



**CITY OF VANCOUVER  
(SOCIAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT)  
A REVIEW OF THE  
VANCOUVER CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY**

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# A Review of the Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy

## Background

The City of Vancouver has long recognized the value of children and youth, and supported their healthy growth and development through a variety of programs and initiatives.

The development of the Civic Youth Strategy and its adoption in 1995 were influenced by many factors, but two in particular are important to note at the outset of this review since they provide the external context for the Strategy:

- The development by the United Nations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child between its first draft in 1978 and its adoption in 1989 caused some rethinking in all governments across Canada. If Canada was to become a signatory of the Convention, it had to be sure that it could live up to the Convention's obligations. What would it mean in regards to child poverty, the right to play, the right to freedom of expression?
- During the 1980s and early 1990s, there was a strong focus on healthy communities and the broader determinants of population health. The health of Vancouver's youth was clearly not determined only by the effectiveness of its traditionally-defined health system. Health is more than an absence of disease, and among its many attributes is a strong sense of community and the concepts of community development and community involvement<sup>1</sup>.

These issues were discussed from the international to the local levels, with one of the outcomes in many jurisdictions being the creation of new positions, policies and programs.

It is also important to set the City context for the establishment of the Civic Youth Strategy. The following points are important:

- The Social Planning Department has a role of 'working with community organizations, civic departments and other levels of government to ensure ....services are available to all city residents'
- Other accepted roles of the City, generally through its Social Planning Department, include strengthening communities and promoting equity and inclusion
- Accepted means by which these ends are achieved include advocacy to other levels of government, working with other departments, and providing grants to community organizations.

A general definition of public involvement is *"any means of involving people who are interested in or impacted by a City decision, in the decision-making process, in order to improve the final decision."*  
Public Involvement Review, Final Report, 1998  
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/planning/pubinvolveguide/Pubinv2.htm#ExecutiveSummary>

The Civic Youth Strategy was developed in light of this overall mission, and its accepted roles and means of operating. The City's broad goals in this regard were:

- to look at ways to involve youth in civic policy development,

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<sup>1</sup> Up until the early 1990s when health services were reorganized in BC, health was, in Vancouver, a city function.

- to strengthen the program and service framework for youth,
- to support youth as they came together and got involved, and
- to assist youth to increase their skills and capacity to build their own communities.

## The Development of the Civic Youth Strategy

In the City of Vancouver, work on children's issues began in the late 1980s with the establishment of the position of Children's Advocate. The first emphasis of this portfolio was on younger children; the Civic Childcare Strategy was adopted in 1990, and the Vancouver Children's Agenda in 1992. The Advocate's position took on a youth focus in 1992 and the position title became Child and Youth Advocate.

The City recognized the responsibility of civic government to youth with the adoption of the Civic Youth Strategy in March 1995. The Civic Youth Strategy had four main objectives:

- Ensure youth VOICE in the City
- Ensure youth have a PLACE in the City
- Promote youth as a RESOURCE to the City
- Strengthen the SUPPORT BASE for youth in the City

In meeting these objectives, implementation plans were to be based in the following three principles:

- Strong youth involvement at the local level.
- Partnership in planning and implementation.
- Assistance and support rather than control and management.

The implementation of the Civic Youth Strategy was to be coordinated by a coalition of civic government (City, Parks Board, Health, Police, and Library), the Vancouver School Board, and youth, in collaboration with other members of the community. The lead City staff person was the Child and Youth Advocate, which at that time was a stand-alone contract position reporting directly to the Director of Social Planning.

In 1999, the City initiated a review of the Advocate's position, as a result of which the position was replaced by that of a Child and Youth Social Planner. That position's job responsibilities continued to include leading the Civic Youth Strategy.

It is six years since the Civic Youth Strategy was adopted by Council, and a review of its effectiveness is appropriate. In May 2001, the City retained Yates, Thorn and Associates to undertake this review. Its parameters were:

- with various stakeholder groups, to review the Strategy's effectiveness
- to research and summarize other models of civic youth involvement
- to make recommendations for improving youth participation in civic government and adult/staff support to the Strategy
- to make recommendations for future sustainability of the Civic Youth Strategy.

The project report was submitted to the City in October 2001.

## Process

The review process involved the following steps:

- ***Review background materials***      The principal documents related to the development of the Civic Youth Strategy and its subsequent implementation were reviewed and their principle points noted. An annotated history of the Civic Youth Strategy was prepared and is presented as Appendix A.
  
- ***Research Other Models of Civic Youth Engagement***      Information about current approaches to youth engagement, both in theory and practice, were gathered:
  - by email through various listserves, in particular the CYE-L (Child, Youth, Environments)
  - by a bibliographic search using ICURR (Intermunicipal Committee on Urban and Regional Research)
  - through the International Play Association and the Society for Children and Youth of BC resource library
  - by examining the websites of over 30 cities around the world, searching on the terms ‘youth’ and ‘youth engagement’

The results of these investigations are documented in Appendix B, with information about several cities of interest summarized in table 1.
  
- ***Conduct Focus Groups***      Four focus groups were arranged by the Child and Youth Social Planner and facilitated by the consultants. They were held during June 2001:
  - Adult supporters
  - Select youth- serving agencies that participated in the review of the Child and Youth Social Planner position
  - Current and previous Civic Youth Strategy core youth committee members
  - Youth that have not been involved in Civic Youth Strategy to date.

Attendance at the two focus groups involving youth was not as good as hoped, due to the transit strike and difficulty of finding an appropriate location. A second attempt was made to host the one for youth that had not been involved in Civic Youth Strategy to date, and attendance on the second occasion was much improved. In addition, contact was made with other core youth committee members by phone and email.

The results of the focus groups were analyzed to identify main themes, and are included as Appendix C of this report.
  
- ***Analysis and Reporting***      Once all investigations were complete, the primary observations from the process were compiled, and recommendations formulated. The draft report was reviewed by the Child and Youth Social Planner and project steering committee, and finalized.

In order to keep this report as succinct as possible, the key observations from each of these investigations are brought together in the next section of the report.

**Table 1 - Summary of Information from a Sample of Interesting Cities**

City	Population	Responsible Municipal Agency	Mandate	Examples of Projects
Auckland, NZ	346,000	Civic Youth Council which reports to Council directly. Also Dept of Community Resources	Making Auckland the First City of the Pacific for young people. See also <a href="http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/strategies_policies_plans/guiding_communities/youth_action_list/index.asp">http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/strategies_policies_plans/guiding_communities/youth_action_list/index.asp</a>	Youth Action: a major youth policy initiative; websites, youth grants program.
Christchurch, NZ	309,000	Children's Advocate, reports to City Manager	A vision of a healthy, child-friendly city	Youth Strategy; Youth Recreation and Sport Report; Skateboarding strategy; Voices of Asian Youth
Hampton, Virginia	146,000	Youth Commission	To provide an opportunity for youth to have a formal role in the City's decision-making through a representative Commission that addresses youth issues	Monthly meetings, Youth Grants program, website
Boston	574,000	Office of Community Partnerships	The mission of the Office of Community Partnerships is to improve the quality of life for Boston residents by fostering new and enhanced partnerships among communities, City government, and external funding	Annual Youth Symposium
North Vancouver	82,000	Youth Development Worker in Planning Department	see <a href="http://www.dnv.org/upload/documents/planning/ythpolicy.htm">http://www.dnv.org/upload/documents/planning/ythpolicy.htm</a>	YouthNet website, Youth Advisory Council
Abbotsford	115,000	Abbotsford Youth Commission	Opening doors for youth	website, all recreation programs for youth, Youth Council

## Observations

The following observations are drawn from the investigations:

- ***Civic Youth Strategy was at the cutting edge of youth engagement in 1995***

The establishment of the Children's Advocate position in 1989, the subsequent policies and programs in support of children and childcare, and in 1995 the Civic Youth Strategy, all put Vancouver on the cutting edge of youth engagement. Since that time, it is the perception of youth service workers that the City has slipped off that cutting edge.
- ***It still looks impressive as a statement of principles and policy***

This is not to say that the Civic Youth Strategy is not still as good a set of goals and guiding principles as exists. Indeed, everyone interviewed agreed that the Civic Youth Strategy was an excellent policy. The progress made toward its four goals had been significant over its six year lifespan:

  - Voice - conscious effort has gone into making sure that youth are included in consultation processes, and this was not always happening before the strategy was adopted. This has particularly applied to younger youth. But there is still a degree of tokenism, as one focus group respondent noted "we often listen to what they say, but seldom do anything about it". And there has been a move toward what was noted as 'issue-based youth', rather than hearing the voice of all youth, or average youth.
  - Place - there are more youth places now, with new locations being assured a youth component, for example Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Library Square, Broadway Youth Resource Centre. Also Parks Board Community Centres have youth service components.
  - Resource - youth are often now included in processes that they might not have been included in prior to the Strategy, such as public art adjudication, issues around the Grandview Cut, library committees, and community centre association management. The image of youth as a resource is increasing around the city, but is still often a negative one.
  - Support Base - the Strategy has focused both City actions and staff directions on youth issues. It has also legitimized activities that might otherwise not have been possible. Other agencies have also focused greater support on youth activities within their jurisdictions, such as Civic Theatres support for Vancouver youth theatre groups.

Everyone was in agreement that there was little need to rewrite the Civic Youth Strategy itself. The concerns were around how it should be implemented over the coming years, the resources that it needs, and the degree of commitment from City Council.

- ***Six years has seen many accomplishments***

The Civic Youth Strategy has been a catalyst for significant change in the last six years. Working in collaboration with other groups, the accomplishments have been considerable. The City website notes:

- development and support of a youth network called Vancouver Youth Voices;
- Partners at Work, an annual work experience program for secondary school students;
- support for an expanded team of youth workers in the community centres;
- formation of a Vancouver Coalition of First Line Children and Youth Service Providers (now no longer in existence)

Other noteworthy accomplishments have included:

- a permitting process for all night dance parties
- initiation and partial funding of the city's annual Youth Week
- work with VYV and other organizations to host an All-Candidates meeting in the 1999 Civic Election
- work with other organizations to develop a safe house for aboriginal youth and to create the Dusk to Dawn Youth Resource Centre for street involved youth.

But some youth workers noted that some of these were accomplished in spite of the Civic Youth Strategy rather than because of it. The sense was that the City was a little out of synch with the rest of the youth services community, and more could have been achieved if the machine had been 'firing on all cylinders'.

- ***Action at the city-wide level is difficult***

It was evident from the discussions with both youth workers and with youth that connecting youth and youth issues at the city-wide scale was problematic. Youth are more able to relate to what happens within their community, and, like many adults, find it difficult to conceptualize what 'city-wide policy implications' really mean.

Working at the city-wide level also meant meetings outside the local neighbourhood, City Hall, longer travel than they were used to.....all these are disincentives to youth getting engaged. Those youth who were able to do this traveling, conceptualizing, and saw some personal benefit in it, were generally older, resulting in the predominance of the 17 to 24 year olds on the Core Committee, etc.

- ***Vancouver's strong community orientation, with NISTs, and websites, etc offers potential***

This is not to say that Vancouver does not work at the community, neighbourhood or local area level. The last several years have seen much activity in this regard: Neighbourhood Integrated Services Teams, the CityPlan Visioning Exercises have come on top of an established practice of Community Centres, Community Schools, Community Policing, etc.



Youth are involved extensively at the community and neighbourhood levels such as in Community Centre Youth Councils, Community Association Boards, the Windows of Opportunity project, Citywide Youth Initiatives and Youth Action Teams. The challenge does not seem to be so much involving youth as finding something meaningful and accessible at the city-wide scale to involve them in.

But searching the City website for the presence of 'youth' in regards to these topics does not yield the amount of information that it might. Even with the existence of the Civic Youth Strategy and the commitment of departments to follow the spirit of the strategy, somehow this is not being done. The Civic Youth Strategy does not consistently make an appearance at the community level.

- ***Civic Youth Strategy was established as a policy written as a set of goals and principles***

One of the reasons that there are these discontinuities in implementation is because the Civic Youth Strategy was developed as a policy written around a set of four goals and three guiding principles.

It did not have any tangible outcomes nor any defined structure. Its early life was spent 'feeling its way' through the minefields of organizational politics, laying out an annual workplan and then using that workplan as both stick and carrot. Reporting to the Mayor and Council was done once per year; an adequate amount of time between reports to show that progress was being made.

There were various reasons why this 'looseness' continued, indeed became more marked. Personnel change was one factor, while another was the chaotic nature of provincial policy, with health care reform leading rapidly to the restructuring of services for children and families.

In other cities where youth engagement strategies have been started, this open first period is generally followed by the addition of more structure after year two. Hence Auckland started with its policy in 1996, but moved to a Youth Strategy in 1998. This strategy allowed the looseness to gel into something harder, more tangible and measurable, and more easy for politicians and senior administrators to understand and therefore support.

It may now be time to make such a move in Vancouver.

- ***Action and accomplishments have been around youth services, while political emphasis has been on youth advocacy***

Council have been supportive of improving services for youth. Safe Houses, work experience partnerships, front-line intervention and support programs....all received Council help.

Yet the concerns of Council as expressed in the review of the Advocate's position, related more to perceptions of youth engagement - how youth were recruited, who they served and

represented - and how and for what reason they approached Council - than to these service level issues.

- ***The need for better youth engagement has been identified in other City reports***

Even during the time that the Civic Youth Strategy has been in operation, other investigations have noted a need for more extensive youth engagement. In particular, the Public Involvement Review Process noted that youth were very little involved in civic life. Their suggested approach was that youth needed more education about both the system and their role in it. Clearly this education approach is one way to increase the level of youth engagement, and efforts are underway to facilitate this through the development of Learning Modules on aspects of city government for use within the Grade 11 Social Studies Curriculum.

However education is only one element in what is a complex system. Indeed if education is the answer, then the question of 'how do we get more youth involvement?' is being interpreted in a particular way. As one respondent to this review noted:

*"...what (does) civic involvement mean. Is it primarily about youth voice in City Hall (ie we have a 'right' to be heard?), or is it about supporting youth involvement in a variety of social change activities in their communities (ie civil society). What does 'youth engagement' mean? Youth engagement with what, with whom, and toward what end? What does civic life mean in the context of the Public Involvement Task Force?"*

Clearly the issues are more complex than just 'education' would imply, but there is broad support outside of the Civic Youth Strategy for more youth involvement and youth engagement. Education must also be defined to include acquiring the skills and having the supports to engage effectively in city processes.

- ***Representing youth and the Civic Youth Strategy to Mayor and Council has become increasingly difficult over the six years***

Focus group participants made it clear that 'getting to the Mayor and Council' had become a problem. Some participants felt that Council was left out of the loop, while others felt that Council did not like what it was being told. Still others felt that it was the way that the communication was managed that was the issue.

Council was very involved in the early days of the Civic Youth Strategy, and clearly efforts have been made by city staff to keep Mayor and Council 'in the loop': all receive the agendas for Core Committee meetings and the minutes afterwards - all include an invitation to attend. Sometimes Councilors have attended, but over time it has become a rare occurrence.

All those involved in the focus groups agreed that more creative and better quality communication is essential. Relationship building must be a focus of activity for all parties.

- ***The relationship between the Civic Youth Strategy and City departments is not clear, nor is it an easy fit***

Relationships with other departments were also noted as problematic. The general comment was that the Civic Youth Strategy worked outside the normal channels of city government. The word 'advocate' and the normal patterns of departmental business did not mesh well. There had to be changes to this relationship if the Civic Youth Strategy was to achieve its objectives.

Departmental representatives on the Core Committee were very supportive of the need for the strategy and its goals, and were happy to play their part in achieving them. But the meetings only happened once per month, some departments tended not to be regular attendees, all staff noted that this was just one of many things on their desks....it was someone else's project, not theirs.

In the minds of some, the first step in improving the relationship has been to move the staff position inside one department; it is clearly a Social Planning Department project now. But this solves only part of the problem: the achievement of objectives for youth requires cross-departmental energies, and these have to be harnessed in some fashion, requiring a resource commitment from those other departments.

So the relationship between the Civic Youth Strategy, the Child and Youth Social Planner and the other departments has to see these other departments taking responsibilities for projects that are within their 'turf'. And this requires a more formalized goal and resource priority setting framework to be established.

- ***The 'meeting model' is not one that works well with youth***

The point was made by several people that youth don't work well in the setting of 'meetings'. They are often intimidated, find the travel inconvenient, and find all the talking somewhat boring. Again those who are prepared to deal within this model tend to be older youth, the 17 to 24 year olds.

This is not to say 'no meetings', so much as to require an examination of 'the meeting model' to determine how it can be adapted to the needs, expectations and skills of youth; and to ensuring that city staff and others involved have the skills and knowledge to adapt to these different approaches.

Complementary approaches could also be considered. A review of other cities shows that often Youth Councils or Commissions are a method used for youth engagement. Some of these have very formal approaches to agendas, minutes and no doubt rules of order, etc. They probably work well, but it is unlikely that they engender a broad mass of participation, and rely on a more limited representational approach to engagement.

- ***The Civic Youth Strategy has become focused on at-risk youth and their issues, with less emphasis on the broad spectrum of young people and their issues*** Focus group participants noted that the target groups of the Civic Youth Strategy had narrowed over the years, with a focus on youth in the Downtown South, and with issues of homeless youth, sexually exploited youth, and other marginalized groups. This was only noted as an issue with regard to the perception that if these groups were receiving service, then more mainstream groups were not.

The concern was the perception that this raised in the minds of Council, and the lack of visibility of the Civic Youth Strategy in all parts of the city.

The originally intended 'coalition' nature of youth groups such as Vancouver Youth Voices has been replaced as these groups have become, or are seen as, spokespeople for these at-risk groups.

Clearly there needs to be more promotion of positive youth images, not just to convince Council that the strategy serves everyone, but also because such promotion will help to reinforce the notion that youth are part of the answer, not part of the problem.

There may also be a need to find more ways of distributing the benefits of the strategy to all communities in the city, and all youth in these communities. But this should not be done at the expense of programs for at-risk youth.

- ***The age range of 9 to 24 years is enormous*** While everyone agreed that this age span was enormous, and that the needs of 9 year olds were so different from those of 24 year olds, there was no consensus on the issue of the appropriate age range for the Strategy. However the following points should be noted:

- while the 9/12 year olds are hardly 'youth', this is the age when youth related issues start to arise
- the Ministry for Children and Family Development's definition ends 'youth' at 19, but this leaves a great gap for those in the 19/24 age bracket when services are very limited
- there is no consensus from other cities as to what is an appropriate age, although 9 and 24 lie at the outer edges of most definitions
- the context of the Civic Youth Strategy is the provision of city services to children and youth - if the City defines youth as say 13 to 24, then it should redefine children as 0 to 12.

Several focus group participants made the point that definitions around age tend to be of little use - some 9 year olds act as if

they were 18, and vice versa. The definition should be around issues that need to be addressed, and many of these issues, as noted above, have their roots at age 9 and even before.

- ***There is very little promotion of the Civic Youth Strategy to youth***

A surprising number of youth had never heard of the Civic Youth Strategy. It is hard to find mention of it on the City's website - it only gets one page and then it is written in quite formal language. There are no publicity brochures, tattoos, T-shirts, coffee mugs.....maybe it is not surprising that youth have not heard of it.

There is much to be gained by increased promotion. Visibility within Civic departments (coffee mugs), awareness of youth (special events), awareness of Council members (golf shirts). Also greater understanding of the linkages between the Civic Youth Strategy and other programs.

Probably the greatest promotional benefits will come from youth-to-youth outreach: with youth engaged in face-to-face discussion with other youth.

- ***The Civic Youth Strategy needs a website as a primary communication and promotional tool***

Given that youth is the primary market for information, a website is a must, and easier to administer than a phone number which was another youth suggestion.

It was also a project in the 1998 Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report, to be accomplished in 1999 (and is now under development).

The website needs to be designed by youth, for youth. There are good examples close to home; it could be modeled on North Vancouver or Abbotsford or ...lots of other places.

- ***The linkage with the Vancouver School Board is more limited than might be hoped***

Education is a prerequisite for effective engagement, for all ages, but particularly for youth. The need for stronger links with both the School Board, the high schools, and their various programs was noted in several of the focus group discussions.

Potential exists to work with various school programs: CAPP, Work Experience, as well as the revised Social Studies curriculum. A district-wide Student Council could also be a powerful stimulus for the Strategy.

Other cities that talked about using education as a medium through which to stimulate youth engagement all noted the positive experiences of working with the wide range of youth in school programs.

- ***Youth Week is central to the programming of many municipalities***

Most Lower Mainland cities focus on the promotional aspects of Youth Week to market both the value of youth generally and the program opportunities that they provide for youth.

The Vancouver model is different in as much as the City does not organize the events, but rather supports and encourages other

youth organizations to host their own events; the city then links these events through an overall promotion budget and funding for the Opening Event.

This Vancouver approach is a real partnership, and is probably under-resourced to take on a promotional campaign around the Civic Youth Strategy as well. However it does offer a major vehicle for additional promotion.

- ***The Child and Youth Friendly Community theme, which is appearing in the goals of other cities, is not yet adopted within the City of Vancouver***

The Child and Youth Friendly Communities movement is growing and some cities are incorporating this language into their youth related objectives. The City of Calgary for instance notes three strategies as part of its *One Future* youth strategy, one being

- *Becoming a more youth friendly organization*

Using the Toolkit prepared by the Society for Children and Youth of BC to initiate discussion with civic departments would allow a strategy such as this to be implemented in Vancouver.

Using this same approach from inside the organization is also the first strategy of cities involved in the Cities of Tomorrow initiative. There it is worded as:

*Involve all participants in proactively examining their own strategic management, policies and planning in their respective local authorities.*

The concept is the same: better local government is achieved by examining strategic management and making it youth friendly.

This kind of approach will also focus attention on the impacts of policies on children and youth, which is already a civic policy, albeit seldom used or enforced.

- ***The concept of an Annual Youth Symposium, while originally part of the Civic Youth Strategy, has never been adopted***

The first Civic Youth Strategy annual plan included an Annual Civic Youth Consultation Day, but this was replaced by participation in a wide range of youth forums organized at the community level.

Boston focuses its youth engagement around an Annual Youth Symposium, focusing on one issue every year; in 2001 it was Youth Mental Health, with over 1500 youth attending.

The promotional value of such a symposium would be considerable, and it would be a good fit with VSB initiatives.

- ***A Youth Awards program would offer potential for positive imaging***

Closer to home, Richmond has a set of youth awards, as do other cities, such as Ottawa, where Youth Awards Night is a Gala Night at the National Convention Centre.

This would also bring the right kind of positive promotion to the Civic Youth Strategy.

- The strength of youth programs in other much smaller cities shows that it is not a resources issue but a commitment issue***

As a final observation, it was clear from the review of other cities that doing youth engagement well is not a resource issue but one of priorities and commitment.

In the Greater Vancouver region, both North Vancouver and Abbotsford have strong, and growing, youth engagement strategies. In terms of cities of equivalent size, Calgary, Ottawa, Auckland and Christchurch are all beacons of enlightenment in this regard.

And if North Little Rock City in Arkansas can support 5 hours of TV programming for youth, by youth, every week.....
- In summary***

In all cases, what was done was different and stemmed from a review of their own needs. But in every case, the commitment to make their strategies effective started at the top of the city, with the Mayor, and ran all the way through the organization. Resources were provided, but in all cases the commitment came first.

## **Recommendations**

The terms of reference for this report request recommendations which will improve youth participation in civic government, improve adult/staff support to the Strategy, and improve its future sustainability. We would propose six broad recommendations as follows:

### **Recommendation #1 - Report back to the Mayor and Council**

- Support from Mayor and Council, not to mention the City Manager and other senior departmental staff is critical.
- The report should reaffirm the principles of the Civic Youth Strategy framework.
- The achievements of the first six years of the strategy should be documented.
- The report could present the five point plan for revitalizing the strategy (i.e. recommendations 2 to 6 below).
- A new communication strategy between the Civic Youth Strategy and Council should be laid out.

### **Recommendation #2 - Take the Strategy to where Youth are, by strengthening its Community/Neighbourhood focus**

- Work with existing youth groups in each neighbourhood. Youth should be involved as facilitators.
- Vancouver's Communities/Neighbourhoods/Local Areas should be the focus for the next three years of the strategy.
- The Strategy's actions should build on those initiatives that exist in every community, and draw on the expertise of youth already working in the area.
- Representatives from each Community Youth Group could come together every six months to discuss and initiate city-wide actions. Departmental liaisons could attend these meetings and support this process.

### **Recommendation #3 - Develop a Civic Youth Action Plan**

- Over the next year, an Action Plan could be developed through consultation with youth, other City departments and youth service providers. Its focus should be one to three years. This Action Plan should be the focus of further reporting back to Mayor and Council.
- The Action Plan should be built up from the recommendations of previous youth work such as Windows of Opportunity.
- Youth should be actively involved in this planning process.



#### **Recommendation #4 - Develop a Promotional Campaign for the Strategy**

- A youth developed website should be a priority.
- A youth-to-youth communication/promotion model should be used to get the word out among youth, and the website, promotions, etc should be a part of this approach rather than vice versa.
- Youth should be encouraged to develop strategies to promote positive youth images in the city.
- A merchandise approach to promotion could be considered.

#### **Recommendation #5 - Strengthen the Educational Linkages within the Strategy**

- Develop relationship with Vancouver School Board to look at possible partnerships.
- City high schools should be encouraged to become involved with the Community Youth Groups in their catchment areas, building on existing programs where possible (eg the Citywide Youth Initiatives).
- Continued partnerships with the Vancouver School Board should be encouraged to support the integration of Youth Action and CAPP hours, the use of the City's new Civics Manual for Social Studies 11, and the development of youth programming within the TV 11 and TV 12 courses.

#### **Recommendation #6 - Encourage the Civic Youth Strategy to examine the Cities of Tomorrow initiative for ways to enhance child and youth friendliness.**

- The broad scale benefits of linking to an international initiative such as this are considerable. The City needs to consider how it can achieve better local government by examining its processes of strategic management and making City Hall more child and youth friendly.

#### ***Further Work***

This report reflects the results of a review of the Civic Youth Strategy. It has not been an evaluation of the Strategy's operations, or an in-depth look at how youth services are delivered within the city, or how youth are engaged in civic life or civil society.

Work must now begin on putting these recommendations into action, through partnerships with youth, the City and the community.

There is one area of research which, while deceptively simple, was not resolved during this review: the age span of the Strategy. The issues here relate to how services for the two marginal age groups of 9 through 12 years, and 19 through 24 years are provided, and by whom, both in Vancouver and in other jurisdictions. This requires much more extensive and focused research than was possible within this review. It would be our recommendation that this work be carried out before any changes are made to the Strategy's age definition.

## Appendix A - The Development of Vancouver's Civic Youth Strategy

We cannot undertake a review of the Civic Youth Strategy without knowing the sequence of actions and activities that led to its establishment, and which accompanied its development.

We provide here a chronology of events; direct quotes from reports are provided in the smaller type.

<b>1975</b>	In 1975, the Berger Royal Commission of Family and Children's Law in British Columbia called for a positive statement of children's rights to be entrenched in legislation. <i>Vancouver Children's Policy</i> , Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, May 1992, p11
<b>1978</b>	International Year of the Child First draft of the UNCRC submitted to UN
<b>1989</b>	UNCRC adopted by UN in 1989. Canada becomes signatory in 1991.
<b>1989</b>	Children's Advocate appointed to a three year term (January 1989 to 1992). Civic Childcare Strategy and the City of Vancouver Children's Agenda were the principle foci of this term of office.
<b>1992</b>	<p><b>Children's Agenda</b></p> <p>Children's Agenda adopted by Vancouver City Council Includes both a <i>Children's Policy</i> and a <i>Statement of Entitlements</i> Its introduction notes several key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• while the legislated role in the delivery of services for children rests with the provinces, city policies have major impacts on children</li> <li>• all the literature indicates that for effective programs, community involvement and community-based delivery are key elements for success</li> <li>• a City that works for children, then we will be a City that works for everyone.</li> <li>• action must happen across all departments:</li> <li>• This will only happen when it becomes the responsibility of all departments, as part of their regular work, to ask the question "What does this mean for children?"</li> </ul> <p><i>Vancouver Children's Policy</i>, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, May 1992, p15/17</p>
<b>1992</b>	<p><b>Children's Advocate position confirmed for another three year term (1992 to 1995)</b></p> <p>Children's Agenda forms basis for her workplan, summarized as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address systemic issues             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* poverty</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* equity of outcome</li> <li>* cultural diversity</li> <li>* empowerment - on this last point she noted: Empowerment - Over the last three years, the Advocate has been increasingly convinced of the profound importance of these concepts and now concludes that the major weakness of her term have been the lack of attention given to hearing directly from children about their needs, wants, desires and fears. <i>Vancouver Children's Policy</i>, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, May 1992, Page C-7</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address Priority Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* children's health and safety - working with Vancouver Health Department; children's mental health; promoting safety and security</li> <li>* pre-teens</li> <li>* community development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>1993</b></p>	<p><b>Development of Vancouver Youth Voices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* a city-wide youth-run youth network of locally based and issue-based youth groups In contrast with the more traditional model of a centralized youth Council, the network model ensure broad participation rather than limited representation. It also allows for more informed input as participation is drawn from local or issue-specific groups rather than relying on a small group of youth to speak on behalf of many issues with which they may or may not have much experience. Finally, since this network is being developed and driven by youth themselves with the intent of establishing it as an independent body, there is considerable potential for long-term viability. <i>Administrative Report re Civic Youth Strategy</i>, Children's Advocate, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, March 14, 1995, Page 9</li> </ul>
<p><b>1994</b></p>	<p><b>Children's Advocate proposes a realignment of her work to focus on</b></p> <p>... the role of civic government in addressing the issues of preteens and youth, and advising Council that she would be coming forward with a Civic Youth Strategy" ... <i>Administrative Report re Civic Youth Strategy</i>, Children's Advocate, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, March 14, 1995 page 2</p> <p>She notes four main conclusions from her first two and half years of work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the Advocate has been able to develop a more balanced image of youth: while she is well-aware of the problems connected with youth, she also has considerable opportunity to experience the resourcefulness, persistence and creative problem-solving of Vancouver's youth. Appendix 7 - 1</li> <li>2. In order for youth to serve as a resource in and to the City, they must be involved, and to be involved, they must be heard. Appendix 7 - 1</li> <li>3. These experiences confirm the need for a city-wide coordinated plan to strengthen the support base to youth. These experiences have affirmed the strength of local development models. Since the city is already moving in this direction through its Integrated Services Teams Initiative, the Civic Youth Strategy must be developed within the context of this Initiative. Appendix 7 - 1</li> </ol>

	<p>4. ... youth speak strongly for preventive, community-based, non-stigmatizing services which are designed in partnership with youth and built on youth strengths. This approach is well-beyond a civic plan directed simply at management and control of "youth as a problem." Appendix 7 - 1</p>
<p><b>1995</b></p>	<p><b>Civic Youth Strategy Approved</b></p> <p>Its principal elements were:          "The City of Vancouver recognizes the responsibility of civic government to youth with the adoption of the Civic Youth Strategy. Henceforth, this Strategy sets the direction for the planning and delivery of civic services involving youth. Youth are people between the ages of 9 and 24 years.</p> <p>Youth Policy Statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City of Vancouver commits to involving youth as active partners:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. In the development, assessment and delivery of civic services which have direct impact on youth, and</li> <li>ii. In broad spectrum community consultations and initiatives.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• The City of Vancouver promotes and supports youth-driven youth groups as a key consultation resource to the city to ensure that the voices of youth are heard.</li> </ul> <p>Core Objectives          In order to create the opportunity for young people to be partners in determining the future of Vancouver, all departments in the civic government will work to achieve the following four objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that youth have "a place in the city."</li> <li>• Ensure a strong youth voice in decision-making.</li> <li>• Promote youth as a resource to the City.</li> <li>• Strengthen the support base for youth in the city.</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Principles          In meeting the objective outlined above, implementation plans will be based in the following three principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong youth involvement at the local level.</li> <li>• Partnership in planning and implementation.</li> <li>• Assistance and support rather than control and management.</li> </ul> <p>Structure for Implementation          Implementation of the Civic Youth Strategy is coordinated by a coalition of civic government, the Vancouver School Board, and youth. This coalition works in collaboration with other members of the community. Civic Youth Strategy, Pages 4 to 5</p> <p>At the end of its first year, it was hoped to have achieved the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A formally recognized three-party coalition of civic government, Vancouver School Board and youth is established as the long-term coordinating structure to the Civic Youth Strategy.</li> <li>2. All city departments have developed a focused action plan associated with the objectives of the Strategy.</li> <li>3. A communications system connecting Strategy partners is implemented (e.g. Electronic bulletin board system on the proposed Youthwork Project Bulletin Board in Parks and</li> </ol>

	<p>Recreation).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Each of the City's Integrated Services Teams has a mechanism for youth involvement.</li> <li>5. An annual "Civic Youth Consultation Day", planned in partnership with youth.</li> <li>6. A map of service support base for youth in the city, which includes information similar to that provided in the departmental service profiles, is completed.</li> </ol> <p><i>Administrative Report re Civic Youth Strategy</i>, Children's Advocate, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, March 14, 1995 Page 11</p> <p>Its expected outcomes in 3 to 5 years were noted as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A schedule for rotation amongst civic departments to assume the lead role in the implementation of the Civic Youth Strategy</li> <li>2. A strong city-wide youth network in the city of community-based "youth pockets" - these "pockets" forming an integral part of each Integrated Services Team.</li> <li>3. City services continue to make concrete changes to become more user-friendly.</li> <li>4. The service base for youth has become a service network, e.g., there is sharing of training opportunities, a strong communication vehicle is established, and there is in place a common model of service evaluation. Appendix 10</li> </ol>
<p><b>1996</b></p>	<p><b>First annual Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally recognized three party coalition: - not only the School and Parks Boards, but also the Police Board and Regional Health Board were participating</li> <li>• Core Committee formed with 8 youth and 7 staff</li> <li>• recognition that the coalition has to be broadened</li> </ul> <p>... to include representation from the community of service providers who deliver city-wide, community-based services to Vancouver's youth.</p> <p><i>Administrative Report re: Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report</i>, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, April 30, 1996. Page 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• broadening of the staff base to draw in representatives from all departments</li> <li>• Communication system - using the Parks Board Bulletin Board and youth pages on the City web site</li> <li>• Integrated Service Teams - using Parks Board Youth Workers as contacts with ISTs</li> <li>• Annual Civic Youth Consultation Day - participation in a wide range of youth forums organized at the community level</li> <li>• Map of Service Support Base for Youth - a model had been developed and mapping of services commenced</li> <li>• City department action plans: every department had such plans in place and</li> </ul> <p>The Civic Youth Strategy led directly to, served as a catalyst for, and/or provided the impetus for, a number of collaborative projects involving City departments, community service organizations, other Boards, other municipalities and youth. Page 7</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other projects had been approved by Council that reflected the spirit of the Civic Youth Strategy: waiving of conference fees for youth to conferences about youth justice; numbers of young people on community centre boards, etc; funding stabilization for Youth Worker positions.</li> </ul> <p>The Annual Report was also circulated to youth for their comment and input.</p> <p>Future directions were presented and endorsed by Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote the Civic Youth Strategy with youth including outreach to youth of diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>2. Promote the Civic Youth Strategy within Vancouver's business sector.</li> <li>3. Assist in the implementation of the Vancouver School Board student forums.</li> <li>4. Assist in the development of a shared approach within Civic government to involve youth in the City of Vancouver's public consultation processes such as the upcoming Public Arts Consultation process, Transportation plan and City Plan.</li> <li>5. Continue to support the development of Vancouver Youth Voices as a youth-run, City-wide network of youth groups ...</li> <li>6. Pay attention to the committee framework and the maintenance of links between key partners including youth, various civic departments, related boards and community service providers. While project outcomes are the most tangible result of the strategy, this is a new model of partnership that will require nurturing as well as review.</li> <li>7. Support the inter-municipal work of the Child &amp; Youth Advocate to extend the base of civic government assistance to youth.</li> <li>8. Assist youth initiatives addressing youth in the media.</li> </ol> <p><i>Administrative Report re: Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report, Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver, April 30, 1996. Page 15</i></p>
<p><b>1997</b> <b>(March 24)</b></p>	<p><b>Advocate's Workplan</b></p> <p>The workplan identified four priorities,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Collaboration and cooperation in strengthening the network of child and youth services</li> <li>B. Supporting Parents and Families</li> <li>C. Inclusion of aboriginal and culturally diverse populations</li> <li>D. Public education and civic consultation</li> </ol> <p><i>Administrative Report re: Advocate's Workplan, City of Vancouver, March 24, 1997. Pages 1/3</i></p> <p>One part of the priority re <i>public education</i> was noted as 'sustaining the Civic Youth Strategy'</p>

1997

(Oct 17)

## Second annual Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report and Annual Workplan

Progress was reported on the Future Directions laid out 18 months before:

1. Promote the Civic Youth Strategy with youth including outreach to youth of diverse backgrounds.

*Administrative Report re: Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report, City of Vancouver, Oct 17, 1997. Page 4*

- generally proceeding well
2. Promote the Civic Youth Strategy within Vancouver's business sector.
- some progress made
3. Assist in the implementation of the Vancouver School Board student forums.
- forum held
4. Assist in the development of a shared approach within Civic government to involve youth in the City of Vancouver's public consultation processes such as the upcoming Public Arts Consultation process, Transportation plan and City Plan.
- broad range of projects supported
5. Continue to support the development of Vancouver Youth Voices as a youth-run, City-wide network of youth groups ...
- Vancouver Youth Voices now receiving financial support through the City's Community Services Grant program, and involved in a variety of projects
6. Pay attention to the committee framework and the maintenance of links between key partners including youth, various civic departments, related boards and community service providers. While project outcomes are the most tangible result of the strategy, this is a new model of partnership that will require nurturing as well as review.
- partnerships are evolving
7. Support the inter-municipal work of the Child & Youth Advocate to extend the base of civic government assistance to youth.
- various collaborations among youth and youth advocates
8. Assist youth initiatives addressing youth in the media.
- several initiatives, especially Youth Week

The report also noted several important challenges:

- A. The lack of both emergency and transition housing, and affordable, longer-term housing for youth
- B. Despite the widespread recognition that preventative services offer the best value in both human terms and cost effectiveness, the unmet treatment and intervention needs of youth in trouble and "at risk" make it difficult for government and non-government service providers to shift limited and reduced resources to the preventative end of the service continuum
- C. Building productive relationships between youth all over the City and the institutions and services affecting their lives is a labor-intensive process. Allocating sufficient staff time and priority to this process within various organizations is often challenging.

	<p>Future directions were also noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To explore ways to sustain on-going and meaningful youth involvement in the Civic Youth Strategy and the work of the City through Vancouver Youth Voices, working with civic departments and other community partners.</li> <li>2. To continue to promote awareness of and involvement with the Civic Youth Strategy among all youth in the City, including special efforts to involve young people from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>3. To continue to promote the principles of the Civic Youth Strategy within civic departments and local boards and to support and monitor progress on related action plans.</li> <li>4. To develop a proactive media strategy regarding coverage of youth issues and portrayal of youth, with the goal of promoting more informed and balanced coverage. This could include supplying youth-positive stories and undertaking a media watch.</li> <li>5. To promote the principles of the Civic Youth Strategy with the business and service club communities.</li> <li>6. To work with the Province and others to meet the basic needs of youth in the City in the following areas: shelter, housing, support services, health and safety.</li> </ol>
<p><b>1998</b> <i>(Nov 3)</i></p>	<p><b>Third annual Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report</b></p> <p>The Future Directions laid out in the 1997 report were not reported back on directly, except through the highlighting of progress and achievements of 1997/8</p> <p>A number of tasks for the 1998/9 year were identified as well as recommendations to Council.</p> <p>Tasks included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Building partnerships with civic departments, boards, as well as media and corporate supporters, to create and enhance opportunities for youth;</li> <li>* Improving the City's youth web page;</li> <li>* Outreach to promote awareness of the Civic Youth Strategy and to encourage participation from youth throughout Vancouver;</li> <li>* Promoting and supporting youth as a resource to the City, including peer training in advocacy and other skills;</li> <li>* Working with provincial and federal authorities and others on strengthening the support base for youth through coordinated service planning in neighbourhoods and city-wide;</li> <li>* Seeking the official endorsement of the Civic Youth Strategy from the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board;</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Strengthening partnerships between Park Board, the Health Board, the School Board and community organizations like The Centre, Urban Native Youth Association, and others to better address the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth.</li> </ul> <p><i>Administrative Report re: Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report, City of Vancouver, Nov 3, 1998. Page 12/13</i></p> <p>Some new projects in 1998/99 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Helping shape and build a millennium youth legacy project for the City;</li> <li>* Reviewing the support structures for youth involved in carrying out the Civic Youth Strategy;</li> <li>* Examining the dimensions and consequences of youth poverty.</li> </ul> <p>Council recommendations included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. strategies to improve youth participation in civic elections, including enhanced civic voter education for young people.</li> <li>2. enhance opportunities for youth employment, work experience and mentorship within civic workplaces, and report back in 12 months.</li> <li>3. conferences involving youth-related issues include seats for young people without charge.</li> <li>4. annual financial support to Youth Week coordination at \$5,000</li> <li>5. the opportunities and obstacles related to late night social/recreational activities and venues for youth within the City.</li> <li>6. a review of late night public transit use</li> <li>7. continue to support partnerships and projects that meet the need for safe and affordable housing for youth.</li> <li>8. increase funding immediately for alcohol and drug treatment resources and mental health services for youth in their home communities</li> </ol>
<p><b>1999</b> <b>(July 6)</b></p>	<p><b>Child and Youth Advocate's Progress Report</b></p> <p>The Advocate outlined work that she had undertaken in regards to the four priorities laid out in her 1997 report, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Collaboration and cooperation in strengthening the network of child and youth services</li> <li>B. Supporting Parents and Families</li> <li>C. Inclusion of aboriginal and culturally diverse populations</li> <li>D. Public education and civic consultation</li> </ol>

	<p><i>Administrative Report re: Civic Youth Strategy Progress Report, City of Vancouver, July 6, 1999. Pages 3/9</i></p> <p>Civic youth consultation was noted as part of the fourth priority.</p> <p>Future workplan priorities included reporting back of previous Civic Youth Strategy recommendations to Council.</p> <p>The Civic Youth Strategy Core Committee and Departmental representatives meetings were among many others that were noted as requiring the Advocate's attention.</p>
<p><b>1999</b> <b>(June 21)</b></p>	<p><b>Review of the City of Vancouver's Child and Youth Advocate Position</b></p> <p>The results of this review are summarized in the report's Executive Summary as follows:</p> <p>The majority of those consulted felt that the primary importance of the Advocate rests in the position's potential relationship-building role, both with respect to building links between youth and the City of Vancouver, and in fostering and facilitating relationships amongst community groups. However, many participants also identified a number of structural and procedural factors which may have impeded the effectiveness of the Advocate. These include the lack of a clear accountability system, the lack of clarity with respect to the Advocate's role and mandate, and an age range in those whom the Advocate serves that is too wide to be effective.</p> <p>Key points for consideration arising out of the review are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Maintaining the position of the Child and Youth Advocate, but framing within a clearer system of accountability;</li> <li>* Clarifying the mandate and scope of the Advocate's work, with a focus on achievable goals;</li> <li>* Linking the development of the Advocate's workplan with other initiatives of the City of Vancouver; and</li> <li>* Clarifying the role of the Advocate as a facilitator of advocacy services rather than a spokesperson or lead advocate.</li> </ul> <p>Review of the City of Vancouver's Child and Youth Advocate Position; Queenswood Consulting Ltd., June 21, 1999.</p>
<p><b>1999/2000</b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report on Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CYS youth partnered with Environmental Youth Alliance and Vancouver Youth Voices to host municipal all candidates meeting on youth-related issues. Also helped to produce candidate info cards for youth.</li> <li>• Worked with City Clerks Elections staff to have voting stations placed in areas of the City that were accessible to youth as well as a mobile voter booth for street youth. Also trained youth to do voter registration.</li> <li>• CYS youth reps met with civic union presidents to discuss youth mentorship</li> </ul>

	<p>opportunities (ie job shadowing, co-op placements, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded the Youth Coordinator for Vancouver’s Annual Youth Week that helped to establish a strong foundation for the program and ensure it’s long term sustainability.</li> <li>• Worked with City staff from Police, Fire, Permits and Licenses, and Planning, and Environmental Health to develop a permitting process to allow legitimate and safe late night dance parties to occur in Vancouver.</li> <li>• CYS youth developed and conducted a youth (ages 13-18) survey of late night recreation needs. Findings confirmed that youth wanted local late night social/recreational activities.</li> <li>• Vancouver Youth Voices piloted “Meeting Our Needs “ training for CYS Department Reps committee members. Also provided Advocacy training and support to youth at 2 community centres.</li> <li>• Hosted over 130 students annually in various civic worksites for the Partners at Work project.</li> </ul> <p>Source: Information provided to the consultant by the Child and Youth Social Planner, October 2001</p>
<p><b>2000?</b> <i>(not dated)</i></p>	<p><b>Summary of Feedback on the Child and Youth Social Planning Positions</b></p> <p>In commenting on the Civic Youth Strategy this report noted:</p> <p>There was strong support for the social planning team to work collaboratively with youth in reviewing the Civic Youth Strategy. The responding groups would like the review to consider at a minimum, the following points: principles, process for youth voice, strategies to increase City involvement, ways to broaden youth knowledge and make the strategy relevant to more youth.</p> <p>In the interviews and submissions of youth, there was a lot of energy and thoughtfulness in responses. Youth had both a broad and long-range view, new and refreshing perspectives, were able to give concrete suggestions to address areas of concern and had a willingness to continue working together to improve supports for children and youth in the City. Every effort should be made to recognize and build on these capacities and leadership. Page 4</p> <p>Its recommendation in this regard was:</p> <p>Initiate a review, in collaboration with youth, on the Civic Youth Strategy by way of involving existing citywide youth leadership as well as network-based youth. To explore the feasibility of developing a youth mentorship program.</p>
<p><b>2001</b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report on Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractor hired to review Civic Youth Strategy.</li> <li>• Hosted another 130 Partners at Work students in various City departments.</li> </ul>

- City celebrated its 6th annual Youth Week.
- Worked with the City's Human Resources Department and CUPE 15 to develop a Letter of Understanding for Youth Community Action Program student placements. Student placement currently underway with City Information Technology staff to develop the City's Youth website.
- Collaborating with Environmental Youth Alliance and Self Help Resource Association on a Youth Mapping Project as a part of the Centre for Excellence on Youth Engagement.
- Participating on Youth Subcommittee of the GVRD federal homelessness initiative to address issue of youth housing.

Source: Information provided to the consultant by the Child and Youth Social Planner, October 2001

## **Appendix B - Youth Engagement in Civic Life - What's Happening Around the World**

The purpose of this appendix is to provide background information about how other cities around the world are addressing the issues of youth engagement.

Contact was made with a number of individuals through email, and information gathered by examining published documents and by looking at websites. This is by no means a comprehensive review - that is far beyond the scope of this study. What we have tried to do is to identify some key sources and resources, to review them, and to use this background, along with the other two research tasks (review of history of CYS, and focus group discussions) to provide a basis for the suggested approaches which we document in the main report.

**This particular appendix is also designed to provide a launching pad for further research by Social Planning Department staff, and others.**

### ***General Sources of Information***

#### ***Various books by Roger Hart***

Roger Hart is a Professor of Environmental Psychology at the City University of New York. He is probably the leading the leading academician on the topic of children's participation, children's rights, and the physical environment. His publications on this topic are essential background reading for anyone interested in the topic of civic engagement of children and youth. Three publications are of particular relevance:

- 1992 - Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship - published by the UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy
- 1997 - Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care - published for UNICEF, by Earthscan Publications, London
- 1999 - Cities for Children: Children's Rights, Poverty and Urban Management - written with Bartlett, Satterthwaite, de la Barra, and Missair - published for UNICEF, by Earthscan Publications, London. Chapters 13 and 14 are of particular relevance to this study: The Context of Local Government and The Practical Implications for Local Government.

#### ***National League of Cities Reports***

The National League of Cities (the US equivalent of Federation of Canadian Municipalities) publish six research reports annually as part of a series entitled 'Practical Ideas for Local Government Leaders'. Two reports in the last several years have looked at community participation:

- 1996 - Connecting Citizens and Their Government: Civility, Responsibility and Local Democracy. One section of this report focused on ‘Youth Involvement: “Our Future and Our Only Hope”’.
- 1999 - Youth participation and Community Building .

Both reports note numerous examples of what US cities are doing to stimulate and facilitate youth civic engagement.

***Hearing The Voices of Youth: Youth Participation in Selected Canadian Municipalities***

***Prepared by: Dr. Tullio Caputo***

***Prepared For: Health Canada***

Its Executive Summary notes:

*Previous research on the attitudes of youth has identified a number of issues of concern to young people including self-esteem, peers and social relationships, family violence, sexuality, and experiences at school. Two themes are consistently reported in the literature on youth concerns. First, young people want to be listened to, treated with respect and taken seriously by adults. Second, they want to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. In Canada, various agencies have been involved in promoting youth participation. Health Canada has identified youth participation as a key component in the healthy development of young people. This study was designed to gather information on what is currently going on in Canadian communities with respect to youth participation. It was intended as a way of learning from people’s experiences with youth participation and hearing their assessment of “what works.” One objective of this study was to identify 3 or 4 “best practices” models of youth participation. A decision was made to focus on youth participation at the municipal level since these government structures are close to the communities they serve and provide services which cut across various sectors of concern to youth. The following key questions were explored in this study:*

- *What are the most important concerns currently being expressed by young people in your community?*
- *How does your community identify the concerns of its young people?*
- *Do young people from all sectors of the youth population, including marginal and high risk youth, have an opportunity to participate?*
- *What would be the best way of involving young people in your community?*

The full report is available for downloading at the Health Canada website:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/childhood-youth>

***Young people's politics: Political interest and engagement amongst 14- to 24 year-olds- published for the Rowntree Foundation by YPS (price £13.95, ISBN 1 902633 64 4).***

A summary of this research is provided on the Rowntree Foundation website at:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/520.asp>

It notes the following Conclusions:

*The researchers conclude that the challenge to those who are keen to kindle political interest is to ensure that young people are aware of the relevance of politics within their lives. While they need to be shown that politics is more than party politics, they also need to be made aware that politicians share a number of their interests and concerns. However, in order to engage their attention, politics needs to be delivered in an accessible and enjoyable way that enables them to consider and appreciate the issues being discussed. Political parties will clearly have a role to play in achieving this.*

*The Government's plans to add 'citizenship' to the national curriculum should be applauded, as formal political education clearly has an important role to play. But it is essential that this will operate and coexist alongside the other ways in which young people can be empowered and informed - for example, at home, at school, or amongst the local community. In addition, politicians need to give more consideration to the concerns of young people, and forums that facilitate such dialogue are required. Ways of involving young people in the structures and processes of decision-making are also needed.*

*The impact which these initiatives will have, however, depends upon the degree to which, and manner in which, young people believe their interests and needs are being heard and responded to. In order to convince young people that their interests will be effectively represented they will want to see politicians from a wider cross-section of society. They will also want to see evidence that politicians are acting on their behalf.*

*A balance needs to be struck between empowering and engaging young people and pressurising them to participate and be interested in politics. Young people seem keen to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for their involvement but they may feel increasingly burdened if there are too many requests for their participation; the electorate as a whole is increasingly being asked to vote in more elections. In participating in these elections they are also required to fathom their way through a range of new and complex proportional representation voting systems. Ironically, these moves towards greater participation may be in danger of resulting in what might be termed 'democratic overload'.*

*Finally, it should be recognised that young people are currently taking action in a range of political activities even if they do not see them as political. In addition, while they often do not assess themselves as being interested in politics, they are concerned about issues - such as education and qualifications, job availability and security, and discrimination - which are at the core of the Government's agenda. In the past, too much emphasis has focused on the apathy of the young. It is now time to focus attention on the role of politicians, educators and elders in engaging and representing the interests of young people.*

It should be noted that the issue of youth needing more educational content about civic government was also made by the Public Involvement Task Force, and the City has now developed Learning Modules for the grade 11 Social Studies curriculum, which are now available to teachers.

**Skimmeli, Marit (2000):  
Participation from  
children and youth in  
local democracy. A  
survey of children- and  
youth councils in  
Norwegian  
municipalities. Masters  
thesis in political science,  
NTNU (Norwegian  
University of Science and  
Technology)**

Marit sent an email in which she noted the following:

*I wrote my masters thesis in political science about participation from children and youth in Norwegian municipalities.*

*I set out to find how and if the "Children and Youth councils" work the way they're intended, but as I started my research I realized that there didn't even exist a list of how many and which municipalities have this sort of councils. So with support from The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs I sent out a questionnaire to all 435 municipalities in Norway. I asked questions like:*

- if they have a children- and/or youth council*
- when it was established*
- if they are planning to establish one*
- why they established it*
- why they haven't established it*
- who took the initiative*

*Then I asked quite a few questions on how the councils are organized: how they are elected, the degree of interest, how often they meet, how many participate, age limits, funding/budget, assistance from local authorities, what sort of cases to they handle, how are they selected, what kind of authority do the council have over the various cases etc.*

Her summary of conclusions included the following:

*This sort of arrangement can do both adults and children/youth, not to say the municipality as a whole, a great deal of good if it works. The danger with children- and youth councils as I see it, and that I experienced when arranging courses for municipalities (in connection with Save the Children Norway), is that the adults (politicians,*



*administrative staff etc) have a tendency to start up with these things just to be able to brag about it, and because it's "in the wind" right now. Many haven't had a real discussion about what it means to have a children- and youth council, what they want it to be able to do, how much power they want to give away (if any) etc. When it comes down to business the adults don't listen to the youth anyway, and that is even more of a disappointment for the children/youth than not having a youth council in the first place. It seems like many municipalities think it's just to establish a children- and youth council - and then that's that, all problems solved.*

*I might sound pessimistic and that's not quite the point. In those places where the councils do work and the children/youth are taken seriously it's great! It's just that there are also many places where it doesn't work out, and where things have happened just a little bit too fast and without too much thought about it. I believe that given the "right people" are involved, and that things have been through a thorough discussion first, this can be a really good thing. Which leads me to another important point which is the fact that this sort of model is very much dependent on the individuals involved - both amongst the children/youth and the adults - but especially amongst the adults. It is important that the persons involved are able to communicate with the youth/children at their level, and take them seriously.*

*So,*

- Make sure the council has a contact person/employee to help the children/youth find their way in the system, and that this person is able to communicate with children/youth*
- Make adults use language that is understandable to the children/youth. Let the children/youth use methods that are ok for them (not speaking from the rostrum or writing difficult reports).*
- Think about how you elect the representatives to the council. Is it really representative if you elect only from the school council where you will get mostly children/youth that are already heard and represent a strong group (at least that's how the school councils in Norway work).*
- Money is important - but not everything. In one municipality one of the most important issues the youth raised was that they wanted the benches in the schoolyard to be moved. No one had ever listen to them before so that this point came across.*

*Comparative aspect: In Norway where many municipalities in the outskirts are sparsely populated and threatened by urbanisation, establishing children- and youth councils are a way of trying to work against this trend by taking the young people more seriously so that they will want to live there as adults as well.*

**Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement**

As part of the research component of the Federal Children's Agenda, five Centres of Excellence were established. One focused on Youth Engagement. It has established a website at:

[http://www.tgmag.ca/centres/index\\_e.html](http://www.tgmag.ca/centres/index_e.html)

They define youth engagement as:

*....the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, which has a focus outside of him or herself. Full engagement consists of a behavioural component (e.g., spending time doing the activity), an affective component (e.g., deriving pleasure from participating in it) and a cognitive component (e.g., knowledge about the activity).*

Each Centre of Excellence is funded for five years, 2000/2005, so we are hoping for great things - stay tuned!

**Cities of Tomorrow - International Network for Better Local Government**

Funded by the Bertelsmann Foundation, this 10 city international project has the following mission:

*When a city focuses strategically and proactively upon the welfare and wellbeing of its children and young people, positive changes will impact upon the lives of all citizens. If a city ensures that all policies, planning and programmes are examined in the light of 'How will this affect children and young people?', there is potential to enhance the city for all. Local government is in a unique position as a neutral focal point to provide leadership in this area. It can act as 'guarantor' in co-ordinating and monitoring services and children and youth. It is in a powerful position to promote long term strategic development. Local Government's knowledge of local needs enables it to lead in smart-networking which ensure provision of the best possible services and the best environment for its children and young people. Local government is strategically placed to involve children and young people in planning and ensuring that their perspectives are heard and acted upon.*

*This project aims to:*

*A. Involve all participants in proactively examining their own strategic management, policies and planning in their respective local authorities.*

*B. Showcase projects which are:*

- innovative and creative*
- transferable*
- make a measurable difference in children and young people's lives*

- *involve effective partnerships*
- *cost effective*
- *bring added value to all citizens*
- *involve children and young people in planning.*

*C. Evaluate projects in terms of 'What measurable differences can be seen in the lives of children and young people in our cities?'*

*An important aspect of the project is to involve children and young people in the process.*

Its website is:

<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/CitiesOftomorrow/>

***BC Government's Voice  
for Youth Initiative***

According to the BC Government:

"B.C.'s youth deserve to have a real voice that's heard by government."

<http://www.youth.gov.bc.ca/voice/>

Part of the YouthOptions BC Initiative.

***Information from  
Search Institute***

While the Assets Approach is not just about Youth Engagement, its website does provide many ideas that can add to any youth engagement strategy. The bottom line is that youth with assets become engaged in civic life, while those without assets do not. Building assets is a prerequisite to effective youth engagement.

Their URL is:

<http://www.search-institute.org/>

***Child and Youth  
Friendly Communities  
Initiative***

Based in BC, this Initiative of the Society for Children and Youth of BC also addresses many of the fundamental elements of youth engagement.

Their URL is:

<http://www.scyofbc.org/cyfc/toc.html>

## **Cities Outside Canada**

The primary sources of information in this section of the appendix are the websites of the respective cities, and the cities noted in the studies by the National League of Cities. Several cities were noted to us by email, and, where possible, further information was researched through those cities websites. Web references are given throughout the report.

### **Auckland, NZ**

Pop: 346,000

Responsible Municipal Agency: Civic Youth Council which reports to Council directly. Also Dept of Community Resources

Mandate: *making Auckland the First City of the Pacific for young people*. See also [http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/strategies\\_policies\\_plans/guiding\\_communities/youth\\_action\\_list/index.asp](http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/strategies_policies_plans/guiding_communities/youth_action_list/index.asp)

Examples of Projects: Youth Action: a major youth policy initiative; websites, youth grants program.

Auckland has an effective youth engagement process which includes a City Youth Council which meets once per month with a full agenda and minutes. It mirrors the practices of the full City Council. Its agendas and minutes are published on the City website. An example can be found at:

[http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/governing\\_your\\_city/representatives\\_and\\_meetings/agendas\\_and\\_minutes/committees/auckland\\_city\\_youth\\_council/a20010629.asp](http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/governing_your_city/representatives_and_meetings/agendas_and_minutes/committees/auckland_city_youth_council/a20010629.asp)

The Youth Council has also prepared a Youth Plan entitled Youth Action:

*Youth Action is a plan to make Auckland a cooler place for you to be. It's been designed by young people for young people, and it builds meaning between the Council and the youth of Auckland.*

Further information and the full plan in pdf format can be found at:

[http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/strategies\\_policies\\_plans/guiding\\_communities/youth\\_action/index.asp](http://www.akcity.govt.nz/council/strategies_policies_plans/guiding_communities/youth_action/index.asp)

The City's Youth Community Planner, Patrick Hanflin, can be reached at: [HanflinP@akcity.govt.nz](mailto:HanflinP@akcity.govt.nz)

### **Christchurch, NZ**

Pop: 309,000

Responsible Municipal Agency: Children's Advocate, reports to City Manager

Mandate: A vision of a healthy, child-friendly city

Examples of Projects: Youth Strategy; Youth Recreation and Sport Report; Skateboarding strategy; Voices of Asian Youth

Christchurch has also been at the cutting edge of youth engagement. Their website notes:

*In July 1998 the Council adopted a Youth Policy which sets out the Council's commitment to young people, their families and communities. The development of the youth policy involved widespread consultation with young people, community groups and government organisations conducted between September 1997 and February 1998.*

More recently, they have moved the policy forward by the development of a Youth Strategy:

*This Youth Strategy document signals the beginning of another phase in terms of the Council's commitment to young people. It is an attempt to carve out some strategic direction for the implementation of the Youth Policy. It holds the potential for some advances to be made in relation to young people and the Council's Youth Policy. Whilst committed to*

*the development of strategies to increase the participation rights of young people, the Council recognises a need for young people to share responsibility for ensuring that the relationship is healthy and productive.*

<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/Publications/Youthstrategy/>

Other initiatives have included:

#### **Youth Recreation and Sport Forum Report**

*On 2 March 2001 a recreation and sport youth forum was held at the Pioneer Leisure Centre. Approximately 80 young people from ages 13 to 18 years representing numerous Christchurch high schools and training organisations attended the event to give their views on youth recreation and sport needs in the City. The attendees were a cross section of young people, with varied levels of interest and participation in recreation and sport.*

*The forum was organised by the Christchurch City Council in conjunction with a number of Christchurch based youth and sports groups, including the Canterbury Youth Workers' Collective, Hauora Matakauraka and School Sport Canterbury. It was aimed at obtaining young people's views on the issues facing recreation and sport in Christchurch so that the Council could incorporate these into its latest sport and recreation strategy*

<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/reports/2001/YouthRecreationSportForum/>

#### **Voices of Asian Youth**

*'Voices of Asian Youth' research, a study conducted in 1998 to assess the needs of Asian Youths living in the City, includes a number of recommendations to help schools, the Christchurch City Council, and social, health and recreational providers understand the issues Asian high school students face.*

<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/Reports/1998/VoicesofAsianYouth/>

Christchurch is also the lead city for the *Cities of Tomorrow* project noted previously.

#### **Frankston, NSW, Australia**

Frankston, NSW, is a community involved in the Growing Up In Cities project. They have used the issue of community safety to engage youth with city government.

The project coordinator, Karen Malone, emailed a chapter of a book. The following is an extract of this extract:

*The final report identified eight key issues and recommendations, which were presented and ratified by the Frankston City Council and integrated into their Safer Cities Plan. The eight main issues were bullying and violence,*

*traffic, drugs, access and safety when using public transport, skateboarding around the city, community facilities, youth facilities and community integration. The project team lobbied particularly around the issue of community integration, as it felt that the other specific issues could only be addressed once young people were given legitimate status in the community. The recommendation to the council read:*

*Community integration is important for young people's sense of belonging, ownership and civic responsibility. Many young people spoke of the need for youth places and activities, which existed within rather than outside mainstream community life. Most young people said they felt their presence in shopping centres, community facilities or even in the streets was seen by many members of the public as a threat. Recommendation: Public space and community planning programs should include input from young people and focus on ways of integrating young people into community life. (Malone 1999, p. 44)*

*The mechanism suggested for addressing this issue was to develop a Youth Safety Management Team (YSMT) that would be embedded in the structure of the City Council.*

*When the Mayor and the Community Safety Management Team launched the Community Safety Plan in late 2000, the development of the YSMT was included as one of four priorities for 2001:*

- *4.0. Establish and provide ongoing leadership and support for a Youth Community Safety Management Team, to contribute to the development and implementation of policies, programs and projects related to community safety and crime prevention. (Frankston City Council 2000)*

*The YSMT had its first meeting in late December 2000. Membership in the group was through a call for nominations requested from each of the local secondary colleges, the local university and further education college, the Yellow Ribbon project group (a youth run volunteer group supporting youth in crisis), InCYNC (a youth support group run by Council Youth services), and through public media.*

Extracted from:  
Chapter - *Neighborhood Quality in Children's Eyes*: authors Louise Chawla and Karen Malone  
from *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood, City*  
edited by Margaret O'Brien & Pia Christensen  
Falmer Press series on The Future of Childhood

## **Hampton, Virginia**

Pop: 146,000

Responsible Municipal  
Agency: Youth Commission

Mandate: To provide an opportunity for youth to have a formal role in the City's decision-making through a representative Commission that addresses youth issues

Examples of Projects:  
Monthly meetings, Youth Grants program, website

Hampton, Virginia, has a Youth Commission  
*The Youth Commission is a City funded Commission that is composed entirely of high school students from Hampton.*

- *Vision-Young people with the power and voice to shape the future of Hampton.*
- *Mission-To provide an opportunity for youth to have a formal role in the City's decision-making through a representative Commission that addresses youth issues.*

It holds monthly public meetings in the Council Chambers

Among their accomplishments, they note:

- *Hampton's Youth Commission Gave Away \$40,000 To Teen Organizations In our City...*
- *Hampton's Youth Commission Is Helping Make Our City A Better Place For Teens In The Future...*
- *The Commissioners comprehensive plan was acknowledged by the VA planning association.*

Their website can be found at:

<http://www.yl-va.org/ha/voice/youthcomm/index.htm>

## **Boise, Idaho**

Boise appoint youth to each City Committee and Commission.

Details for 2001 are in the Mayor's press release at:

[http://www.cityofboise.org/mayor/press\\_release.asp](http://www.cityofboise.org/mayor/press_release.asp)

Boise is using the Search Institute Assets Approach (see above).

## **Boston**

Pop: 574,000

Responsible Municipal  
Agency: Office of Community Partnerships

Mandate: The mission of the Office of Community Partnerships is to improve the quality of life for Boston residents by fostering new and enhanced partnerships among communities, City government, and external funding

Examples of Projects: Annual Youth Symposium

Each year the City holds a Youth Symposium, inviting up to 1500 youth to plan and run the Symposium. Each year a specific topic is chosen.

Details of the process and results for 2001 are at:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov////////communitypartnerships/symposium/index.html>

## **Fremont, California**

With support from City staff, youth in Fremont produce a newspaper written entirely by youth, and distributed four times per year through high schools.

They have recently established a website (seems to be largely still under construction - home page only at present):

<http://www.fremontyouthtoday.com/>

## **Other Cities**

Other cities in the US where innovative approaches are in operation include:

**Show Low, Arizona** - curriculum approach for all grade 4 students ending in a 'treasure hunt' through City Hall and meetings with Mayor and Council

**Burien, Washington** - Mock City Council meeting

**Abilene** - Youth Advisory Council

**Arlington Heights, Illinois** - Youth in Government Day

**Bryan, Texas** - 8th Grades shadow city staff - also have Government Day

**Newton, Iowa** - high school students required to attend a Council meeting

**North Little Rock, Arkansas** - have NLRTV, where youth produce 5 hours of TV programming each week - also work with police on a monthly news magazine show

None of these initiatives are noted on the cities' web sites.

Source: NLC Report (1996), Connecting Citizens and Their Government: Civility, Responsibility and Local Democracy

## **Cities in Canada**

### **Lower Mainland Cities**

#### **Coquitlam**

The City addresses youth issues primarily through its Leisure Services Department:

*Coquitlam Youth Council, Teen Committees and Clubs (13-18Y) empower youth to make a difference in their community while gaining valuable leadership and work experiences.*

Web reference:

<http://142.219.192.20/leisure%5Factivities/leisure7.htm>



## **North Vancouver**

Pop: 82,000

Responsible Municipal  
Agency: Youth Development  
Worker in Planning  
Department

Mandate: see  
<http://www.dnv.org/upload/documents/planning/ythpolicy.htm>

Examples of Projects:  
YouthNet website, Youth  
Advisory Council

North Vancouver (District) have had a Municipal Youth Policy since 1995. They have an extensive youth website:

<http://www.dnv.org/youthnet/>

Funding for the website development is provided through the Youth Community Action (Tuition Credits) program.

And a goal for 2001 to develop a Youth Advisory Council.

## **Richmond**

Richmond also have an active Youth Services department:

[http://www.city.richmond.bc.ca/youth/youth\\_index.htm](http://www.city.richmond.bc.ca/youth/youth_index.htm)

Notable are:

- Youth Strategy prepared in 1996
- Annual Implementation Update Reports to Council
- Youth Advisory Council
- U-ROC Youth Awards Program
- The Youth Services section of the City web site was developed with the assistance of Richmond high school students through the Work Experience Program, and the Career and Personal Training Program.

## **Surrey**

Little emphasis on youth. Youth Services is within the Recreation, Parks and Culture Dept.

Several youth centres, and plans for youth parks in each town centre.

No mechanisms for youth civic engagement.

## **Abbotsford**

Pop: 115,000

Responsible Municipal  
Agency: Abbotsford Youth  
Commission

Mandate: Opening doors for  
youth

Examples of Projects:  
website, all recreation  
programs for youth, Youth  
Council

Website at:

<http://www.abbyouth.com/>

Its goals are:

- A. *To advocate on behalf of youth*
  1. *To assist in the development of a positive profile for youth.*
  2. *To provide opportunities for community involvement.*
  3. *To encourage community investment in youth.*
- B. *Implement programs for youth in the community*

1. *To continue and enhance preventative leisure/recreation options for youth.*
  2. *To provide training, leadership, and volunteer experiences for youth.*
  3. *To focus on awareness and prevention of identified youth social issues.*
  4. *To increase the quality of Youth Commission services provided to the community.*
- C. Be actively involved with the community in developing programs & services for youth*
1. *To encourage healthy youth and families*
  2. *To create avenues for youth involvement in social/political action*
- D. Share youth information and resources with the community*
1. *To promote the Youth Commission as a resource for youth, parents, and the community.*
  2. *To enhance and revise materials that promote services for the Abbotsford youth.*

Has a Youth Council, and publishes a monthly newspaper *Teen Tribute*.

## **Burnaby**

Burnaby has always had a strong youth services component within its Recreation Dept, but has not developed any services or programs that really go beyond that.  
To look at what they do provide:

<http://www.burnabyparksrec.org/youth/youth.html>

## **Outside BC**

### **Calgary**

Calgary has a strong set of youth programs, both within the City government and through Child Friendly Calgary.

They are currently developing a Youth Strategy under the heading *One Future*:

*Each city and each of its youth share a bond. They each have only one future, and for better or for worse, their futures are inextricably linked.*

*One Future is an overall strategy to guide and coordinate youth related programs and services of the City of Calgary. It recognizes that a municipal government has an important role to play in shaping the future shared by a city and its youth. This report provides an overview of the project as of July 2000. One Future is being built on a foundation of community consultation, and after substantial guidance from both Calgary's youth and the organizations that work with them, it will be in full swing by the Spring of 2001.*

It's URL is:

<http://www.gov.calgary.ab.ca/community/youth/strategy.html>

It has three strategies:

1. *Becoming a more youth friendly organization*
2. *Realigning programs, services and funding for most benefit*
3. *Targeting high priority youth issues through direct service, partnerships and advocacy*

## **Regina**

Regina has focused the majority of its youth efforts on at-risk youth, especially those in the aboriginal community. Details of its programs can be found at:

[http://www.city.regina.sk.ca/content/info\\_services/social\\_devel/youth.shtml](http://www.city.regina.sk.ca/content/info_services/social_devel/youth.shtml)

## **Toronto**

The new Metro Toronto Council has looked extensively at the issues of Civic Engagement, conducting a consultation process with expert information seminars. The results of this process is at:

[http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/civic\\_engagement/reflections.htm](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/civic_engagement/reflections.htm)

However this process does not specifically focus on youth.

Toronto also has a Children and Youth Advocate, and an extensive set of programs under the heading of Children and Youth Action Committee:

<http://www.torontochildren.com/>

*The Children and Youth Action Committee (CYAC) is made up of members of Toronto City Council, school trustees, and community representatives. Its mission is to improve the well-being of children and youth in the City of Toronto. This web site highlights the work of the CYAC. It also provides links to other useful Internet resources dealing with children.*

### *CYAC Background*

*In January 1998, Toronto City Council created the position of Children's Advocate and also set up a Children and Youth Action Committee (CYAC). The Children's Advocate chairs the CYAC which brings together politicians and people who work with children. Through a variety of working groups, the CYAC is building public support for children's programs and developing more effective ways to meet the needs of children.*

The CYAC has an annual Best Practices Award, produces an annual Report Card, produces a monthly newsletter, as well as other activities.

## Ottawa

Ottawa has recently created the Ottawa Youth Cabinet. This followed a report to the Transition Board entitled 'Youth: A Place at the Table'. The Youth Cabinet will have 21 members aged 15 to 25 years. Two Councilors will act as Youth Advocates.

Full text of the Council report can be found at:

<http://city.ottawa.on.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/csedc/2001/03-21/ACS2001-CRS-SEC-0028.htm>

## Appendix C - Results of Focus Groups

### **Adult supporters:**

**May 29, from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm**

**Location: Social Planning, 10th and Cambie, 1st floor**

**Facilitator: Bob Yates**

**Attendance: City staff department reps, core partner staff from Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Police Department and other key City staff - plus later email correspondence with several staff.**

**Numbers: approximately 10 departments represented**

### **Objectives**

- Challenges and Successes - Review challenges and successes of current dept. reps and core committees
- Future Possibilities - Discuss terms/interest/goals for future staff involvement/ support for civic youth involvement
- Other Models - Discuss options for models of future civic youth involvement

### **Questions**

1. What do you think are the main successes/achievements of the CYS to date?
2. ....and what have been the major challenges/problems?
3. Are the Core Objectives of the CYS still appropriate?
  - a place for youth
  - a voice for youth
  - youth as a resource
  - strengthening the support base for youth

Instead of being bogged down in it, the CYS is too far outside the city's bureaucracy. It is not regularly considered in planning city initiatives. Changing the responsible position from the former advocate (by definition outside the system) to a social planner (regular staff member) may help to better integrate the program.  
Source: City staff person

4. How has the CYS matured over its six year life? Is its organizational framework too cumbersome? Has it got bogged down in City and other bureaucracies?
5. Beyond yourselves, who I will assume are committed to the idea of youth involvement, are city departments and staff generally committed to the CYS?
  - what about Councilors and Council?
6. What are some of the other partnerships that the city could build that would strengthen the CYS's Core Objectives?
7. Are youth broadly enough involved? Or is it only some types/ages of youth who are

I'd wager that a solid majority of staff are not even aware of it. The departmental reps all have their own jobs to do, and little time to educate their peers. While information on the CYS is available, it is not well promoted.  
I believe that the mayor and councilors are supportive of the CYS. However, I have heard complaints that they are not kept informed, and are consulted only when a report appears on a council agenda.  
Source: City staff person

involved? What should be done to broaden youth involvement? Is youth 9 to 24 years the right age span? too broad?

8. Is a different model of youth engagement needed?

**Comments**

Note: Comments of participants are presented here in italics, in as close to verbatim as possible. Where a direct quote is made, it is presented in quotation marks. Comments have been reviewed and are presented under a series of headings.

Successes

The City has benefitted from youth advice

- *Feedback from youth has been useful*
- *Without question, the CYS has helped to refocus issues in a more positive manner eg raves*
- *Planning department hires youth - eg delivering flyers - but it all takes time and effort*

The Core Committee process has assisted departments to focus on youth issues

- *Also improved working relationships between departments on issues concerning children and youth*
- *The strategy was never central to why things were done, but allowed linkages across departmental boundaries*
- *The sense of camaraderie boosts enthusiasm and job commitment*

CYS has legitimized actions that might otherwise have not been possible

- *Focus of support for youth serving agencies eg in cultural field, the CYS has engendered greater support for Vancouver Youth Theatre groups*
- *Strategy has provided strong ammunition and good information for staff decision making*
- *CYS has legitimized the expansion of services to younger age groups eg community participation in planning*
- *Thinking explicitly about youth has allowed all departments to improve services to youth*
- *Now youth have a voice in community planning through neighbourhood planning focus - specific youth processes - using youth as a communication vehicle, but it all costs money.*
- *Dunbar has a youth plan*

Services for youth have expanded as a result of the CYS

- *Expanded services for youth through the 1990s - the CYS was the vehicle for advocating for these increased service levels eg job placements through EEO, harassment training through Hasting Institute*
- *A place for youth - definitely more now than when CYS started - Collingwood Village, Downtown, QE park, Library Plaza*

Young people who are involved tend to be mid-teens and up, although there have been good results from involving primary and secondary schools in planning programs of interest to them such as streetscape programs. It could be helpful for the departmental reps to identify programs in their areas which might be of interest to youth, and suggest the social planner target them when there is little or no youth involvement yet. Based on what I heard from young people while I was working with the family court/youth justice committee, youth don't get involved for a variety of reasons. Programs that would interest them take place during school or working hours. Public buildings can be intimidating and don't make young people feel welcome. Transportation needs are often un-met. Food is a prime inducement, and so is money. ....The point is to make staff more aware of the requirements for a youth-friendly program.  
Source: City staff person

- *Youth as a resource - youth are involved in many more activities than they once were: on public art adjudication committee; on library committees; issues around Grandview Cut*
- *Wide recognition of the value of early childhood focus that was the emphasis in early years of the strategy*

#### Other positive attributes of the CYS

- *CYS is a backstop for all youth issues - they get addressed here if not at the departmental level*
- *In terms of age, the upper limit for MCFD and legally is 19 years - this often leaves those 19 to 24 with little areas of support*

#### Challenges

The CYS is an uncertain fit with the rest of civic government

- *"The ethic does not mate well"*
- *There is a tension between being the 'advocate' and the regular workings of the city - advocacy is not a city function*
- *Government is primarily a reactive mechanism that responds to issues rather than advocates on behalf of them - the role of the CYS needs to be more firmly rooted in this vision of government services*

Challenges related to meshing with departments

- *Concern that the CYS is not central to what each department does*
- *Many of the members of the staff committee saw their involvement as marginal, and themselves as marginal to the overall process - "I'm on the committee by default"*
- *A voice - library surveys of use by youth - "we often listen to what they say, but seldom do anything about it"*

Lack of support from Mayor and Council

- *There is no support on Council for a proactive role - most of the information that Council receives about youth is negative - there is a need for a better Council presentation mechanism that focused on the more positive aspects of youth activity*

Loss of focus over time

- *Several Community Crime Prevention Offices, but lacking specific youth focus*
- *CYS tends to of importance to City/Council, not to youth*
- *Move toward 'issues based youth' - need a broader spectrum of issues*
- *The focus of the strategy has become fractured, in terms of ages of youth being addressed*
- *There is a high degree of politicization around the ages of youth being served*

#### Future Possibilities

General comments

- *Need to strengthen the city-wide effort*
- *For the police, anything that happens should be an extension of what exists, and should focus on the key issues of youth crime, sexual exploitation, etc*
- *City may be just too big for one youth body*
- *Don't ask the questions if you don't want to deal with the answers*
- *The City generally works on the basis that people come to them for information - if they want to be proactive with youth, they must come to youth - that means more money on promotion, web sites, etc*
- *Need to find ways of involving youth on a continuous basis*

- *The CYS is not marketed, while most programs are*

#### Linkage with School Board

- *Need for more school tours of City Hall*
- *VSB is a conduit to the schools*
- *Needs stronger linkage with CAPP*
- *Need to integrate the CYS and its various initiatives more closely with School Board programs*

#### Stronger departmental support

- *But it cannot always be off the edge of everyone's desk - has to be a staff person dedicated to making it work - in someone's job description*
- *It needs to be a more departmental approach*
- *Departments need youth liaisons*

#### Stronger support from Mayor and Council

- *Need for regular meetings with the Mayor*

#### Linkage with Community Centres

- *Also issues re Community Centres - youth workers in each one, but not necessarily in core funding*
- *Community Centres should and sometimes do provide both a place and voice for youth*

#### Other Models

##### General comments:

- *Meetings are not the way to engage youth - the two sides have conflicting ethics and interests; venues are unsatisfactory to one side or the other; understandings re cost vary between parties; pop and pizza every time is an insult*
- *Every year needs renewal, no matter how dedicated the staff team*
- *The annual reporting exercise was always useful - but need to include 'impact' statements*
- *Move to a ward system for appointing youth?*
- *Need a Council Member as Advocate*
- *The strategy has no clout - compare to Toronto where Advocate is a Councilor*
- *More youth should be involved through greater linkage with CAPP program*



**Select youth- serving agencies that participated in the review of the Child and Youth Social Planner position**

**June 5, from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm**

**Location: IWA Hall, Commercial Drive**

**Facilitator: Bob Yates**

**Participants: approximately 10 staff reps from a variety of agencies including Family Services, Kiwassa, Sunset and Dunbar Community Centres, Vancouver Youth Voices, GAB Youth Services, Windermere Sec School, Environmental Youth Alliance, Boys and Girls Clubs, Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, and Parks Board (Youth Services).**

**Objectives**

- Comments on Past and Present - Review current Civic Youth Strategy (including youth-driven umbrella organizational structure)
- Future Possibilities - Discuss models for future youth/staff involvement and support for CYS
- Possible Partnerships - Discuss possible partnerships for future Civic Youth Strategy

**Questions**

1. Before we talk specifically about the CYS, could you just introduce yourselves and tell the group how you are involved with young people who are active in civic life?
2. Before coming here today, did everyone here know about the CYS? And even if you were aware of it, did it impact your work in the city with young people?
3. Take a look at the Core Objectives of the CYS for a moment. What comments would you make in regards to your perception of the City's commitment to each one?
  - a place for youth
  - a voice for youth
  - youth as a resource
  - strengthening the support base for youth
4. How has the CYS matured over its six year life? Has it got bogged down in city and other bureaucracies? Is its organizational framework too cumbersome?
5. Are city departments and staff generally committed to involving young people?
  - what about Councilors and Council?
6. What are some of the other partnerships that the city could build that would strengthen the CYS's Core Objectives?
7. Are youth broadly enough involved? Or is it only some types/ages of youth who are involved? What should be done to broaden youth involvement? Is youth 9 to 24 years the right age span? too broad?
8. Is a different model/approach to youth engagement needed?

## Comments

### Comments on Past and Present

#### General comments

- *The direction of the CYS depends on the skills of the person managing it - and on their own agendas*
- *"If the City doesn't want to listen, what's the point in shouting?"*
- *"It's a policy - it has to be broad"*
- *Good stuff is happening in the city, but despite the CYS - the City has fallen behind*

#### Strengths

- *Provides a framework for action at the city-wide level*
- *"Good to hit City bureaucracy over the head with"*

#### Challenges

- *Has no practical or tangible feel at the local level*
- *Youth don't know the process or want to give time to learn*
- *The definition is too vague - need to go back to square one and add the structural and process stuff*
- *It is unusual to find youth who are able to work at the civic level*
- *Places for Youth have been created in downtown, but not elsewhere*

#### Comments on groups involved in CYS

- *Environmental Youth alliance - effecting change at the local level*
- *Vancouver Youth Voices - channels and processes of empowerment - primary demographics are marginalized youth*
- *Neighbourhood Houses are often asked to find youth who want to get involved at the civic level - often hard to do. Find CYS very wordy. Involvement through Youth Week.*
- *Vancouver Coalition for Children and Youth was difficult to sustain*
- *Found that working through VYV and EYA was the best way to get the Youth Voice out there*
- *Vancouver Youth Voices - not plural - always the voice of the current advocacy group - the group became more exclusive over time*
- *Youth involved with CYS are all in the 17/24 age group - traveling is an issue for younger youth*

#### Future Possibilities and Partnerships

- *Hook kids into their local communities - hard to do at the City wide level - need to refocus CYS at the community level*
- *What is key is getting youth to understand the connections to the bigger civic picture*
- *Toronto process has an openness that is lacking in Vancouver*
- *It comes down to funding - Youth organizations need to have funding to ensure the buy-in - something tangible*
- *CYS was designed to hold the City and Council accountable, not vice versa - the question is how is the City prepared to take a stand*
- *How will changes in the CYS change how decisions are made at City Hall - currently more window dressing than substance*
- *NIST groups would be an obvious starting point for involving youth - could be organized through the Social Planner position*
- *NISTs are the key - using a system that is there, with the Social Planner providing a road map*

## **Current and previous CYS core youth committee members**

**June 5, from 5.00 pm to 7.00 pm**

**Location: IWA Hall, Commercial Drive**

**Facilitator: Melanie Clark**

**Participants: 1 person attended meeting (poor attendance due to transit strike); later email and phone discussion with others**

### **Objectives**

- Comments on Past and Present - Review current model of youth involvement;
- Youth Participation, Representation and Adult Support - Discuss issues of youth participation, representation and adult support. Identify common issues/interests for their participation in civic government
- Options for Models - Discuss options for models of future civic youth involvement

### **Questions**

1. Perhaps we could start off by each of you telling us about your involvement with the CYS, and what you think are its strengths, or what has been achieved through it?
2. What are its weaknesses? What frustrations have you encountered?
3. The Core Objectives of the CYS were around a place, a voice, youth as a resource, and strengthening the support base. To what degree have these core objectives been met
  - a place for youth
  - a voice for youth
  - youth as a resource
  - strengthening the support base for youth
4. Are the Core Objectives of the CYS still appropriate?
5. How supportive has the City - staff, departments, Councilors - been for the CYS?
6. Are youth broadly enough involved? Or is it only some types/ages of youth who are involved? Is youth 9 to 24 years the right age span? too broad?
7. What has to be done to broaden youth involvement? What other ways could we use to get youth involved in civic government?
8. Apart from the CYS, what led to you getting involved? What were the catalysts? What

There's a lot of stagnation on that committee. As I mentioned, I joined the committee periodically for a few years. It became too insular and there was very little time spent on outreach. The youth on the committee themselves, I feel, became too busy to really commit time to doing things. We needed new energy.

It's an ongoing frustration. The problem with youth is that they are very busy, especially ones that are involved. One does not want to over-burden their time. At the same time, youth also "grow up." After a few years, they become young adults and the next "generation" come through and have new concerns, ideas, etc. It's a very dynamic, but transient, population.

Source: Core Committee member

It's huge. Preteens and early twenty somethings have different needs and interests. There's so much change in so little time here-that's probably the only thing they have in common.

Source: Core Committee member

Youth are as involved as they need to be. There need to be outlets for youth involvement, but you can't force people to be involved. It has to be made interesting, fun and rewarding. Youth should be educated about why it's important for them to be involved in their City.

Source: Core Committee member

should we do that might get more young people participating?

9. Is a different model/approach to youth engagement needed?

I fortunately had great role models. Penny Perry, Paul Leung, Greg Eng. They actually cared about youth, or that's how I felt.  
Source: Core Committee member

## Comments

### Comments on Past and Present

- *Achievements of CYS - encouraging youth to be part of their communities*
- *Youth as Resource - youth need a better understanding of how civic government works*
- *Support - loss of the Advocate's position was a major blow - need more support for the CYS Committee - the youth need funding directly, rather than through the mesh of an adult at City Hall*
- *Staff have always been there when needed*

### Youth Participation, Representation and Adult Support

- *Place - need an office in City Hall - places do exist - places close too early - most places are for street involved youth - need more for all youth*
- *Voice - groups are stronger, but no one is listening any more - this was verified through the survey - lost its relevance as an issue*
- *Objectives are still relevant - they cover everything - but need more resources to implement them*
- *Mayor and Council made CYS possible in the first place, but now largely ignore it - need a renewed commitment from Mayor and Council - they need to come to CYS meetings from time to time*
- *Age of 24 is appropriate, but age of 9 is very young - but that is when the problems start*

I was involved during the planning stages of the CYS. The initial concept was to develop a youth-driven, youth-centered approach to getting young people involved in the City. To this end, we organized a one-day forum/workshop in order to gather youth input. The basic questions that we wanted answered were:

- what resources can the City provide for youth?
- what things are working for youth in the City?
- what services are most important to youth?
- how can youth be better represented in the decision-making process?
- what is the role of "youth" in the City?

There was a lot of energy coming out of the forum. What also came out of those ideas was the CYS.

In the ensuing years, I joined the committee periodically to provide further input. To me, the CYS embodies those concepts we came up with in 1995. The energy and commitment of the four "objectives" of the CYS are strong.

Source: Core Committee member

### Options for Models

- *Need reps in the high schools to spread the news about youth engagement opportunities*
- *The single CYS committee could be broken into age groups*
- *A Youth Mentorship Program would be another approach*

**Youth that have not been involved in CYS to date:**

**Session #1**

**June 4, from 5.00 pm to 7.00 pm**

**Location: IWA Hall, Commercial Drive**

**Participants: 1 only**

**Session #2**

**June 25, from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm**

**Location: Public Library**

**Participants: approximately 25 youth, attracted through a variety of student councils, community centre youth councils, Neighbourhood Houses, youth-driven agencies, targeted youth communities-gay/lesbian, First Nations, Ethno-cultural groups**

**Facilitator: Melanie Clark**

**Objectives**

- Barriers to Involvement - Review/discuss current CYS and reasons/ barriers for lack of awareness/involvement
- Common Issues - Identify common issues/ interest for their participation in civic government
- Options for Models - Discuss options for models of future civic youth involvement

**Questions**

1. As we go round the table here, could each of you introduce yourselves and tell us how you are involved in civic life?
2. Before coming here today, did you know about the CYS?
3. Take a look at the Core Objectives of the CYS for a moment. What comments would you make in regards to your perception of the City's commitment to each one?
  - a place for youth - refer to the Strategy for details - probe and summarize
  - a voice for youth - refer to the Strategy for details - probe and summarize
  - youth as a resource - refer to the Strategy for details - probe and summarize
  - strengthening the support base for youth - refer to the Strategy for details - probe and summarize
4. By and large, you young people are variously involved in civic life, yet this has not occurred through or because of the CYS. What led to you getting involved? What were the catalysts - those key reasons or experiences? What should we do that might get more young people participating?
5. The CYS is focused on youth 9 to 24 years. Is this too broad?
6. The City is taking stock here regarding its relationships with youth. What advice would you give them about how to get young people more engaged, involved, participating?

## Comments

### Barriers to Involvement

- *Youth are generally involved in one initiative, often through school or their local community centre, before becoming involved in city-wide initiatives*
- *Places - do exist but often are not known about or are avoided by many youth. They have increased in number over the last five years*
- *Youth as a Resource - image is improving - initiatives that get youth involved are helping - media are an issue that needs addressing - image presented is always negative - one role of City could be to promote positive youth images*
- *Most youth thought CYS was only about City Council stuff*
- *Little knowledge of the places that do exist*
- *Community Centres are good but they only provide a small amount of what youth want*
- *Also want - courses and to learn; raves and dances; more skateparks; homework helpers, walls for tagging and graffiti; place that is run by youth, for youth*
- *Who feels involved: most youth accepted that they had made little effort to find out; once a youth drops out of school there are few ways to get reconnected; youth always have the view that adults are not really listening*
- *Youth are very unsure about the value of their contribution - have been brain-washed by adults to think that their decision making is inferior and therefore not to be valued*

### Common Issues

- *Most of the local youth councils are poorly advertised and promoted*
- *Voice for Youth - youth are looked down upon by most adults - little evidence presented to the contrary*
- *Those aged 19 to 24 still think of themselves as 'youth' even as they recognize their adulthood - still part of those 'tween years*
- *Generally thought that those aged 9 to 12 are too young*
- *Support base for youth - good peer counseling initiatives - school counselors are too old and out of touch - medical supports are good*
- *There was one non-alcoholic club, but City shut it down*
- *Lots of evident ageism*
- *Most of the organizations that youth involved with saw them as a resource - but they are unusual*
- *Youth get very few opportunities to show how responsible they can be*
- *More control for youth within the school system - would make institutions like Student Councils really work and be more powerful*
- *Role modeling from parents is critical*
- *Age - don't classify by age, but by issue*

### Options for Models

- *City wide Youth Initiative, with its multiple partners (SD, Police, Parks Bd) is one effective mechanism for promoting engagement*
- *Using internet to promote would be good investment - most youth can access somewhere - but must provide information that youth want*
- *More promotion is essential for all aspects of the CYS - process of recruitment and information should start at schools - use web page - booth at SUB at UBC - community centres critical for reaching the over 18 year olds*
- *Use Youth Week to advertise*
- *Broadway Youth Resource Centre - could this model be replicated?*
- *Info sources - website and a call in phone line*
- *use schools - but must go beyond schools so as not to miss out people*
- *Need a Youth Division of City Council*

- *City-wide Youth Initiative focuses on very general questions - need to be a lot more specific*
- *Need a listing of the decisions being made that affect youth - promote through a newsletter (one already in schools) - promote also on website*
- *In Calgary they have positive youth messages on TV*
- *Community Centres hire youth*
- *City has real role in promoting positive messages - but youth must be positive themselves: that's their part of the deal*
- *Need to train youth more within the school system - there is a relationship between power and experience*
- *It is also about learning the skills in the process: knowing how to act and what to do*
- *Need to work within the existing system before starting new things - eg secondary schools, Neighbourhood Houses, Community Centres*
- *Unity and Diversity - good 2 day training session - should be broader distribution of the workshops*

