

CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT



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TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets
FROM: Director Of Social Planning
SUBJECT: Annual Report Back on the Work of the Youth Outreach Team

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive for information the Annual Report Back on the Work of the Youth Outreach Team for 2004/05.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

On June 26, 2003, Council approved a new model for youth engagement for the Civic Youth Strategy that includes:

- THAT Council direct the Social Planning Department to report back annually on the progress and work plan for the Civic Youth Strategy;

Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy, 1995

On March 28, 1995 Council approved the Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy (CYS). It is a statement of commitment to work in partnership with youth and the larger community to:

- ensure that youth have “a place” in the City;
- ensure a strong youth voice in decision-making;
- promote youth as a resource to the City;
- strengthen the support base for youth in the City.

It also commits the City to involve youth and youth-driven organizations as active partners in the development, assessment and delivery of civic services having direct impact on youth; and including youth in broad spectrum consultations.

SUMMARY

This annual report offers an overview of the Civic Youth Strategy, an update on the activities of the Youth Outreach Team (YOT) over the past year and details on the progress the Team has made to ensure that the 4 goals of the Strategy are met. Examples of youth engagement and YOT processes are illustrated throughout the report, including: supporting City staff in efforts to engage youth in civic forums and consultations; youth involvement in civic programs and policy development; accountability mechanisms; youth celebration events and service planning with community and Provincial partners. The report also includes information on work the Youth Outreach Team will undertake from June 2005 to June 2006.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the progress of the work of the Youth Outreach Team from June 2004 to May 2005.

BACKGROUND

March 2005 was the 10th anniversary of Council’s approval of the Civic Youth Strategy policy document. The landscape of the youth community in Vancouver has changed significantly in 10 years. As capacity has grown amongst youth and youth driven organizations, there is now an incredibly vibrant and active youth community that has increased expectations for engagement by government and service providers. Youth are demanding now, more than ever, to be meaningfully involved in policy development, program and service planning, and in the assessment and delivery of municipal services which affect their lives.

In 2003, in an effort to be responsive to the changing assets and expectations of the youth community, the City adopted a new approach to youth engagement, which was to shift to a peer to peer model that was supported by adult partners. This model provided more young people more opportunities to meaningfully participate in municipal decision- making by working in partnership with City staff, community groups and other youth from around Vancouver. In June 2003, Vancouver City Council reaffirmed that youth are a valuable resource to the municipality by approving the development of a City staff team-the Youth Outreach Team (YOT) to make this policy commitment come to life.

The Youth Outreach Team helps advance the Civic Youth Strategy by acting as a bridge between City staff and youth community organizations; functioning as "guides" for youth to understand and access the municipal "system"; providing expertise to City staff around youth engagement in programs and projects; and convening youth and City staff to address issues or work on projects of mutual interest. Last year's update report to Council is available at <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20040708/pe4.htm>.

DISCUSSION

Youth Outreach Team: A Model of Youth Engagement

Building on current research conducted through the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, UNICEF Child and Youth Friendly Cities initiative, and the UNESCO Growing Up in Cities, the City of Vancouver's Youth Outreach Team (YOT) has been working towards designing effective strategies for engaging youth in meaningful decision making within the municipality. The Youth Outreach Team applies these strategies, not only to engage young people in the community, but also to engage their peers within the Team. The Youth Outreach Team strives to be inclusive, accessible and sustainable, which are elements of good practice when seeking to meaningfully involve any citizen.

The role of the Youth Outreach Team is three-fold:

- **To support City staff** to engage youth (ages 13 to 24) meaningfully in consultations and decision-making that are particularly, but not solely, related to "the development, assessment, and delivery of civic services that have a direct impact on youth". YOT also acts as a bridge between City staff and youth community organizations to convene youth and City staff to address issues or working on projects of mutual interest (e.g. drug prevention consultations and youth input into implementation plan).
- **To support community partners** in helping youth in their programs activate youth citizenship through engaging municipal government (e.g. Elections outreach).
- **To support youth and youth groups** to engage municipal government directly (without the intermediary of a youth worker or Youth Outreach Team member) in order to address issues that are important to them and to function as "guides" for youth in understanding and accessing the municipal "system" (e.g. GetOut Grants).

Work of the Youth Outreach Team in 2004/05

Over the past year the Team has been very active in providing support to City staff around youth involvement in consultations, and input into civic programs and policy development. The group continues to support youth involvement in planning around civic and other services, as well as addressing issues that impact youth. The Team has developed a number of accountability mechanisms including improved communication tools and has supported the development of youth celebration events for the City. For a full summary of YOT projects over this past year see Appendix A.

a) *Support to City Staff*

The Youth Outreach Team has supported several departments by providing guidance and advice around meaningful youth involvement in civic forums, neighbourhood planning consultations and civic committees. They have also provided key contacts in the youth community to enable City staff to do more effective outreach to youth and to access youth facilitators and youth agencies who have the capacity to work alongside them in conducting consultations. The YOT provided support to staff to obtain youth input into consultations, including:

- Mayor's budget forums
- Cool Vancouver
- Plaza of Nations
- 4 Pillars Prevention Strategy and Implementation Plan
- Wards Plebiscite

In its first 2 years, much of YOT's work with City staff was a result of youth approaching staff asking if youth had been consulted. Often youth had not been and the YOT played an advocacy and educational role in explaining why it was a good idea to do so. This past year there has been a noticeable shift in staff awareness. They are no longer asking "why" to include youth but are now asking "how" to include them and they are calling the YOT and asking for advice and support. The demand has increased significantly and the YOT is constantly reprioritizing requests and in some cases cannot take on the work. In the next year the YOT will provide more tools and continue to provide workshops (e.g. Citylearn Public Involvement training) to help strengthen staff capacity to engage youth meaningfully and reduce the need for ongoing project support from the YOT.

b) *Support to community*

YOT continues to provide support to the youth community by providing facilitation for youth meetings (e.g. Vancouver School Board District Student Council), attending community forums (Kitsilano school safety forum) running City Hall tours for youth groups in collaboration with the City Clerks office, and providing leadership for the Partners at Work program that places 80 to 120 VSB career preparation students in civic worksites each March. The YOT has also been invited to present at conferences and workshops for youth, service providers, and government officials to share knowledge and experience around meaningfully engaging youth in a municipal setting. Workshop presentations included: *Leading Out Loud*- youth conference; Lower Mainland Municipal Association; the City's Women's Task Force; Growing Up in Cities Canada- A Child and Youth Friendly Vancouver, etc. We are providing assistance to the Growing Up in Cities planning group to support their development of a toolkit for municipal staff on how to engage young people in their work.

Staff was invited to join community partners and assist in the development of a business plan for The Centres for Urban Youth Development to establish a "youth-driven" style hub for the city. The Youth Hub proposal has grown out of a history of youth-driven, peer to peer organizing and capacity-building in Vancouver. For more information on this hub and its connection to the 2006 World Urban Forum contact Social Planning staff.

c) *Support to Youth - Involvement in Civic Program and Policy Development*

Social Planning staff and the Youth Outreach Team were part of the interdepartmental (Office of Cultural Affairs and Park Board) staff team that recently completed implementation of Phase 1 of the *Get Out- Youth Legacy Program*. The *Get Out* program is an excellent example of a city initiative that has had youth involvement throughout and included YOT facilitating (in partnership with the Environmental Youth Alliance) a workshop to get youth input into program development and implementation.

The YOT worked with the City's Drug Policy staff and the kinex Youth Initiative of the Self Help Resource Association to train and support 20 youth from diverse communities (i.e. new immigrant, LGBT, street involved) to host 10 dialogue sessions to gather youth input into the City's Drug Prevention strategy. Social Planning staff are also working with Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver School Board as they work towards implementation of their school aged prevention strategy to ensure that there is coordination between the two initiatives.

The 2005 "March 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination" event had a youth theme this year in response to youth community members who had identified the need to highlight the issues of Aboriginal and immigrant and refugee youth. This event, hosted in Council Chambers, was planned by youth and staff who will continue to meet and facilitate dialogue around the issues and look to support future activities recommended by the youth members.

d) *Youth Celebration Events*

In meetings last year, youth community representatives supported YOT's involvement in promoting youth achievements and celebration events in the city. The YOT has continued to support the City's annual Youth Week and also developed a new celebration event: the COV Youth Recognition Awards and Resource Fair.

- Youth Week

This year marked the celebration of the City's 10th annual Youth Week with over 35 different events around the city including a large kick off event at Robson Square that attracted several thousand participants with a skateboard competition, main stage youth entertainers, hip hop dancing and MC competition.

- COV Youth Recognition Events

Also during Youth Week, the Youth Outreach Team ran a full day of events at the Vancouver Public Library including a Youth Engagement Best Practises Workshop that was facilitated by the National Centre for Excellence on Youth Engagement. A Youth Engagement Fair also took place that showcased 25 youth groups and agencies in Vancouver as well as City Departments and how they were involving youth in their work. The final event of the day was the first annual COV Youth Recognition Awards Ceremony. Over 250 people attended to watch 75 nominees in four categories (Youth 13-18, Youth

19-24, Adult Allies, and Youth Groups and Organizations) who are recognized for their positive contributions to the community.

e) *Accountability*

The YOT has explored a number of options to improve accountability in response to community feedback. Although improving accountability is an evolving process, we have implemented some immediate measures to keeping our work more visible, by improving our communications and seeking opportunities to create partnerships around more formal evaluation. Many pieces of YOT's work and objectives also involve youth input in setting directions which ensures responsiveness to community need and demonstrates accountability (e.g. website redesign consultations). We will also continue to seek opportunities to connect with youth in the community and ask for feedback on our work whether it be at community meetings, forums, advisory committees, the new Youth Network or via web surveys.

In November 2004, the Youth Outreach Team took part in a training workshop where they drafted an Outcome Measurement Framework that will provide a mechanism to plan and evaluate the Team's work. This framework sets goals and short to long term outcomes and provides a mechanism to assess progress. Contact Social Planning staff for a copy of the Outcome Measurement Framework.

- *Communications*

One of the challenges of the work is communication. A large part of the work this past year has been to enhance and develop new tools for connecting with the large youth community and sharing information.

We heard from youth that improvements were needed to our website to improve navigation, layout and to make it more youth friendly (www.vancouveryouth.ca). The goal is that the site will become a central information hub for youth in Vancouver with the addition of events calendars, job postings and training workshops, grants information and links to other youth organizations. To date we have had over 30,000 "hits" and we anticipate that once the site is re-launched later this month that those numbers will increase significantly.

The Youth Outreach Team has also published a bi-monthly eNewsletter called "Youth In the Hall" as another means to send out regular announcements and updates. This has necessitated building a master contact list which will also be a useful mechanism for other City staff to quickly and efficiently send out notices, invitations/opportunities to participate, give feedback, consult etc to the large youth community.

- *Connecting to the Youth Network*

The Youth Advocate Mentor is currently facilitating the development of the new Youth Network. The Network will be a youth driven project that will also be a venue for youth to convene to do advocacy on issues of concern to them. The YOT will provide support to the Network by helping with communications (using the YOT website, email distribution lists,

etc.) and addressing issues that fall within the City's mandate. Although this Network will be shaped by the youth community and service providers, it will be a place where YOT will seek broad consultation with youth to gather input and feedback into their work.

- *Exploring Partnerships for Research and Evaluation*

The YOT is in the early stages of developing a collaborative research project with the National Centre for Excellence on Youth Engagement, the Student's Commission and the International Institute on Child Rights and Development. This project will examine and document Vancouver's youth engagement model (the YOT) and related successes, challenges and learnings.

f) *Facilitating Service Planning and Development*

In addition to YOT's work, staff are still very active with other levels of government and community youth agencies to support and improve service planning and delivery, access to services and address service gaps for youth in the city.

The Youth Social Planner has taken a leadership role on the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness- Youth Working Group. This group was active in reviewing federal HRSDC funding proposals to address youth homelessness in the region, developing a youth section to the Regional Homelessness Plan and playing an advocacy role at the larger table. The Youth Working Group, in partnership with a community youth agency, supports the participation of 10 youth members who have experienced some form of homelessness or were at risk of homelessness.

Staff have also been very active in the Youth Funders Committee and the Vancouver Agreement Youth Task Team (VAYTT). Both tables had representatives from the 3 levels of government present to address a variety of youth service issues and gaps. Recently the two groups discussed amalgamation and plans to move in this direction are already underway. The focus of the Youth Funders Committee has included developing a funding database to capture all the funding going into the continuum of youth services for at risk youth in the city, planning and supporting the 4 youth services "hubs", planning around service gaps (ie youth housing) and reviewing the needs for street youth outreach workers. The VAYTT has funded a number of projects and business plans including provision of bridge funding for the Downtown South Integrated Youth Services Centre, support for youth employment initiatives, and funding for youth engagement in the City's Drug Policy dialogues for youth. It is proposed that the groups will merge under the Youth Funders Committee to increase efficiency and effectiveness. A reprioritization of the work of both groups is in progress.

- *Hubs*

The Youth Funders Committee made a commitment to establish and support 4 youth services hubs in Vancouver to function as one stop shops for youth services. This year City staff have worked to help secure locations for 2 of these hubs: one for Family Services of Greater Vancouver at 1134 Burrard St. and the other for the proposed new Native Youth Centre to be operated by Urban Native Youth Association.

Highlights of the Successes and Challenges for 2004/05

Below is a list of successes and challenges for the year. The nature of youth work is constantly changing and evolving to be responsive to changing needs, take advantage of the emerging opportunities and strive for improvement.

Successes

- Identifying key City staff representatives (champions or adult allies) who work in partnership with the Youth Outreach Team to serve as a link into the many different departments.
- Building relationships and bridges between the Youth Outreach Team, City staff, community groups, and youth and youth groups.
- Recognizing the positive contribution of young people and those who support them in the city.
- Placing resources directly in the hands of youth (e.g. Get Out! grants)
- Involving youth in the design, delivery, implementation and evaluation of an initiative, program or policy
- Developing workshops and sharing tools and techniques on youth engagement with City staff
- Connecting to youth at the neighbourhood level, either through schools, community centre's or community organizations.

Challenges

- YOT's work is non-traditional and multifaceted which makes measuring its effectiveness challenging. In addition to using the Outcome Measurement Framework to assess progress, developing partnerships with research bodies and others who can assist with documentation and evaluation will be critical. It is anticipated that this work will commence this year.
- Mandate of YOT is broad. As the demand for information and support to meaningfully engage youth in municipal decision making continues to grow, so does the demand on the staff time of the Youth Outreach Team.
- Continue to connect in a meaningful way to all of the diverse groups of young people living in the city.

Partners in Bringing the Civic Youth Strategy Policy to Life

Over the past two years the Youth Outreach Team has experimented with many ways of bringing youth and City staff together to further the goals of the Civic Youth Strategy. It has also become very clear that the YOT cannot do this work alone. The partners listed below are all actively involved in the implementation of the Strategy:

- *Child & Youth Advocate and Youth Advocate Mentor*

The Child and Youth Advocate and Youth Advocate Mentor work with Social Planning staff and the Youth Outreach Team to implement the Strategy in a complementary manner. Social planning staff and the YOT are responsible for the ongoing strategic planning and coordination of youth friendly programs and policy, to act as a resource for youth and City staff, and to ensure that the principles of youth engagement are put into practice. The Advocate team has a very broad mandate that includes children and youth from 0 to 24

years of age and has an independent role. The focus is on systemic advocacy, speaking out on issues and concerns on behalf of the City and to other levels of government, and identifying issues and making recommendations. The emerging Youth Network will also have an advocacy component that can support youth input into issues that fall both within and outside of the City's mandate.

- *CYS Department Reps Committee*

The Youth Outreach Team works on specific projects to support youth voice in consultations and program development in partnership with many other City staff. The Department Representative Committee for the Civic Youth Strategy was revived in the spring 2005. The Committee is another opportunity for the YOT to work collaboratively with City staff, enhance the communication on youth involvement within the City, provide more support in the form of tools and guidance for staff, and have a mechanism to continue to document all the efforts at involving youth around City Hall. The CYS Department Reps Committee will meet 3 times a year to share information, bring forward issues and opportunities to involve youth in their work, and act as "champions" within their departments to further the goals of the Civic Youth Strategy. All departments will be asked to monitor and track their work in this area so that it may be summarized and communicated back to Council and other interested parties.

Highlights of Youth Outreach Team Work for 2005/06

Below is a sample list of projects that the Youth Outreach Team will be working on over the next year (until June 2006). The work will continue to evolve over the summer as we continue to meet with City staff, Civic Youth Strategy Department Representatives, community partners, and the youth network.

YOT supporting City staff:

- Work in partnership with the Elections Office to coordinate an outreach strategy for the municipal elections
- Development of a youth engagement toolkit for municipal workers (in partnership with Growing Up in Cities Canada)
- Explore options for the implementation of the City's 4-Pillar Drug Prevention Strategy (youth engagement component)

YOT supporting community partners:

- Continue to connect youth community agencies with City staff to collaborate on projects and increase youth engagement in the policy development and consultations.
- Continue to monitor outcomes using the Outcome Measurement Framework and develop collaborative research and evaluation project with the Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement, Growing Up in Cities Canada, and Child and Youth Friendly Cities.
- Work in partnership with the World Urban Forum Youth Working Group (WUFY) to deliver several World Urban Café's and continue to support the development of a business plan for Vancouver Youth HUB to be showcased at the World Urban Forum.

YOT supporting youth & youth groups:

- Conduct targeted outreach for municipal elections
- Conduct outreach to specific group of youth (i.e. Aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, Chinatown youth, young girls, street involved youth and school-based youth)
- Build on the success of the City of Vancouver Youth Recognition Awards for next years event
- Support the Youth Network via the Youth Outreach Team's communications
- Complete the redesign of the Youth Outreach Team website and publish monthly E-newsletters
- Plan and implement for Phase II of the Get Out! Youth Legacy program.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Youth Outreach Team continues to evolve in order to be responsive to City and community needs. The Team involves many youth, City staff and community partners in their work to strengthen the implementation of the Civic Youth Strategy. The Youth Outreach Team is a resource to the City as it provides education and support to City staff who look to meaningfully engage youth in civic consultations and policy development, connects youth in the community to city processes and recognizes and celebrates this involvement.

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APPENDIX: A 2004 - 2005 Summary of Youth Outreach Team Projects

Support to City Staff:

Provided stewardship for Central Area Planning on consultation for Plaza of Nations land use
Supported youth involvement in Neighbourhood Plans
Provided 2 City Learn Workshop components on engaging youth in civic processes
Presentations to various departments re: youth engagement
Co-implemented the Get Out -Youth Legacy Program
Outreach to youth around Wards with Elections office
Participation on Vancouver Agreement Youth Task Team and Youth Funders Committee
Input into development of implementation for City's 4 Pillar Drug Prevention Strategy
Co-chair for Regional Homelessness Committee-Youth Working Group and related projects
Co-planning for International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with youth
Planning support to International Women's Day event
Facilitated Youth Consultation session for Park Board Strategic Planning
Facilitate City Hall Tours for youth/school groups

Support to Community:

Support the development of the Youth Network (led by the Child & Youth Advocate Mentor)
Participated in Intergenerational Issues Workshop at Senior Summit,
Inclusive Cities Project, SPARC
World Urban Forum
Peace Jam, YMCA (connecting community peace building projects to the City)
Facilitate presentations to youth (Schools, Neighbourhood Houses, Organizations)

YOT Supporting youth & youth groups:

Provide leadership for Partners at Work program with other city staff
Provide on-going support to Vancouver's Youth Week planning staff
Partnership with Women In Engineering program at John Oliver SS
Participate in future of multiculturalism dialogue (Provincial Level Forum)
Recommend youth reps for Council's Advisory Committees
Coordinated new Youth Recognition Events for the city including:

- youth resource fair
- youth workshop on youth engagement
- CoV Youth Recognition Awards

Administrative & Accountability

Exploring partnerships and planning for research and evaluation
Continue assessing YOT progress with Outcome Measurement Framework
Completing Process Document for YOT
Continue with training & professional development for YOT
Complete annual work plan for YOT

Communications

Complete website redesign (including community consultation)
Produce e-Newsletters (bi-monthly)
Update list serve
Develop and produce display & promotional materials