

GIBSONS,
BRITISH COLUMBIA

COMMUNITY-LEAD PLANNING

WHO

The Town of Gibsons

GOALS

To foster transparency and gauge levels of public support for an upcoming Official Community Plan

HOW

Ethelo collected votes and comments in a seamless way, enabling citizens to participate in shortlisting the community initiatives of their choice

OUTCOME

A transparent results panel, shortlisting key initiatives with the greatest levels of public approval

Following a citizen open house, Modus Consulting used Ethelo to validate areas in Gibson's Official Community Plan. Over 165 participants added 23 new proposals and contributed 1,200+ comments. Various levels of support for recommended changes reflected the community's diverse opinions. Modus Engagement Specialist, Vince Verlaan, affirms:

"We required an easy-to-configure and user-friendly digital platform... working with Ethelo in this planning project was a successful collaboration."

BACKGROUND

To update their Official Community Plan (OCP) the town of Gibsons, BC, worked with Ethelo Decisions through Vince Verlaan, an engagement specialist from the firm MODUS Planning, Design and Engagement. Gibsons used Ethelo in two stages of its planning process. The first stage was to seek public input on proposed changes to the current OCP, and the second to validate final revisions to the OCP arising out of the first stage.

APPROACH

Through an open house and a questionnaire completed by 92 people, it was established what components of the former OCP were still relevant and where change was needed. This provided the foundational data necessary for the Ethelo Forum. Ethelo then worked closely with MODUS to create the structure of the online public input process. The OCP itself was re-organized into categories, topics and options for amendment. After entering all this data into Ethelo, wording was tested and refined, and the overall configuration tested by Gibsons staff before the public process began.

Residents who participated in the first stage were presented with a brief survey that gathered demographic information for later analysis. Participants then reviewed recommendations in 12 topic areas and were able to vote and provide comment-based feedback and make proposals. Ethelo's structured approach allowed participants to easily weight the areas that were most important to them, and engage with other participants in a focused manner. Because the voting period was held open for a period of time, the participants could log back in to check in on the conversation happening in the comments section, and adjust their votes dynamically as they learned more.



Figure 1. Categories set up in Ethelo for Gibsons OCP.

RESULTS

In the first stage, 387 participants were invited and 164 participated in the process, for a 42% response rate. More than 1,200 comments were contributed, and 23 new proposals were made. Support for the recommended changes ranged from mild support to total support reflecting the community's diverse opinions. Those participants were invited a final confirmation stage; 77 residents participated and provided 143 comments.



Figure 2. Topics listed under 'Social & Economic'

A participant provided these insights on the process, "Thanks for going to such great lengths so residents (and others) can contribute their thoughts, we all love Gibsons and plan to live here as long as we can."

Vince Verlaan commented on the consultation:

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Our public consultation services require easy-to-configure and user-friendly digital platforms, and our recent pilot of Ethelo in a community planning project was a successful collaboration.

The team at Ethelo are very thoughtful about how to build their platform to support projects like this, and they were very responsive to our requests for tweaks to ensure success. I will work with them again for sure.

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