

# A New Engagement: Incorporating Newcomers into GTA Planning Processes



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
MISSISSAUGA

# IMFG

Institute on Municipal  
Finance & Governance

IMFG Seminar Series

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# Overview

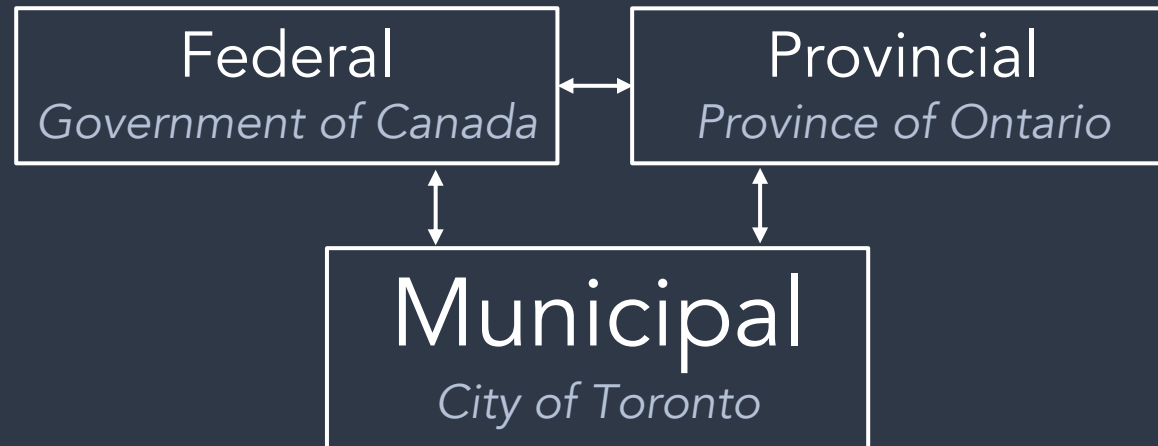
- Introduction to Research Program
  - Municipal policy responsiveness to multiculturalism and migration
  - Newcomer engagement in planning decision-making processes
- Findings and Discussion
- Recommendations

# Introduction to Research Program

- Intersection of immigrant integration and participation in planning
- Planning *for* versus planning *with* newcomers
- Capturing a diversity of interests in public decision-making to identify 'common good'
- Research objectives:
  1. How does engaging newcomers in planning processes facilitate integration?
  2. How can inclusive decision-making lead to better planning outcomes?

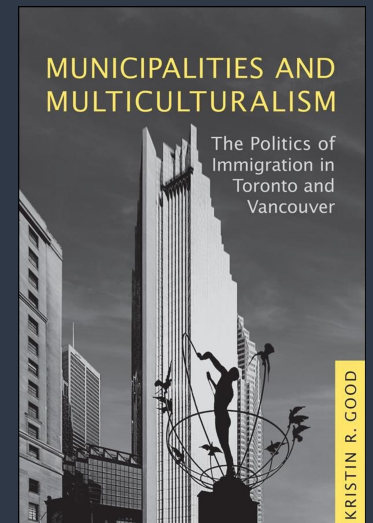
# Immigration in Canada

- Two-thirds of newcomer population live in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal, despite representing one-third of national population



# Municipal Responsiveness to Immigration

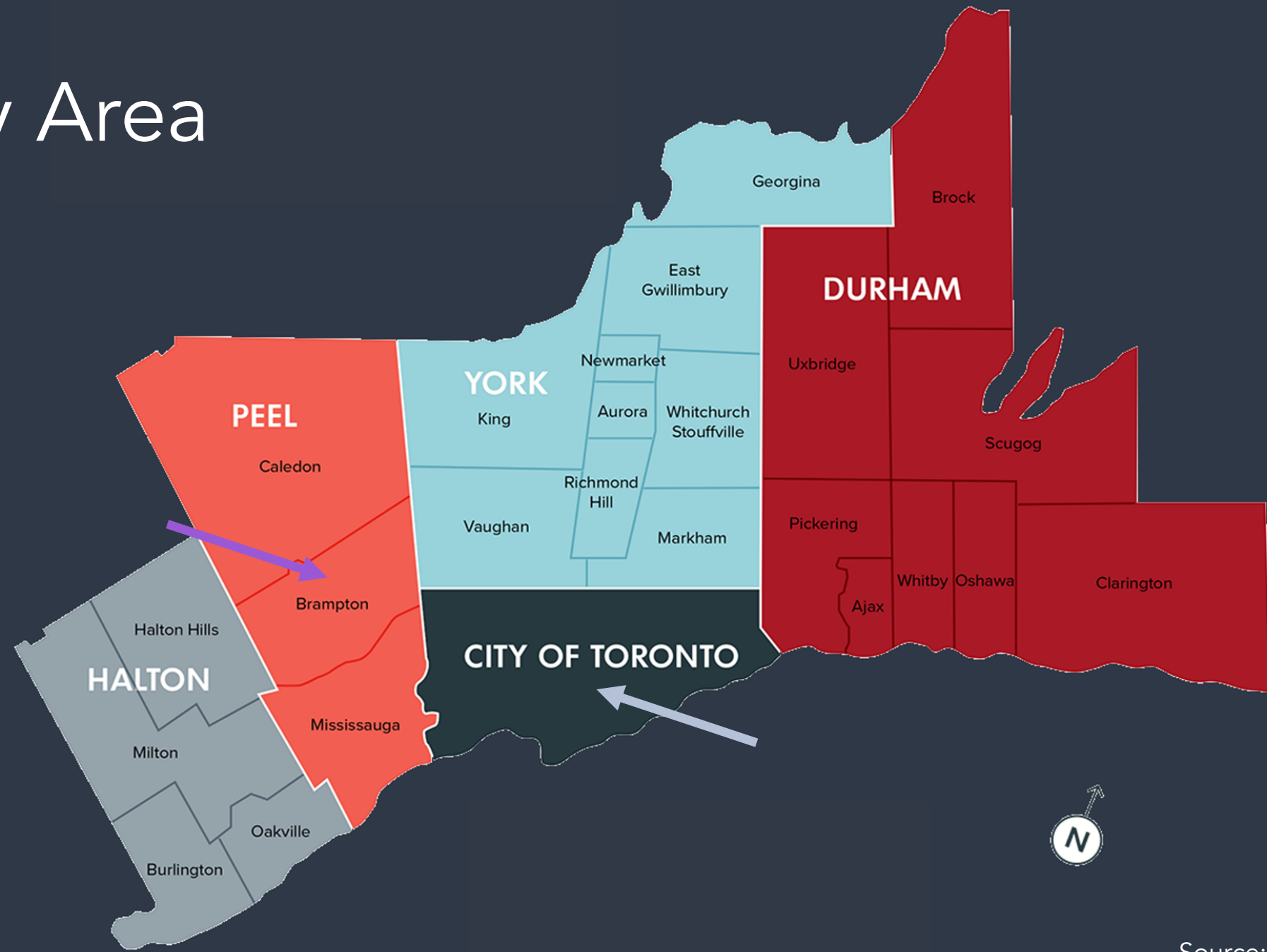
- Immigrant settlement policy acknowledging municipal role
- Support for community organizations and community needs
- Mechanisms to increase newcomer political inclusiveness



# Literature Review (Municipal Responsiveness)

- Most outstanding studies:
  - Good (2009): Role of civil society organizations and coalescing of migrant communities
  - Tossutti (2012): Relationships between local governments and civil society organizations and communal or local identity
- Fourot (2015): Mechanism determining how policy trajectories change over time

# Study Area



# Preliminary Analysis

- Conclusions of other studies:
  1. City of Toronto: "Very responsive"
  2. City of Brampton: "Unresponsive"
- Factors assessed in preliminary study:
  1. Acknowledging community identities
  2. Partnering with civil society organizations
  3. Engaging newcomers in civic affairs



# 1. Acknowledging Community Identities

- Refers both to immigrant and municipal community identities
- Immigrant groups that are not able to organize as communities are limited in pressure they can exert on municipalities
  - Brampton: *2040 Vision*, encourages inclusion of “cultural groups and foster individual group profile, expression, celebration, and identity”; commits to establishing Institute for Brampton Cultural Diversity

## 2. Partnering with Civil Society Organizations

- Strength of relationships between municipal governments and civil society organizations, as well between such entities
  - Toronto: Emerged in lead up to amalgamation in late-1990s
- Civil society organizations' unique position to facilitate connections between host and newcomer populations and cultivate greater sense of acceptance
  - Canada: Local Immigration Partnerships, which develop plans to build inclusive and responsive environments for newcomers

### 3. Engaging Newcomers in Civic Affairs

- Creating occasions in which newcomers' valued opinions can influence public decision-making processes
  - Brampton: *2040 Vision*, entailed comprehensive public engagement for its preparation and committed considerable resources to future consultations

# Preliminary Findings

- Study of plans, policies, and other official documents:
  1. City of Toronto: Continues to lead charge
  2. City of Brampton: Has made up significant ground
- Employ symbolic and practical acknowledgement of multiculturalism
- Create community development plans through open consultation and carry out collective action
- Infusing public engagement exercises with features that acknowledge diversity

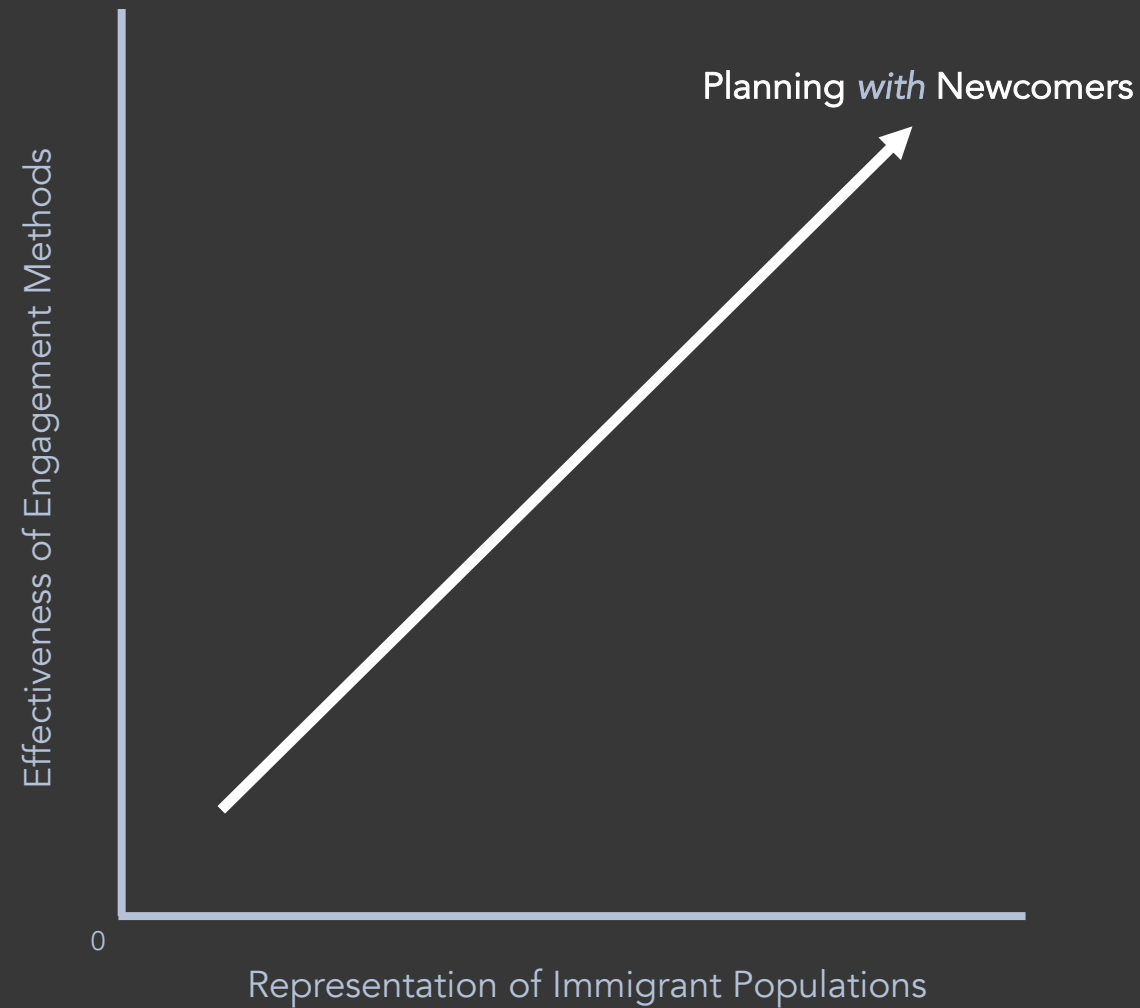
# Study Overview

- Are municipalities 'walking the talk' when engaging immigrants in public decision-making?
- Case studies:
  1. City of Toronto: Jane-Finch Initiative
  2. City of Brampton: Official Plan Update
- Methods: Semi-structured interviews with planning practitioners

# What is Public Engagement?

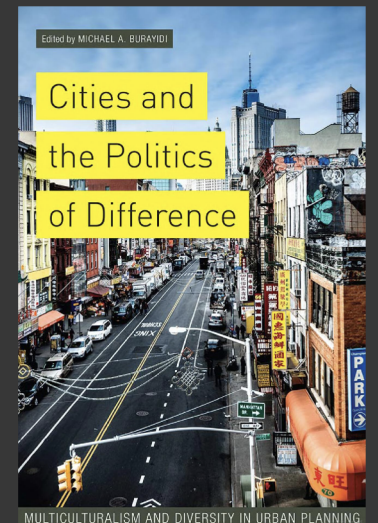
- Public engagement can take many forms
  - Focus of study: Municipally driven public consultations on planning-related matters
- Types of considerations:
  - Accessibility: Timing, location, food, and support services
  - Language: Translation and interpretation
  - Education: Capacity-building leading up to decision-making

# Paradigm of Immigration Engagement

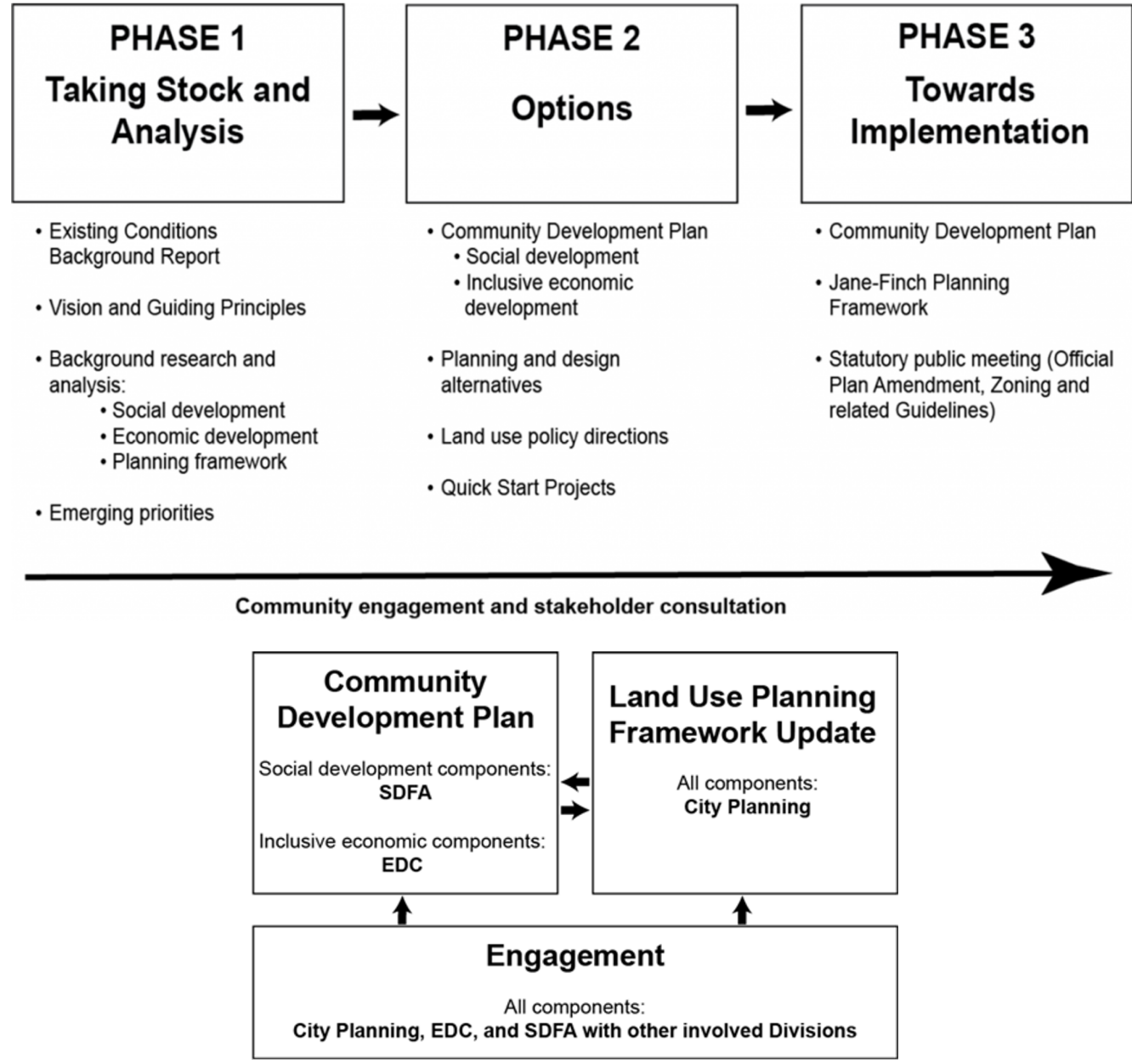


# Literature Review (Migrant Engagement)

- Utilize creative participation techniques to engage not one, but multiple 'publics' (Nguyen et al., 2015)
  - Expectations must be managed on scope, outcomes, and impacts of processes
- Planners are uniquely positioned to facilitate marginalized groups' taking their rightful seat at table in decision-making (Rios, 2015)
  - Developing and demonstrating cultural competence
  - Leveraging unspoken 'cultural contracts'







# Jane-Finch Initiative (Toronto)

- Implications of 'megacity' amalgamation in 1998:
  - Coming-together of civil society to advance inclusive policy agenda
  - Municipal prioritization of immigrant integration
- Local organization serves as 'public-facing' entity for community engagement



# Official Plan Update (Brampton)

- First Official Plan overhaul since 2006
- Builds substantially upon *2040 Vision* experience
- Equity-seeking group specific engagement strategy





### BRAMPTON PLAN TOUCHES EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE.

**City-Wide Workshop #1**  
 On April 10th, 2021 from 10am-12pm, the City of Brampton held a City-wide virtual workshop. Click 'Learn More' to access the engagement summary, presentation slide deck and recording of the session!

[Learn More](#)



### BRAMPTON CITY-WIDE PLAN WORKSHOP #2

**City-Wide Workshop #2**  
 On October 23rd, 2021 from 10:30am-12pm, the City of Brampton held a City-wide virtual workshop. Click 'Learn More' to access the engagement summary, presentation slide deck and recording of the session!

[Learn More](#)



### BRAMPTON PLAN Protecting our environment

**Protecting Our Environment**  
 Join us on June 21, 2021, from 4-6pm for our virtual Public Town Hall. Click 'Learn More' to access the link to the meeting, discussion paper, presentation slide deck, recording and survey!

[Learn More](#)



### BRAMPTON PLAN Improving Transportation and Connectivity

**Improving Transportation and Connectivity**  
 Join us on June 21, 2021, from 4-6pm for our virtual Public Town Hall. Click 'Learn More' to access the link to the meeting, discussion paper, presentation slide deck, recording and survey!

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### Focus Group #1: Youth

On May 12, 2021, a Youth Focus Group was held for the City of Brampton Official Plan Review focusing on the draft proposed City Structure framework. Click 'Learn More' to access the engagement summary, presentation slide deck and recording!

[Learn More](#)



### Focus Group #4: Seniors and Accessibility

On June 16, 2021, a Seniors and Accessibility Focus Group was held for the City of Brampton Official Plan Review focusing on Brampton Plan. Click 'Learn More' to access the engagement summary, presentation slide deck and recording!

[Learn More](#)



### Ethnic Radio Series

Staff took to the airwaves on local Punjabi radio stations to talk about Brampton Plan and answer questions from the public

[Learn More](#)



### BRAMPTON PLAN Supporting Better Housing Options

**Attainable and Supportive Housing**  
 Join us on June 7, 2021, from 4-6pm for our virtual Public Town Hall. Click 'Learn More' to access the link to the meeting, discussion paper, presentation slide deck, recording and survey!

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### BRAMPTON PLAN Celebrating our Mosaic

**Arts and Cultural Heritage**  
 Join us on June 7, 2021, from 4-6pm for our virtual Public Town Hall. Click 'Learn More' to access the link to the meeting, discussion paper, presentation slide deck, recording and survey!

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### Focus Group #2: Black Community

On May 27, 2021, a Black Community Focus Group was held for the City of Brampton Official Plan Review focusing on the draft proposed City Structure framework. Click 'Learn More' to access the engagement summary, presentation slide deck and recording!

[Learn More](#)



### Focus Group #5: Arts and Cultural Heritage

On June 17 & 22, 2021, Arts and Cultural Heritage Focus Groups were held for the City of Brampton Official Plan Review focusing on the draft proposed City Structure framework. Click 'Learn More' to access the engagement summary, presentation and recording

[Learn More](#)

# Findings

- Despite pandemic, planners have pursued surprisingly innovative approaches to engaging newcomers in public participation activities
- Importance of engaging civil society organizations more closely
- Practitioners have shown some degree of exercising cultural competence to inform how exercises are promoted and facilitated

# Findings (cont.)

- Planners confront barriers inhibiting more meaningful engagement that can truly result in 'public' decision-making and build trust
  - October 2021 report: 34 per cent of contributions during 2018 municipal election came from development industry
- Doubts persist relating to perpetuating tokenistic participation and not accommodating cultural norms into public consultation

# Recommendations

- Involve civil society organizations in citizen capacity-building on how to contribute meaningfully to municipal decision-making processes
- Increase resources to facilitate access to public engagement, with focus on cultural sensitivity and emerging technologies
- Draw upon cultural and local ties to develop collective identities
- Reimagine role of planning practitioners to advocate for needs of newcomer communities

# Next Steps

- Scoping review on both planning *for* and planning *with* newcomers
- Interviews with:
  - Local planning officials
  - Representatives of civil society organizations
  - Immigrant participants in public participation exercises
- On-site participant observations of planning-related public engagement activities



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Thank you!



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