerns, expectations and opinions, or comment on issues subject to consultation.</p> <p data-bbox="477 940 1458 1001">This is a way for elected officials to understand the point of view of citizens and take it into account when making decisions.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="477 1050 1458 1110"><i>Examples of consultation measures: survey, public hearing, call for memorandums, advisory committee.</i></p>
<p data-bbox="152 1161 407 1192">Active Participation</p> <p data-bbox="201 1234 358 1266">INVOLVEMENT</p>  <p data-bbox="185 1497 375 1528">COLLABORATION</p> 	<p data-bbox="542 1161 1404 1192">Multi-directional communication or form of interactive participation</p> <p data-bbox="477 1234 1463 1325">Citizens are directly involved in different phases of a project's development process, in order for their points of view to be taken into account and integrated in the decision-making.</p> <p data-bbox="477 1352 1458 1442">Citizens' involvement in the process makes it possible, among other things, to generate new ideas, raise little known problems, and reinforce the local community's ability to act.</p> <p data-bbox="477 1505 1437 1596">The municipality works in partnership with the public at every stage of the decision-making process, including the development of various scenarios and the selection of the best option.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="477 1644 1458 1675"><i>Examples of active participation measures: citizen forum, charrette, citizen jury, urban walk.</i></p>

Source: Cadre de référence de la participation publique - Union des municipalités du Québec, in collaboration with the Institut du Nouveau Monde, 2017

10. Decision-making process and implementation of the policy

This section presents the key players involved in the decision-making process related to matters subject to the policy. It establishes the responsibilities of municipal departments with regards to the implementation of the policy and the times to intervene.

The Town of Rosemère's Communication Department

As a resource allocated to a public participation process by the municipal council, the Town's Communication Department has the following responsibilities:

- Support the planning and implementation of participation processes, by developing effective and accessible communication tools suited to circumstances.
- Ensure detailed note-taking of activities and follow up on results within a reasonable timeframe.
- Produce information tools on the policy.
- If required, work with consultants in order to carry out an independent process.

Employees of the Town of Rosemère

The directors of the Town of Rosemère's other departments have the following responsibilities when developing the files:

- Assess the opportunity of holding a participation process (see section 6.2 for a list of matters subject to the Citizen Participation Policy) in order for this process to be launched as soon as possible, if required.
- Provide their expertise, when needed, to inform participants in the process of their knowledge and history of the project involved.

Executive Management of the Town of Rosemère

The expertise of the executive management must be sought as soon as an issue likely to be subject to a participation process is identified. In addition, the executive management of the Town of Rosemère should:

- Work closely with the directors involved on the coordination of the process.
- Provide the support required by public participation processes.
- Serve as consultants to elected officials, the Communication Department and other municipal departments involved.

Elected officials

The municipal council has the following responsibilities:

- Track measures in the participation process.
- Adopt an active listening approach in dealings with citizens in order to better understand their opinions and viewpoints.
- Ensure that all opinions expressed are taken into account.
- Following a participation process, take a decision in the best interests of the population in general and explain the basis for this decision.

11. Assessment of the policy's application

The Town of Rosemère's application of a citizen participation policy must be subject to an **evaluation process** to ensure the policy's usefulness over time, evaluate progress achieved and identify improvements that can be made to participation processes or measures.