CITY OF **VANCOUVER**

OTHER REPORT

Report Date:	May 2, 2005
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CC File No.:	3107-1
Meeting Date:	June 16, 2005

TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets

FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission

SUBJECT: Neighbourhood Engagement

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. THAT Council adopt a policy of having city planning staff assigned to specific neighbourhoods and communities on a continuing basis, to act as a point of contact, and to assist in capacity and relationship building between neighbourhoods and the City in a manner similar to the ongoing involvement that is occurring in communities during Visioning Implementation, and that the General Manager of Community Services be requested to report back on the strategy, staffing, budgeting and implementation for this process.

B. THAT, based on the existing policies and practices through which the City provides financial assistance to communities involved in visioning implementation, Council extend and expand financial resources to support the involvement of residents in new or updated City designated planning programs.

C. THAT Council instruct staff to continue the Council approved policy of the development, use, and monitoring of a broad range of methods of engagement mechanisms and processes, and for other departments including Planning, Engineering, Real Estate Services, and Development Services, and others in the City be encouraged to adopt broader engagement methods as have been used effectively in various CityPlan Visioning exercises.

D. THAT Council approve in principle, the increased devolution of decision-making to the neighbourhood level, and further, that Council appoint a City Councillor and a Vancouver City Planning Commissioner as co-chairs of a Task Force that will examine

the policy, legal and financial implications of increased neighbourhood based decision making. The Task Force co-chairs should first be directed to examine and report back to Council regarding budget, timeline and membership recommendations. Council should then appoint additional members to the Task Force from staff, neighbourhoods, and community groups who will then collectively develop the terms of reference. The Task Force should have an initial two-year mandate, with an option to extend for a further year, and would make its first report back to Council by fall of 2005.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

Vancouver has a long and distinguished history of public engagement in policy making and program implementation. In addition to the examples described in this report, there are additional public engagements that should be highlighted. Citizen-based Community Centre Boards direct Centre programs. The Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NISTs) and the Vancouver Agreement have received prestigious UN awards for innovative partnerships between governments and the community. CityPlan and Community Visions have received international awards. CityPlan public process tools have been replicated elsewhere in North America (e.g. Toronto, Ottawa, Seattle) and internationally (e.g. Philippines, Mexico, Britain). The City's award winning Public Involvement Review recognized achievements and also identified areas for further improvement.

With respect to Recommendation A, Council is already on record (September 11, 2003 and June 8, 2004) as supporting assignment of staff to neighbourhoods on an ongoing basis, following adoption of a Community Vision, to work with the community to implement Visions. At Council's request, Planning staff have recently met with community representatives in areas with existing, but outdated, plans to recommend new programs. A report on future planning initiatives in these areas is expected by July. Some information on the cost of providing ongoing planning services in all areas of the city will be included. Council should, however, be aware that the current shortage of work space in City owned buildings is resulting in significant space rental costs to add new staff. Reassigning existing policy staff to program implementation is not recommended given the limited number of policy positions and the number of outstanding Council requests.

Council should be cautious about approving Recommendation B without a more rigorous review of options and specification of the scope of what might be included under "extend and expand financial resources to support the involvement of residents in new or updated City designated planning programs" given that City Plan initiatives do provide some funds for neighbourhood planning activities, increases in funding may lead to a de facto grant process which must comply with Vancouver Charter provisions.

Recommendation C reinforces the Council approved recommendations emerging from the Public Involvement Review (December 13, 2001) to continue to develop and monitor public involvement tools. Training programs are already underway to improve public process skills across the organization.

As noted in Recommendation D, there are a significant number of issues to be considered, both financial and legal, should Council choose to devolve more decision making to the neighbourhood level. The issues differ with various responsibilities. It is important to note that the Vancouver Charter mandates to City Council the decision-making process in carrying out the City's undertaking.

There are limited delegations of authority to City officials and Boards, but the Vancouver City Charter does not permit delegations contemplated by this report. Therefore, changes as suggested in this report would require Vancouver City Charter amendments.

The City Manager notes that Recommendations A to D highlight increased costs, expanded scope and Charter authorization changes for expanded public and staff engagement on a neighbourhood decision-making basis.

The City Manager therefore RECOMMENDS to Council that prior to endorsing recommendations A, B, C and D, that the City Manager report back on cost options, scope and Charter authority related to Recommendations A, B, C and D, as outlined in this report.

PURPOSE

This report is focused on the engagement of citizens and neighbourhood groups with the City of Vancouver. The purpose of this report is to summarize the discussions and deliberations of the Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) and many citizens, community and neighbourhood groups on this issue over the past 24 months. This Report outlines the key issues discussed, each with the resulting recommendations. It then sets out specific action steps for Council to consider for implementation now, and in the future.

The observations and comments contained in this report are a summary and synthesis of comments and observations made by many dozens of citizens of Vancouver who participated in numerous formal and informal discussions with the VCPC over the past two years. The Commission initiated a multi-faceted process out of a keen interest to learn more about citizen's experiences. We are now reporting back to Council with the results of our findings, which include recommendations for specific Council actions that we feel reflect the desires of citizens and citizen groups to improve citizen engagement in Vancouver.

POLICY

This Report references a number of policies and initiatives adopted by Council to investigate and support improved community and neighbourhood engagement. However, as this Report also documents, communities do not yet experience a consistent level of effective and respectful engagement with the City. These issues need to be addressed through more effective examination and implementation of existing policy, as well as additional policies and strategies as recommended by the Vancouver City Planning Commission. Where possible, the Report builds on these existing policies and initiatives and recommends ways in which they can be enhanced and improved.

BACKGROUND

History of City of Vancouver Engagement Processes

The City of Vancouver has had a long record of involving citizens, community and neighbourhood groups in its decision making process. This tradition started during Vancouver's earliest years when there were few professional staff, and civic leaders needed the involvement of citizens for a myriad of civic activities and governance. The first formally constituted citizen's body was our own, the Vancouver City Planning Commission, which was formed in 1926, some three years before the amalgamation of the cities of Vancouver, South

Vancouver, and Point Grey. Formed of citizen volunteers with staff advice, the Planning Commission was tasked with preparing the overall planning study which has guided the development of this City ever since (the Bartholomew Plan).

Currently there are 23 formal advisory bodies that involve many dozens of volunteers working on a myriad of topics from planning to cultural affairs, youth, bicycling, public areas and design, to name but a few. In the past, some of these citizens committees held approval power for some civic functions. The VCPC had the decision making powers equivalent to today's Development Permit Board and the Board of Variance. Today, however, all of the regulatory powers of civic governance are held by elected officials and/or have been devolved to paid staff of the city. As a result, citizen groups maintain an advisory role only. This is true for the VCPC, the Urban Design Panel and all other citizen committees and organizations.

Citizen Approval Through Referendum

It is important to note that actual citizen approval is required under the Vancouver Charter for the spending of significant amounts of capital dollars. This necessitates a referendum for capital plans, which today are most commonly held in conjunction with civic elections held every three years. In the past, stand-alone referendums have been held on some major capital projects, (the most recent was for the Cambie Street Bridge in 1984), and citizen approval was sought by referendum for Vancouver's participation in the bidding for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

In fulfilling their mandates, citizen advisory bodies have also served as an informal communication vehicle allowing civic officials to monitor public opinion on current issues. In more recent times, city staff and elected leaders have also initiated a number of different ways to listen specifically to citizens about their ideas and concerns. Sometimes, city staff have used professional market research or polling firms and methods to gauge the reaction of citizens to major issues. In other situations, staff have created less formal methods of receiving citizen ideas and comments. Most often called "consultation", these activities have used a variety of methods including formal public hearings, large public meetings, informal workshops and small gatherings, "open houses", design charettes, and other formats.

The philosophy of civic governance is more than the "consent of the governed" that guides our overall Canadian democratic system. At the civic level, this philosophy has been broadened to include more than consent, but involves active listening, dialogue and the actual participation of citizens.

As a result, Vancouver has an admirable record of outreach to its citizens. On occasion this can be used for major planning initiatives such as CityPlan, (1995), but most often this process is initiated on a smaller scale when a development change is proposed – a land owner or developer wants to build something and those affected are asked for their reaction. This might involve a Development Permit or sometimes a re-zoning. Occasionally a process is started by a neighbourhood or community group who asks the City to address an issue of concern such as traffic, park facilities, public transportation, or similar topic.

While there has been a long history of this consultation process, the success of it can only be described as mixed. To our observation, it can sometimes work extremely well. The most recent new visioning process for Chinatown is often cited as being successful in both process and outcome, as has the work on the Downtown Eastside, the knight/Kingsway redesign and the redevelopment of Woodward's. But, while there have been some significant successes,

there has also been some less positive outcomes, including, more recently, the Kits Beach Pavilion, and the townhouse development at 10th Avenue and Sasamat.

Public Involvement Review

Partly as a result of this record, the City initiated a review of public participation in civic governance over the past decade and a number of improvements have resulted. The most recent such review was titled The Better City Government Initiative of 1996. One of the main priorities of this Initiative was to improve the public involvement processes. In 1997, Context Research Ltd was contracted to conduct the associated Public Involvement Review (PIR). The PIR reviewed the public involvement component of 10 planning processes in Vancouver, from re-zoning to CityPlan. The results of the PIR found that Vancouver had shown improvement in terms of public involvement, offering more opportunity for citizens to become involved in decision making than other cities in B.C.

In addition, the PIR also identified a number of key areas that required further attention and expansion in order to make citizen engagement in Vancouver truly meaningful. These areas were also identified in our study, and include the need to clarify the overall mandate for public involvement related to the project at hand, and to specify the goals and objectives for engagement in order to ensure citizen input has a specific purpose in that process. In addition, ensuring the appropriate level of staff training and resourcing is available for effective public engagement, particularly utilizing a broader range of planning tools, and ensuring the ability of staff to engage marginalized groups and communities effectively, including having documents translated and staff with multiple language and cultural communication skills available for public discourse; all these additional elements were key aspects of citizen engagement identified in our study.

Throughout our studies, we have found that City planning staff genuinely believe they actively listen to citizen input and honestly accommodate suggestions on a routine basis. Discussions with staff have revealed countless examples of changes to development proposals and plans that were made at the direct suggestion of citizens. Yet, through our discussions with active citizens, we also learned that there exists a major disconnect in this process. Citizens and neighbourhoods groups consistently reported to us that they do not believe that the City is sufficiently or consistently responsive enough to citizen input. Citizens and neighbourhood groups, for the most part, felt there to be a general lack of clear and open communication and often did not recognize that they may have had any significant impact within a consultation process, unless it was viewed as a major battle where there were clear wins and losses. Citizens reported that there were indeed many instances where public consultations had been successful, but there were also many instances where citizens claimed that the City "could do better".

Neighbourhood and community groups have also consistently reported less favourable opinions of the overall City consultation processes. This dichotomy has been known to a few Commissioners who have observed the consultation process in Vancouver over a number of years, and was further reinforced in our most recent review. There were a few instances where positive relationships with City Staff were described on some occasions - but an increasing number of groups continued to voice higher levels of frustration and concern, even disillusionment. While the city staff felt that, on balance, a process may have worked fairly well, and was improving, citizens reported much lower levels of satisfaction, often with a more negative trend. The Commission concluded that further efforts to improve relationships with neighbourhood and community groups were clearly needed.

The Neighbourhood Engagement Committee

In January of 2003 the Commission created a new working committee, named the Neighbourhood Engagement Committee, with the mandate to review how the City manages its relationships with citizen groups, and to examine ways to better engage neighbourhoods, regardless of the City's governance structure. (At the time the City was considering a Wards system of civic governance). The committee started by discussing the issue internally and then identified the need to for further research related to see how this issue was being addressed in other cities. In September 2003, two UBC graduate planning students were engaged to review and summarize the current literature on the subject, and to conduct background research into public engagement methods and best practices used in other municipalities in Canada and the US. Their report provided guidance for further work of this committee and is included an Appendix I, Appendix II is a copy of the background material that was sent to all participants of the first round of discussions with neighbourhood and community groups.

The Neighbourhood Engagement Committee continued its work over 2003 and 2004 with:
- A series of three "kitchen table" meetings with over 40 community groups in diverse locations throughout the City (Appendix III)
- The preparation of a summary discussion paper, titled 'Emerging Themes', from those sessions which was circulated widely for review and comment. (Appendix IV
- A informal workshop with Council
- A discussion session with community leaders which helped refine the Themes discussion paper
- A concluding workshop, held in December 2004 at Britannia Community Centre in which the Themes document was discussed in detail and priority actions identified by participants, as reflected in this report to Council (Appendix V)

DISCUSSION

A Major Concern:

When Commission staff started the organizing process for the Dec 4 workshop, the scepticism of neighbourhood representatives was again apparent. Reaction was mixed, even from groups who had participated in previous discussions within the scope of the project; some citizens were interested, but many more were cautious, even disbelieving. Of greater concern was the level of cynicism uncovered. A great number of active citizens expressed their displeasure, even suspicion of this topic. Disbelief, and anger was rarely far away. Citizens continued to express their dismay at past experiences in dealing with City staff over a number of neighbourhood issues. While the Commission was aware of the concerns (see the section above), it was troubling to again learn of the depth of the citizen reaction.

There is common belief in some parts of the City that so called "consultation" is too often just "window dressing" and is sometimes not completely transparent. Citizens related countless situations where, what was supposed to be sincere listening to citizens, was, in fact, just the opposite. Many examples were provided where:
- development decisions were all made before the consultation began
- staff were sometimes acting as advocates for proponents
- information was hidden from neighbourhoods
- no changes were made to proposals, regardless of the comments received.

- "consultation" was sometimes perceived to be just a sales effort to get neighbours to agree to something they did not like.

These comments were sometimes followed with a justification: no wonder there is a lot of NIMBY-ism in Vancouver – many citizens and neighbourhood groups feel it is the only tactic left to them. If they truly believe that their civic government process is not genuine and sincere, their only response is to oppose, no matter how unreasonable that opposition might seem.

The Commission's concerns were therefore fundamental. How could we honestly ask for more citizen input on the broader topic of neighbourhood engagement if citizens felt it was, in itself, a worthless exercise? Or worse, if citizens felt their city was insincere in its relationships with them, and that there was a "hidden agenda" all along, how could we make progress? Our informal research showed that this extreme reaction was not always present, and that relationships with different departments of the City were often considerably different. The City Plans section of the Planning Department was clearly able to demonstrate some significant progress directly related to citizen engagement, and had positive relationships with a large number of community groups. Other departments were less successful. But it was noted that, to the citizen and neighbourhood groups, the subtleties of the operating style of different departments was lost. It was all one city to them, and one unsuccessful encounter with any part of it could colour their entire relationship.

In trying to reply to these concerns our Commissioners and volunteers countered as best as they could, noting that the Commission had no development agenda, secret or otherwise. Despite the best efforts to alleviate the underlying concerns many individuals are still sceptical about any possible outcome. There remains a persistent attitude: "show me how this will be improved"! Attendance at our workshop was lower than hoped, largely because of this concern.

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

Ongoing Planning Staff Liaison:

Despite a varied discussion at the workshop and since, there was one area that found support among almost all citizens, neighbourhood and community groups. Participants reported an almost unanimous conclusion, that true engagement was enhanced when there was a permanent staff contact, one whom community leaders and citizen volunteers could get to know and build a positive relationship with. Participants asked for creation (or continuation) of a neighbourhood planning representative, who would be a consistent contact person in the community, and who would assist in community development and empowerment.

The research conducted by the graduate student intern/researchers a year earlier had indicated a similar finding in a number of other jurisdictions. Cities that had found ways to have ongoing staff assignments in neighbourhoods reported much more effective outreach results – decision making was enhanced and relationships were more positive. Citizens approached their elected civic leaders in a more positive way. In some cities this philosophy has evolved into a more formal structure, such as Seattle's Office of Neighbourhoods. Some have gone further and devolved a significant spending responsibility to local authorities. The Exploration of such a step in financial management is outside the scope of the Commission's work at this stage. However, it is something that the Commission feels deserves attention in future.

Neighbourhood groups who were involved in a Visioning or Visioning Implementation exercise reported the highest level of satisfaction with their staff liaisons. In these exercises Planning staff are assigned to specific neighbourhoods for a sufficient length of time that they are able to get to know citizens and community leaders. To them, the City takes on a very personal face. The end result is a more responsive visioning exercise, and an increased amount of communication and trust.

The Commission feels that the success of this approach is now self-evident. It works. Staff describe increased cooperation, and more positive communication with their neighbourhood associations. Elected leaders report that interactions with neighbourhood groups in this process are more positive and are oriented towards problem-solving, not opposition. The Commission realized that there was no need to import a new staffing model from elsewhere, that the approach used in the City Plans section of the city staff for Community Visioning and Implementation was an appropriate one upon which to build. It was also recognized that professional planning staff (particularly those with multiple language skills) are a scarce resource. Past practice had those staff "move on" to other neighbourhoods, when Visioning Implementation was complete. This practice runs the real risk that progress will be undone as the linkages are lost.

The Commission believes this local staff neighbourhood assignment system is vital to continue the progress on engagement that we all seek. Rather than rotate these staff assignments to new neighbourhoods, we believe it would be better to leave some staff capacity in place as permanent liaisons and modestly expand the staff resources to serve new neighbourhood planning processes as needed. Ultimately this might evolve into a more formal structure – but for now, even a modest and gradual increase in staff connection will have a lasting positive affect.

The Commission noted that Council has already approved a policy of planning staff appointments to specific community groups as a part of the Visioning implementation process (CityPlan Community Visioning Implementation, September 2003 – RTS 03027). However the current assigned staff is well below the targets set by Council in 2003.

RECOMMENDATION A. That Council adopt a policy of having city planning staff assigned to specific neighbourhoods and communities on a continuing basis, to act as a point of contact, and to assist in capacity and relationship building between neighbourhoods and the City in a manner similar to the ongoing involvement that is occurring in communities after completion of Community Visioning.

Funding for Neighbourhood or Community Groups

Communities that have participated in a Visioning exercise report that, even a small amount of financial assistance goes a very long way to support their neighbourhood work. City Plans Department provides up to $10,000 for community associations to assist them in participating in community planning programs and activities. These funds can be used at the discretion of the local associations and can support communication, printing, light refreshments for meetings, and support to volunteers including child care. The funds are maintained in City budget accounts, but are spent at the discretion of the appropriate committee. When viewed in terms of an $800 million city budget, even $10,000 per community seems very modest indeed. But its importance to the community cannot be overstated. It provides tangible proof that the City cares enough about its relationships to nurture the organizations it needs to work with. It also provides concrete resources for volunteer citizens who make a significant contribution to civic life, often at real personal cost. The City has also provided financial

resources to support neighbourhood engagement in the specific planning study on the East Port lands.

The Commission feels that this funding should be maintained for neighbourhoods that are completing a Visioning process and should be expanded as new neighbourhoods are included in further local area planning process. Funding should be continued so that community associations can have continuity and that the overall capacity of the citizen members can be increased.

RECOMMENDATION B. That, based on the existing policies and practices through which the City provides financial assistance to communities involved in visioning implementation, Council extend and expand financial resources to support the involvement of residents in new or updated City designated planning programs.

Engagement Mechanisms

Neighbourhood groups and individual citizens report that the City needs to continue to develop a broader range of mechanisms for engaging the public on matters of common interest. There was an almost universal agreement that the city relies too heavily on two basic but inadequate methods; Public Hearings and Open Houses.

Public Hearings are admittedly required by law for re-zonings, but otherwise they are not seen as an effective way for public discourse. Many citizens are uncomfortable in this format as their participation is akin to making a speech, with all the attendant risks and lack of rewards. "Large-meeting-with-microphone" is a format for getting the maximum number of speakers heard in a given time - but it is an ineffective way to promote true dialogue. There tends to be "more heat than light", as one volunteer commented. Rarely does a participant change their mind at a Public Hearing; instead opinions get entrenched.

Staff have used Open houses more frequently, and with some higher degree of success. These events can span more hours and can be hosted in commercial or neighbourhood venues. Citizens have more time to visit to learn about current topics. Staff can be assigned to be available to answer questions and discuss options. Comments are usually gathered by a simple process, questionnaires or the use of "sticky notes". Many citizens prefer the less formal and less public nature of this style. However, many also relate an uncomfortable feeling, that they were sometimes being "sold' by the staff, whom often appear to support a proponent. "Who represents the public interest?", they ask.

While neighbourhood groups are supportive of outreach efforts like Open Houses, they are sometimes uncomfortable because they have no way of hearing other's comments or concerns. There is some disquiet - how much that is negative about a proposal is really being passed on, or is it being glossed over? Citizens report wanting to be able to hear others comments - to see if their own reaction is valid, or is shared in other voices. Open Houses can be valuable, but they could also be used to minimize concerns or to dissipate opposition. As a result Open houses should not be the only other mechanism used for public engagement.

The commission noted that the features of the more successful planning initiatives, such as the Chinatown Revitalization Study of 2003/2004, the Knight/Kingsway study and the Woodward's redevelopment all showed that a multiplicity of techniques are sometimes needed to be successful. Small group meetings of many kinds were held with a variety of neighbourhood and stakeholder groups. Professional facilitation services were employed on

occasion. Formal Public meetings early on in the process were, for the most part, avoided. Instead a process was followed that was better described as community building, a process that was adaptable and flexible. It was lengthy and it took a significant amount of staff time, and multilingual capabilities. Diversity of views was commonplace and mistrust was always a danger. City staff employed a variety of techniques and were patient; they listened to the community and worked to reflect their engagement needs. Ultimately a broader consensus emerged, and action plans became possible. The processes were generally regarded as successful by the participants and staff alike. Our assessment was that the extra effort was worthwhile.

Nowhere is the added effort needed more than in neighbourhoods where there is a population of citizens who do not have English as a first language. There are so many parts of Vancouver with significant populations of citizens with English as a second language, who are even less comfortable in large public meetings. Increased efforts are needed to reach out to and involve them, whether they speak Chinese or the other major languages that are common in our region. True, Vancouver has made some progress at translating some public notices. However this development is slower than originally planned, and progress needs to be accelerated. Further, it is not enough to translate a notice of an event if there are no diverse language skills available when the event occurs. It may be necessary for staff to work with cultural communities to build increased capabilities in outreach capabilities, and in employing additional mechanisms appropriate to other cultures.

It is interesting to note that, at a recent meeting of all the representatives of Vision Implementation Committees (dubbed the Pan-Visioning Meeting), the language and cultural barriers to engagement were confirmed as the second most important challenge to the volunteer community leaders who are heavily committed to the Visioning Implementation process. After a year's work on this topic, these citizens confirmed that much more work needs to be done on this challenge.

It should also be noted that the Commission itself has no better track record in this regard. Sincere efforts have been made at all our activities to be as inclusive as possible. We have had public event notices translated and run ads in ethnic publications - but our successes are modest. Although a specific Kitchen Table discussion was organized in partnership with MOSAIC and included representation from at least five major ethno-cultural communities in the city, it was noted that almost all those who participated in the final December 4th Workshop were predominately professionals from more affluent middle class neighbourhoods; they were predominantly Caucasian, and over 40 year old. No 'minority' groups, anti-poverty groups, or representative from economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods chose to participate in the workshop. This is difficult and challenging; it takes effort, time, and resources. Clearly, more effort to be inclusive is needed in our own work as well.

RECOMMENDATION C. That Council instruct staff to continue the development, use, and monitoring of a broad range of methods of engagement mechanisms and processes, and for other departments including Planning, Engineering, Real Estate Services, and Development Services, and others in the City be encouraged to adopt broader engagement methods as have been used effectively in various CityPlan Visioning exercises.

Devolved Decision Making

Neighbourhood Engagement means much more than making an honest effort to listen to citizens. It means developing and supporting citizens and citizen groups so they become equal

partners in the full democratic process of civic governance. The city needs to welcome more than the opinion of its citizens; it needs to involve them in the decision making process. This is more than a simple democratic process.

There is no more important democratic issue than how tax dollars are spent for the common good. Vancouver's taxpayers already have absolute power over major capital spending through the referendum approval process for the 3 year Capital Plan. In addition, City Council and senior staff consistently engage citizens in the discussions about the operating budget; on occasion market research firms use polling techniques to measure citizen priorities. Yet these decisions are for major amounts on a city-wide scale. There is no parallel process available on a neighbourhood level. As one workshop participant put it, "If you're serious about neighbourhood engagement, you would find a way we can have some local control over some part – however small – of the city budget."

It is recognized that devolution of decision making must be done in ways that ensure accountability, transparency and inclusivity. Ultimately a series of questions need to be posed such as:
  - What measures need to be in place to ensure accountability of transparent decision making, adequate financial management and administrative structures at the community level?
  - How can communities develop structures that reflect their diversity while meeting these city requirements for accountability?
  - What is the best way to ensure that community structures are inclusive of a wide range of voices?
  - How can disparity in community capacity across the city be best addressed to ensure equity of outcome?

The Commission has been aware of some examples of local decision making and budget control in other jurisdictions. However, we were not able to devote the time to consider all the implications of such policies and processes, or whether they might be applicable in Vancouver. There are a number of issues to explore, philosophically and administratively and, to date, we have had neither the time nor the expertise to pursue them fully. It seemed appropriate to seek ways that a small amount of local decision making, perhaps capital or operating budget spending, could be devolved to neighbourhood groups, but we could not examine how it might work within our original mandate.

Recognizing that this item was a priority for a number of neighbourhood organizations, we concluded that it needed further study. However, the Commission felt strongly that, not only was the issue was important enough to warrant further work, but that we were prepared to further invest our modest time and resources to support that work. The current Neighbourhood Engagement Committee of volunteer citizens expected to complete its work with this report and to recommend its own dissolution to the Commission upon completion. However, a further study of shared decision making and some level of decentralized budgeting was something that merited additional support. The Committee agreed to recommend the creation of a Task Force to examine this issue more completely, and recommended that it be co-chaired by a City Councillor and a Planning Commissioner. Further, the Commission has voted to allocate a sum of $5000 from its 2005 grant towards the costs of this work.

RECOMMENDATION D. That Council approve in principle, the increased devolution of decision-making to the neighbourhood level, and further, that Council appoint a City Councillor and a Vancouver City Planning Commissioner as co-chairs of a Task Force that will examine the policy, legal and financial implications of increased neighbourhood based decision making. The Task Force co-chairs should first be directed to examine and report back to Council regarding budget, timeline and membership recommendations. Council should then appoint additional members to the Task Force from staff, neighbourhoods, and community groups who will then collectively develop the terms of reference. The Task Force should have an initial two-year mandate, with an option to extend for a further year, and would make its first report back to Council by fall of 2005.

CONCLUSION

After two years of work, third party research and countless meetings and discussions, the Commission believes that the four recommendations outlined in this report represent the very best mix of policy and concrete actions to advance the cause of citizen and neighbourhood engagement. It is our hope that Council will endorse and implement all four together.

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APPENDIX I   Report highlights of the UBC graduate researchers/interns

Appendix II   Kitchen Table Discussion Group Participants

APPENDIX III   Kitchen Table Discussion - Backgrounder Information

APPENDIX IV   Emerging Themes Discussion Paper

APPENDIX V   December 4 Workshop Report.

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Literature Review and Resource List for Citizen Participation

Prepared For: Vancouver Planning Commission, Community Engagement Sub-Committee
Prepared By: Leslie Dickout & April Lawrence
Presented on: December 10, 2003

VANCOUVER

Public Process Guide, City Of Vancouver Pilot Project, 2000
http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/publicprocessguide/index.htm
This Pilot project lays out in detail all the principles of
public engagement the City should use in its public
consultations. While it is a model only for government to
citizen consultation, if implemented, it would have all the ideal
ingredients.

Vancouver Electoral Study Information –
http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/election systems/content
s.html
This 1996 report contains historical and more current information
on how Vancouver has been governed. It also contains the summary
of a survey of 40 cities world wide which asked questions about
their governance systems. Also in the document are references
for resources on how to evaluate ward systems and how to
appropriately size wards (such as Robert Williams' *Some Criteria
for Revising Kitchener's Ward System*). It provides a spreadsheet
comparing voter turn out in each city regardless of electoral
system. The study suggests NO correlation between ward systems
and voter turn out.

Dobson, Charles. **The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building
Communities.**
www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook Perhaps the ultimate source for
citizen engagement. This provides how-to advice on aspects of
community organizing and community building as well as links to
other resources and case studies. There is also a section of
Vancouver specific resources and information.

McAffee, Ann. *When Theory Meets Practice – Citizen participation
in Planning.*
Seelig, Michael and Julie. *CityPlan: Participation or
Abdication.*
These two articles are *presented as a point/counterpoint in* Plan
Canada, May 1997, Volume 37, Issue 3 p. 18.
These two articles face off over the quality of public
participation in Vancouver's CityPlan process. McAffee defends
the process as necessary as tha planner's role clearly changes
from expert to facilitator. McAffee argues the public process
lead to citizen input, buy in and the generation of solutions and

directions not a citizen wish list that planners cannot produce.
The Seeligs argue the long and expensive process produced only
wish lists. They argue that as the provincial funding context
changed, the City was even less able to deliver on the results of
the process they started. They contend that public processes
such as CityPlan produce only vague and obvious visions – that
people want a clean city with affordable housing.

Stewart, Kennedy. **Think Democracy: Options for Local Democratic
Reform in Vancouver.** Published in 2003 through the Simon Fraser
Institute's Institute for Governance Studies, this book outlines
the historical, current and governance practices as they relate
to civic participation in Vancouver. Highly informative and easy
to follow, this is an excellent resource for information related
to electoral and extra-electoral mechanisms of decision-making.
Think Democracy seeks not to provide answers, but rather to
provoke thoughtful discussion about how citizens can better take
part in deciding the future of Vancouver and, "help build the
consensus needed to move forward to action."

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform.
http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public
Website of the 158 member independent, non-partisan, randomly
selected citizen group that is presently exploring electoral
reform in British Columbia through exploration of the systems
used around the world. If the assembly decides reform in BC is
needed, they will frame a referendum question around the issue,
to be included as part of the 2005 election ballot.

Reforming Municipal Electoral Accountability – 1998 **Making Local
Accountability Work in B.C.** Report for the B.C. ministry of
Municipal Affairs, 1998 PDF available at
http://www.sfu.ca/igs/news_reports1.html

CANADA AND NORTH AMERICA

A Review of Public Participation and Consultation Methods.
http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/compareparticipation.pdf
This is an excellent document that explores 17 extra-electoral
mechanisms of civic participation including their strengths,
weaknesses, and recommended uses. For each method, an associated
bibliography of references is attached at the end of the document
for further information. Mechanisms explored include: community
planning, citizen juries, deliberative polling, consensus
conference, and planning cells.

Ensure Handbook for Community Decision Making
http://www.ensure.org/guidebook/new/decision/print.htm While
this site deals with public participation in regeneration
projects, the ideas hold in all areas of public engagement. The
site is especially clear in what issues of conflict to expect and
how to work with them, rather than shutting down conflict that
could lead to learning.

Multi-Process Public Participation Programs. Co-Intelligence
Institute, 2003. www.co-intelligence.org/Multi-
Process Pub Particip.html The Co-Intelligence Institute is
committed to fostering wise and participatory government using
the "co-intelligence" of both the city and its citizens. This
site describes techniques of participation and principles of
citizen engagement.

National Civic League. **Model City Charter, Eighth Edition.**
Building on the first edition published in 1900, this 2003
edition was revised through the work of advisory committees made
up of local governance experts and explores current issues
including election and civic participation structures. Can be
ordered online at http://www.ncl.org/publications/

Abelson J, Forest P-G, Eyles J, Smith P, Martin E and Gauvin F-P.
from **Deliberations about Deliberation: Issues in the Design and
Evaluation of Public Consultation Processes,** McMaster University
Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis Research Working
Paper 01-04, June 2001.

Moore, Nicholas. **Participation Tools for Better Land-Use
Planning: Techniques and Case Studies.** Sacramento: Local
Government Commission, 1997. This brief, clear document provides
a series of techniques for public engagement and a case study to
illustrate the successes and limitations of each. While many of
the techniques are commonly employed (public relations campaigns,
facilitated meetings, formal neighbourhood groups), others are
less commonly used (visioning, public design charrettes, computer
and artistic simulations). There is also a brief but helpful
discussion of getting youth involved.

Talen, Emily. *Bottom Up GIS.* Journal of the American Planning
Association, Summer 2000, Vol. 66 Issue 3, p. 279. This article
discusses the up and coming use of bottom-up GIS, or BUGIS to
give spatial representation to local knowledge and the residents'
experience of the city. BUGIS is presented through light theory
and case studies and provides an inspiring new way to capture
local input for use in planning discussions.

Thomson, Ken. **From Neighbourhood to Nation: The Democratic Foundations of Civil Society.** Tufts University: University Press of New Engalnd, 2001. This book explores the issue of expanding civic culture, particularly how neighbourhood-based systems of local participation and governance can contribute to building meaningful and positive communities. The author has developed scales to measure the extent of neighbourhood organization and effectiveness in the political process.

Wondolleck, Julia & Steven L. Yaffee. **Making Collaboration Work: Lessons from Innovation in Natural Resource Management.** Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2000. This is a book for further reading. While focused on environmental disputes, it is a careful elaboration of the principles of consensus building to achieve common goals in contentious situations. There are frank discussions of how to work with groups that are miles apart when consultation begins, even if the book places perhaps too much faith in the consensus process. Just because a process is well designed, does not mean it promises results. Still, a good and careful elaboration of the virtues and practices of consensus building.

Seattle PI – Nov 2, 2003 – League of Women Voters and Municipal League speak AGAINST a ward system
http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/146215 con02.html

Lethbridge Herald Oct 15, 2001 – Arguing for a modified ward system
http://www.telusplanet.net/public/fellis/E01Oct15.html

INTERNATIONAL

Kingston on Thames – An Example of Devolution
http://www.kingston.gov.uk/nln/council and democracy/the council and decision making.htm Kingston upon Thames has four Neighbourhood Committees made up of the Councilors representing the electoral wards in each Neighbourhood, responsible for providing many of the services in their area. Each Neighbourhood has its own budget and can make decisions on a range of services, including traffic management, planning applications, parks, libraries, housing management, youth service and licensing matters. The meetings are held in the neighborhoods to allow residents to come and have procedures for contacting and addressing the committees. It is unclear if residents also sit on the committee, which would be a healthy modification if implemented.

Citizens as Participants – OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and public Participation in Policy-Making. This is directed at policy makers and is intended to be a brief and easy to read introduction to both the whys and how of promoting active citizenship. Clear and simple articulation of why public

participation is actually cheaper and quicker in the end. Simple checklists and sets of pointers to track compliance. An excellent introduction to what government should look like at a simple level.

Cities for Citizens: Improving Metropolitan Governance – OECD – This is a wide ranging study covering everything from public participation to finance. The entire document is framed under the assumption that cities have to be competitive in a global system – financially and in terms of the life they offer their citizens. It presents the arguments for participation in this context as well, making active citizens a compelling asset, rather than a time consuming inconvenience to getting things done. Contains a precise and informative executive summary.

King, Cheryl Simrell & Camilla Stivers. eds. **Government is Us: Public Administration in an Anti-Government Era.** Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998. This book is an excellent read for public administrators and planners. It discusses the rise of resentment towards government, with the intent of presenting increased participation as a solution. Since it is written from a practitioner's perspective it reads as realistic. It discusses administrative barriers to public participation, civil society, the dilemma's of public participation, as well as its various models and *how to reach a functioning model of citizen self-government*. Case studies are included with the discussion of principles to illustrate how these things are possible.

Munro-Clark, Margaret, ed.. **Citizen Participation in Government.** Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1992. This book is more dense than others in this list, it is intended for further reading for those interested. It contains serious but accessibly discussions of participation and power, extended case studies, questions of democracy and citizen initiative including a case study of *resident initiated participation*. While the book is Australian, rendering the legal discussions rather irrelevant, the principles of consultation described hold beyond local legal requirements.

ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT/ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY –

E-democracy www.e-democracy.gov.uk
The site has been created to support the Government's consultation on e-democracy, which was launched by Rt. Hon. Robin Cook MP on 16 July 2002. You can see the proposals here or download them; respond to the consultation, or link into ongoing discussions; look at background material and make suggestions for more; and keep in touch with events as they unfold.

Councilor Info – http://www.councillorsite.info Part of the UK e-democracy program. It gives each local councilor their own

website, just enter your postal code to find out who yours is and link to them.

Ukonline - http://www.ukonline.gov.uk - While the cite is for the central government it links directly to local government. It clearly lists what Bills and proposals are before various level of government and lists which government services can be accessed on line.

Fax Your MP - http://www.faxyourmp.com/ - Exactly what it says. It is an email site where you enter your postal code (it will also help you find it) and you are instantly given a blank "fax" sheet to write your MP on, press send and it is done.

GATEWAY SITES FOR E-DEMOCRACY -

E-Democracy Resource Links -
http://www.publicus.net/articles/edemresources.html
This is the strongest gateway site with information ranging from academic search engines to advocacy pages. A partial list of useful topics includes on-line voting, on-line campaigning, e-democracy and participation, and on-line public consultation. There are links to established programs in all areas.

Digital Governance - http://www.cddc.vt.edu/digitalgov/gov-menu.html Extended discussion of using Information and Communication Technology to create accountable and participatory government. Contains list of case studies, mostly from developing countries, executed for the World Bank. There are some developed country case studies, however, developing country rhetoric is still relevant as it addresses questions of access to technology and how to make this system work when not everyone is wired from home.

Government On-Line International - http://www.governments-online.org/ This site has Canada specific information about the advance of e-governance at the Federal level.
PDF of the report on Canada's moves to on-line governance - though the focus is Federal, there may be growing support to help municipalities do this- is at http://governments-online.org/articles/13.shtml

Social Science Information Gateway, subsearch, Political Communication, http://www.sosig.ac.uk/roads/subject-listing/World-cat/polcom.html Search within this for Public Participation to access reports and articles on success and failures of e-government, public participation rates, surveys on likes and dislikes of e-government etc. See 2 relevant sample PDF links below. Also note, this site is a major search engine for all areas of governance and planning.

Engaging Citizens in Policy Making: Information, Consultation and
Public Participation- OECD Public Management Policy Brief no.10,
2001
Author(s): OECD
Description: This site provides access to the text of the paper
which was published by the OECD in July 2001. It presents the
main findings from two OECD surveys carried out in 1999- 2000 on
Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections and Using
Information Technology to Strengthen Government Citizen
Connections. It presents a number of guiding principles for
encouraging political participation including measures relating
to electronic government and the electronic delivery of
government services
Keywords: electronic government, political communication,
political participation, Internet, information technology
http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/24/34/2384040.pdf

UK Political Participation Online: The Public Response - a Survey
of Citizens Political Activity via the Internet
Author(s): Gibson, Rachel
Description: This site provides access to a paper by Rachel
Gibson et al of the European Studies Institute, University of
Salford. It formed part of the ESCRC Democracy and Participation
Programme and was published in 2002. It presents the results of a
NOP public opinion survey of 1,972 adults in May 2002. Areas
covered include: the demographic characteristics of British
Internet users, the links between on and offline political
participation and activity and public awareness/use of political
sites.
Keywords: electronic government, Internet, political
communication
http://www.esri.salford.ac.uk/ESRCResearchproject/papers/UK_publi
c_response.pdf

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	City	Government Selection	Neighbourhood/ Citizen Participation Structure	Decision-Making	Methods of Civic Engagement	Catalyst Issues	Limitations	Resourcing
1	Seattle Aprox Pop: 563,374	At Large	· Dept. of Neighbourhoods supports Neighbourhood Assoc's (NAs) across the City · NAs define own boundaries – no max or min pop restiction · NAs report directly to Council or City Administrators · NAs organized into 13 Districts (ea. aprox 43,300 people) each with a District Council (DC) · Each DC has an office and one full time Neighbourhood Service Centre ("little City Hall") Coordinator (NSCC). · One resident & one business rep from each District Council sits on the City Neighbourhood Council (CNC) which reports to the Department of Neighbourhoods	· Dept. of Neighbourhoods build capacity in neighbourhoods; wherever possible residents train other residents · NAs involved in needs assessment, economic development and neighbourhood re-vitalization · DCs are a forum for community issues, funnel budget requests and rate Neighbourhood Matching Fund Projects · The NSCC forms round tables with civic staff, service providers and neighbourhood residents to address issues · CNC implements Neighbourhood Planning and Assistance Program, recommends Neighbourhood Matching Fund projects to Mayor and City Council, oversees budget and priority process	Neighbourhood Associations (resource reliant)	Growth pressures and Neighbourhood change	·NAs have no power in approving zoning changes or development applications; proposal being considered to let neighbourhoods develop own design guidelines and design review;developers would work with neighbourhoods in early stage to resolve issues	· 7 NAs serve as collection points for tax collection · DCs provided an office and one full time NSC Coordinator (NSCC) · A one-time Neighbourhood Matching Fund grant available for improvement project or community organizing · city covers printing costs of one newsletter/year if neighborhood will distribute it
2	Edmonton Pop: 782,101 (2002)	6 Wards - 2 Councillors per Ward + Mayor · Aprox. 130,350 residents/Ward	· city divided into 145 Community Leagues (CLs) aprox. 1,000-18,000 households each · CLs are registered non-profit societies with executive elected by members every 1-2 years · no requirement that members be a resident of the particular neighbourhood · CLs recognized by City as vehicle for communicating with citizens. · every 6-20 CLs join to form Area Council. · CLs are supported through the Parks and Recreation Department with 1 F/T Community Resource Coordinator, and small office in a community recreation facility for every 3-4 Community Leagues. · Edmonton Federation of CLs co-ordinates activities city-wide	· CLs distribute information to members but have no role in City decision-making · No formal reporting relationship between CLs and the City though city staff often inform CLS of proposed zoning or transportation changes · Most CLs concerned with parks and recreation issues though · Some older CLs involved in planning and development issues	CLs are basically 'adverstising' mechanisms for the city	Primary focus on recreation, leisure, and neighbourhood improvement	CLs have no formal power in decision-making	· Parks and Rec Dpt. provides 1 FT Community Resource Coordinator per 3-4 CLs · each CL receives small operating grant of $3,200 -$4,000 and small office in a community recreation facility · Federation given an additional $115,000 operating grant.
3	Calgary Pop: 879,277 (2001)	14 Wards - 1 Councillor per Ward + Mayor · Aprox. 62,776 residents/Ward	· city divided into 123 Community Associations (CAs) of aprox. 7,000 residents each · CAs participate in 32 District Councils (DCs) · CAs also organized into a Federation of CAs.	· Neither CAs nor DCs have formal reporting relationship to the City but most DCs meet regularly with members of City Council from the ward covering that District · CA activities are determined by the interests of the members · Most CAs concerned with developing or maintaining neighbourhood rec. facilities, or quality of neighbourhood issues · The Parks and Rec. Department enforces standards for buildings or facilities developed by CAs but no control over their operations	Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees	Quality of neighbourhood life	· No formal relationship with City · Resource reliant	· Parks and Rec. Department provides: 1 FT Community Resource Coordinator for every 3-4 CAs, leadership workshops for CA volunteers, land for facilities developed by CAs such as small outdoor ice rinks and multi-service centres

APPENDIX I - part 2.xls

City	Government Selection	Neighbourhood/ Citizen Participation Structure	Decision-Making	Methods of Civic Engagement	Catalyst Issues	Limitations	Resourcing
Montreal **Pop:** **3.2 Million** **(2001)**	50 Districts (Wards) 1-6 Councillors per District (ea. aprox 60,000 residents)	· City divided into Fifty districts and organized into 9 arrondissements (each aprox 100,00 citizens) each with Community Boards · aiming to have community panels or boards (Committee conseil d'arrondissement) in every arrondissement that include 4-6 councillors on each	· City divided into Fifty districts and organized into 9 arrondissements (each aprox 100,00 citizens) each with Community Boards · City aiming to have community panels or boards (Committee conseil d'arrondissement) in every arrondissement · Committees conseil d'arrondissement activities address issues specific to that neighbourhood · no formal reporting relationship between Committees conseil d'arrondissement and City. · decentralized City Hall into 14 "access offices" (Bureaux acces Montreal) to issue permits and collect taxes · Committees conseil d'arrondissement have authority to make decisions about city programs with a budget under $50,000; Over that, program must be approved by Council	· Presently use community panels, boards · Moving towards Neighbourhood Association model		In process of decentralizing so citizen power is presently limited	· Each arrondissement has 1 FT administrative staff assigned by the city.
Portland **Pop:** **529,121** **(in 2000)]**	At Large	· city divided into 89 Neighbourhood Associations (NAs), each made up of aprox 200 households · NAs grouped into 8 district Coalitions · each Coalition represented by a District Coalition Board (DCB) which are independent non-profit corporations · Each DCB has a district office in a city building firehall or community centre.	· NAs consider and act upon any of a broad range of issues affecting the livability and quality of their neighborhood; involved in all areas of civic business · NAs are consulted by the city and provide a neighbourhood voice in a variety of areas ranging from input on proposed zoning and development changes, to priority setting on infrastructure improvements, policing practices and crime prevention strategy development; also prepare neighbourhood plans which include the establishment of requirements for subsequent development in the neighborhood · NAs participation directly in City decision-making processes through DCB · City contracts directly with DCBs through their Office of Neighbourhood Associations (ONAs) · ONA acts as an information clearing house and facilitates communication among and between neighbourhoods and districts · DCBs report directly to City admin and Council and are responsible for facilitating citizen participation and neighborhood crime prevention services.	Neighbourhood Associations (resource reliant)	Preservation of neighbourhood residential character	Resource Reliant	· City of Portland provided $1.5 million to the 8 District Coalition Boards last year. This money was provided on a contract basis. · DCBs can fundraise and employ, direct, evaluate and set wage rates for staff due to their non-profit status · DCBs employ 2 professional staff and an office manager · ONA provides in-kind support to NAs for printing and distribution of newsletters and fliers.

Vancouver City Planning Commission
Community Engagement Backgrounder

Dear Participant,

On behalf of the Vancouver City Planning Commission I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion about community engagement in Vancouver. The Vancouver City Planning Commission's mandate is to take a long-term view of issues affecting our city. The current discussion about electoral reform in Vancouver guided by Mr. Tom Berger, head of Vancouver's Electoral Reform Commission, created an excellent opportunity to evaluate how public participation is working in our city and how it could be made better, whether or not the electoral system changes.

Citizen participation, in different cities, comes in many forms, ranging from reading city newsletters to residents making actual decisions about their neighbourhoods. We have provided some brief information about those models in this package.

Please read through this material, think about the questions in it, and imagine the Vancouver you would like to see. Remember that every choice has its downside, so as you imagine the future of citizen participation in Vancouver, try to anticipate and address possible difficulties such as funding, competition between neighbourhoods, conflicting voices within neighbourhoods and balancing citywide objectives with local aspirations.

Some of the choices about how a city works need to be made at a citywide level, like how to run a sewer system. Others are much more local and do invite greater community involvement, like local development and traffic control. We want to identify those issues and explore how they can better involve local citizens.

Whether it is through neighbourhood groups or individual citizens, a key goal of citizen participation is to make sure the experience of what it is actually like to live in the city gets taken into account when decisions are made. This can only be assured when people's voices are heard.

Communities need to be encouraged to organize themselves including having avenues to be heard at city hall. Individual citizens need to have opportunities to express their views on their personal experience of living in the city, of taking transit, understanding the rules about permits, feeling safe or watching your neighbourhood change.

Thank you for taking the time to get together and talk with us. It is our hope that the time we spend together thinking about how to increase participation can lead to a better Vancouver for everyone. If you have any questions please call Leslie Dickout 604.733.6650 or Robert Buller 604.873.7477. Thanks again.

Community Engagement Committee
Vancouver City Planning Commission

Categories of Extra-Electoral Decision Making

Adapted from Stewart, Kennedy. (2002) Think Democracy: Options for Local Democratic Reform in Vancouver.
Vancouver: Simon Fraser University Institute for Governance Studies, 35 - 36

Category	How Power Can Be Decentralized
(4) Full Decentralization	• Citizens have final decision-making power and control over the resources needed to implement decisions
(3) Delegated Power	• Citizens have final decision-making power, but rely on elected officials for resources
(2) Consultation	• Elected officials have final decision-making power, but make efforts to obtain citizen input
(1) Informing	• Elected officials maintain final decision- making power, but inform citizens of their plans and activities

Degrees of Agenda Freedom

Category	Freedom to Set Agenda
(c) Normative	• Citizens are completely free to set agenda • Discussions of values and dreams are possible
(b) Strategic	• Citizens are somewhat free, limited by city priorities • Discussions of how to allocate and spend resources
(a) Operational	•Citizens are constrained • Discussions limited to how to coordinate minor administrative tasks

Things to think about...

What do these words and phrases mean to you?

How are these categories currently addressed in the City and how can they be made better?

Which category is most realistic for the issues you see in the City?

Matrix of Participation*

Stewart, Kennedy. (2002). <u>Think Democracy: Options for Local Democratic Reform in Vancouver.</u> Vancouver: Simon Fraser University Institute for Governance Studies, 35-36.

	(a) Operational	(b) Strategic	(c) Normative	
(4) Full Decentralization			10. Neighbourhood Associations (self-funded)	**{Most Citizen Power}**
(3) Delegated Control	8. Initiative 16. Referendum	4. Citizens Assembly 20. Study Circle	9. Neighbourhood Associations (city-funded)	
(2) Consultation	13. Plebiscite 21. Survey (closed-ended)	2. Advisory Board 5. Citizen Jury 6. Focus Group 7. Green Paper 12. Participatory Budget 14. Public Enquiry 15. Public Meeting 17. Research Panel 19. Stakeholder Forum 22. Survey (deliberative) 23. Survey (open ended)	3. Chat Group 18. Sponsored Lobby Group	
(1) Informing **{Least Citizen Power}**	1. Advertising 11. Newsletter 24. White Paper			

* **Find the number on the list below to explain the mechanism in the matrix above.**

1. Advertising – one-way communication from city leaders to the community through the media

2. Advisory Board – any type of permanent, government-appointed body struck to advise on a particular issue

3. Chat Group – using the Internet, civic leaders set up and monitor electronic forums about various city issues

4. Citizen Assembly – randomly selected citizens explore electoral reform; have power to call for a referendum

5. Citizen Jury – citizens appointed (randomly or representatively) to discuss specific policy issues; consultative role only

6. Focus Group – people chosen randomly to discuss marketing, public messaging or responses to changes in policy

7. Green Paper – official discussion papers containing a range of policy options for a community problem

8. Initiative – citizen-initiated referendum as a result of collecting enough signatures of eligible voters

9. Neighbourhood Association (city-funded) – have decision-making power, but rely on government funding

10. Neighbourhood Association (self-funded) – raise revenues without help from the city, forum for citizens to take action on any issue

11. Newsletter – mechanism used to inform citizens of local council activities

12. **Participatory Budget** – Budgets that result from extensive public consultation on how money should be allocated

13. **Plebiscite** – non-binding referenda asking for opinions on policy options; usually happen with elections

14. **Public Enquiry** – groups such as task forces or commissions that are formed to explore policy problems

15. **Public Meeting** – held to provide information to the public on a specific issue

16. **Referendum** – binding plebiscites that are city initiated, usually yes or no questions on ballots

17. **Research Panel** – a large group of people questioned continually to track changes in opinion over time

18. **Sponsored Lobby Group** – lobby groups partially or fully funded by the city

19. **Stakeholder Forum** – specific decision-making powers decentralized to groups connected with a particular issue

20. **Study Circle** – small, self-formed groups meeting regularly to discuss issues of concern

21. **Survey (closed-ended questions)** – marketers ask a randomly selected sample of people questions with a limited number of answer options

22. **Survey (deliberative)** – measures informed opinion on an issue though discussions between a randomly selected sample of participants

23. **Survey (open-ended questions)** – participants can elaborate beyond 'yes' or 'no' answers

24. **White Paper** – bills submitted to provincial or national legislature including policy concepts and themes; form basis of legislative discussion

Things to think about...

How easy is it for a group of citizens with a local concern to influence policy and planning in Vancouver?

If the city had a fund or a system to assist local citizens to organize in their neighbourhood, would they be considered a self-driven grassroots group or one "controlled" by the city?

How could the City be both involved in helping to foster groups, but allow them to be fully self- organized and directed?

What needs to be done to create criteria to build an effective system to evaluate citizen involvement efforts in Vancouver?

Proposed Questions for Kitchen-Table Discussions:

During our session we will discuss a wide range of topics raised both by you and us. The following four questions are the foundation for the discussion.

- **What have been your experiences, challenges, difficulties, and/or successes in terms of civic engagement in the City of Vancouver?**

- **Share one or two things that the City of Vancouver could do to make civic engagement better and how would they work?**

- **How could you do your job better as representatives of your community's interests, and what would you need to do that?**

- What kinds of decisions do you think should/could be made at a neighbourhood or community level and give examples.

A Brief Resource List for Citizen Participation

VANCOUVER

Public Process Guide, City Of Vancouver Pilot Project, 2000
http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/publicprocessguide/index.htm This Pilot project outlines the principles of public engagement the City should use in its public consultations. While only a model for government to citizen consultation, it includes many of the ideal ingredients.

Dobson, Charles. **The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building Communities.**
www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook This Vancouver based handbook provides excellent how-to advice on community organizing and community building including links to other resources and case studies.

Stewart, Kennedy. **Think Democracy: Options for Local Democratic Reform in Vancouver.** Published in 2003 through the SFU Institute for Governance Studies, this book outlines historical, current and governance practices related to civic participation in Vancouver. **Think Democracy** seeks to provoke thoughtful discussion about how citizens can better engage in deciding the future of Vancouver.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Reforming Municipal Electoral Accountability – 1998 **Making Local Accountability Work in B.C.** Report for the B.C. ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1998 PDF available at
http://www.sfu.ca/igs/news_reports1.html

CANADA AND NORTH AMERICA

A Review of Public Participation and Consultation Methods.
http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/compareparticipation.pdf
This document explores 17 extra-electoral mechanisms of civic participation including their strengths, weaknesses, and recommended uses. Mechanisms explored include community planning, citizen juries, deliberative polling, consensus conference, and planning cells.

Multi-Process Public Participation Programs. Co-Intelligence Institute, 2003. www.co-intelligence.org/Multi-Process_Pub_Particip.html The Co-Intelligence Institute is committed to fostering participatory government. This site describes techniques of participation and citizen engagement.

Group One: Monday January 19, 2004	Contact
South Slope YMCA - 282 W. 49th Ave	
Aboriginal Women's Action Network	
Cambie Corridor Merchants Association	Emilie Kaplun
Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House	Donna Chang
Check Your Head	Lyndsay Pope
Dunbar Community Centre/Association	Wayne Brown/Debbie Barber
End Legislated Poverty	Loralie
Gastown Community Safety Society	Leanore Sally
Grandview Cut Resident's Association	Lynda Fox
Hastings Townsite Neighbourhood Association	Maya Russell
Hastings North BIA	Patricia Barns
Kensington Community Centre Association	Margaret Law
Kitsilano Residents Association	Mel Lehan
Little Mountain Neighbourhood House	Joel Brohstein
Marpole Oakridge Area Council Society	Michelle Underdown (Staff)
MOSAIC	Eyob Naizghi
Orchard Park Tenants Association	Carol Newby
South Granville Seniors Friendship Centre	Kitty Kuk
Strathcona Area Merchants Association	Cathy Kwan
TRAC	Linda Nix
Riley Parke Community Centre Association	Mike Dignan
Douglas Park Community Centre	George Molinari
Group Two: Monday January 26, 2004	
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House	
2425 Oxford St.	
Brittania Community Services Centre	Enzo Guerriero/Diana
Burrardview Neighbourhood Association	Dan Barbour
Cedar Cottage BA	Mr. Kerry Williams
DTES Women's Centre	Michelle
False Creek Community Association	Patrick Couling
Hastings North Community Policing Centre	Layne Pearse
Immigrant Services Society of BC	Patricia
India Mahila Association (women)	Ramindo Sanjh
Kerrisdale/Oakridge/Marpole Com'ty Policing Cen	Pam Gordon
Kinex Youth Initative	Josephine
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House	Steve Boyce
Marpole-Oakridge Community Association	Brent Novak
Mount Pleasant BIA	Martha Welsh
Native Education Centre	Dan Ginan
Raycam Cooperative Community Association	Steve Bouchard

Renfrew Collingwood Seniors Society	Shell-Lee Wert
SPEC	Ivan Bulic
Thunderbird Neighbourhood Association	Lily Dong
West End Neighbours in Action	John Boer
West End Community Association	Moe Coll
Grandview-Woodlands Policing Centre	board member
DTES Resident's Association (DERA)	Mr. Kim Ker (ED)
Group Three: Wednesday February 4, 2004	
Collingwood Neighbourhood House	
5288 Joyce Street	
411 Seniors Society Centre	Margaret Coates
BEST	Ray Straatsma
Carnegie Community Centre	Dan Tetrault
Champlain Heights Community Association	Marg Weiss
Collingwood Community Policing Centre	Chris Taulu
Collingwood Neighbourhood House	Paula Carr
Dunbar Residents Association	Helen Speigelmann
Environmental Youth Alliance	Susan
Gordon Neighbourhood House	John Lucas
Grandview-Woodlands Area Council	Tammie Tupechka
Kitsilano Community Centre	Judy Anderson - board members
Mount Pleasant Heritage Conservation Society	Pat & John Davis
SPARC BC	Jim Sands
Strathcona Residents Association	Amy Walker
Sunset Community Association	Walter Schultz
West End Residents Association	Rob Wynen
Yaletown BIA	Stephanie Clarke
Oakridge Residents Group	Shirley Abrams
Kitsilano Neighbourhood House	Ms. Beryl Cole

Vancouver City Planning Commission

453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V5Y 1V4   tel: **604. 873. 7477**   fax: **604. 873. 7045**   vcpc@city.vancouver.bc.ca

Emergent Themes of the Neighbourhood Engagement Sub-Committee- November 2004

Introduction:

Over the last two years, a subcommittee of the Vancouver City Planning Commission has explored ways to improve citizen participation in civic decision making. Last year we hired two UBC graduate student researchers to investigate best practices in other cities. Using their findings, we organized a set of 3 "kitchen table" discussion sessions with neighbourhood and community groups from across the City. These sessions explored how Vancouver could better engage its citizens.

After the kitchen table discussions, the subcommittee identified some of the 'key themes' that residents had raised. These themes were shared with a group of individuals who have extensive practical and theoretical expertise in neighbourhood engagement. This document is a summary of the key themes that emerged from the comments received during both parts of our process.

1.   Outline opportunities and limits of neighbourhood decision-making power

There should be better distinction made between true decision-making and consultation: When the City invites citizens to participate in a "consultation process" they should better define the objectives of the consultation. There is a huge difference between information gathering, information sharing, seeking input and actual decision making. The City should be more open about their expectations for citizen participation at the beginning of the process. Clearer expectations will help reduce frustration, cynicism, and, if done well, should increase citizen's willingness to participate in a consultation process.

Transfer authority: We should identify issues and circumstances where neighbourhoods might actually have the power to make decisions, and where they don't. For example, local groups might be empowered to implement local improvement initiatives. Other cities have experimented with neighbourhood allocations of locally raised city funds such as parking meter revenues.

Balance neighbourhood and City-wide Objectives: We need to examine the ways that neighbourhoods can help in establishing goals and objectives for the whole city. For example, we need a better process to establish city-wide targets for population, neighbourhood growth, and density. Local neighborhood groups could then determine how they will absorb their share of increased density. Local groups could also be asked to decide on location of important city facilities.

2.   Promoting and maintaining citizen engagement

Recognize and encourage volunteer efforts: Being an engaged citizen requires dedication, time, and energy. This commitment often comes at a personal price. Most community and neighbourhood groups have no access to paid staff, or even modest expense budgets. Volunteers who donate their time and energy need to be visibly recognized and supported in their efforts. Without visible and ongoing support, volunteer based organizations may dissolve due to participant burnout. The City should consider providing ongoing training and development with neighbourhood groups and community representatives to provide the ability for continued participation.

One option would be for the City to give small amounts of seed funding to take some of the burden off citizen groups. These funds would be for simple things like bus tickets or child care

to allow individuals to participate. As well, direct operating costs, such as photocopies, mailing, and other expenses could be supported in a similar way.

3. Expand and improve methods of citizen engagement

Examine and create a range of mechanisms for participation The most commonly used methods of public consultation include formal Public Hearings and less formal Open Houses. While both have advantages and disadvantages, other options need to be explored.

We need to consider a range of ways in which people can participate and thus avoid an over-reliance on public meetings with 'speakers' as the only vehicle. This model can work effectively for some but is less comfortable for many citizens. The use of professionally trained facilitators and/or mediators should be considered, particularly when issues are likely to become contentious.

Involve citizens in developing options: We should search for more ways to encourage participation early in any consultation processes. These early opportunities for participation should occur *before* options have been developed. Citizen input can then be used to shape options for further discussion and consultation. This is in contrast to 'consultation processes' where citizens are presented with plans completely developed without neighbourhood input and where the consultation focuses essentially on providing information on an already finalized design.

Demonstrate local area knowledge as it contributes to the consultation process: Neighbourhood groups could be encouraged to continue their participation with the City only if it is recognized and valued. Once discussion between the City and neighbourhood groups has been requested, we need to ensure that local area knowledge is acknowledged and incorporated in a way that is positive and recorded. We need better ways to follow up on input from neighbourhood and community groups to ensure that their comments and recommendations are recorded and forwarded to the appropriate officials. This could occur through the creation a local area knowledge collection (website or small section of a library collection) which is accessible to local residents and city representatives for ongoing reference.

4. Community to Community discussion and conflict resolution

Encourage groups to resolve conflicts with and without city mediated involvement: Conflicts can sometimes arise between neighbours, neighbourhood organizations, and between communities. These conflicts are important to those involved, but may get in the way of community and neighbourhood engagement. Conflicts can block willing participation of community participants when a particular group is seen to be favored over another, or if one group has more capacity, or is better able to articulate its position or is more persistent than another.

These conflicts need to be resolved on a situation-by-situation basis, with city supported mediation provided where necessary. It would also be of great value to work with community and neighbourhood organizations to create mechanisms to encourage the resolution of conflicts without city involvement, to make sure that problems are resolved before they become dysfunctional.

Encourage groups to communicate with each other to develop information flow independent of the city: We are searching for ways for neighbourhoods to talk to each other, not only to the City, and find ways to transform conflicts between competing interests into more consensus-based decision making.

Equity between neighbourhood and community groups: We need to work towards equity of outcome for neighbourhoods, not just equity of opportunity. This is needed so that all groups are able to participate in engagement discussions and decision making with equitable capacity to

influence decision making. We should make sure that there is equity across neighbourhoods. It is important to be clear about the difference between equal financial support, and equal capacity creation, which is measured by attainable output. This orientation would lead the City to provide neighbourhoods with the appropriate resources needed to help create an equal ability to participate. This is important because, if the amount of time, basic resources and training among neighbourhood groups is different, the ability that participants have to create change for their communities will differ a great deal.

Equity between neighbourhood and community groups needs to be supported so that all groups are able to participate in engagement discussions and decision making.

5. Engage with non-geographic based communities

Improve cultural translation: Representatives of ethnic groups feel that multi-cultural sensitivity in the City, though improved, is still inadequate. They emphasize that language is only the most obvious barrier to participation, and that translations of documents is only the first step in supporting their meaningful participation. On a context-by-context basis, methods of engagement, and mechanisms of participation need to be chosen to better fit the community or neighbourhood in question. Further efforts to improve civic education and outreach need to be considered in many neighbourhoods.

Consider and involve communities of interest. While neighbourhood organizations tend to represent the demographic majority of residents within a local neighbourhood, each part of the city is home to a diverse population of residents. As a result, residents who are not part of the dominant group may not participate with established neighbourhood groups in their area and as a result may not be well represented.

We also need opportunities to engage residents who define themselves as members of communities that are not based on geography. There are many other non-neighbourhood interest groups who may choose to focus on topics of interest that may not be important in their neighbourhoods, but which may be important to the city as a whole. These groups include, but are not limited to: environmental groups; anti-poverty groups; social action or faith based groups. The city needs to find ways to encourage and facilitate the participation of such geographically dispersed groups.

6. Foster and promote long-term relationships between communities and the City.
Encourage long-term relationship building between community members and the neighbourhood city representative: Long term relationships between communities and the city needs trust, reliability, and a relationship built outside partisan political priorities or agendas. Such relationships between the city and engaged communities and neighbourhoods require consistent and predictable access to a city representative who does not change at election time. Encouragement of community and neighbourhood involvement in local area decision making processes requires a familiar face, and an established personal as well as political relationship.

Create a permanent location where community members can communicate with a non-political city representative on a regular, predictable, and ongoing basis: During CityPlan and Neighborhood Visioning, the City had good experiences with using local offices. Though now closed, these local offices should be reconsidered. A permanent street front or community centre based city planning office should be considered to foster ongoing and predictable access to and interaction with city staff. Creating a place where community members can access a city representative on their own time and at their convenience will help improve the sense of responsiveness and community awareness that creates active ties to both the community and the city.

This will also improve information transfer between the City and neighborhoods. There have been some attempts to improve information transfer in the recent past, and we should continue to improve on or introduce new methods.

REPORT OF THE DISCUSSION AND FORWARD-PLANNING SESSION:

"IMPROVING NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF VANCOUVER"

AN "OPEN-SPACE" FACILITATION EVENT
OF THE VANCOUVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

HELD AT THE CANUCK'S FAMILY LITERACY CENTRE
VANCOUVER, BC
DECEMBER 4, 2004

WORKSHOP ORGANIZED BY: ROBERT BULLER, RITA CHUDNOUSKI, LESLIE DICKOUT, VINCE VERLAAN, BROOKE MARSHALL.

WORKSHOP FACILITATED BY: VINCENT VERLAAN POPULI POLICY PROJECTS

IDEAS AND ENERGY SUPPLIED BY: THE ATTENDEES

TRANSCRIPTION BY: BROOKE MARSHALL

"Improving Neighbourhood Engagement in the City of Vancouver"

A one-day discussion and forward-planning session organized by
The Vancouver City Planning Commission

Saturday, December 4, 2004
9:15 am – 2:00 pm

Canuck's Family Literacy Centre, Britannia Community Centre, Burnaby

Finalized Agenda

09:15 - 09:45   **Arrival and Refreshments (muffins, fruit, coffee/tea)**

MORNING SESSION

09:45 - 10:00   **Opening Session:** Introduction to the day's agenda and to process of Open Space.

10:00 - 10:15   **Marketplace of Ideas:** Participants are invited to write out and announce a topic for discussion in small groups. The topic should relate to one of the themes of the draft report, unless something has been missed. Each topic is posted as an invitation to a small group discussion on that topic. Attendees sort together the topics as needed.

10:15 - 11:15   **Open Space Breakout Session #1:** Form into 4 to 6 groups, each with a topic from the agenda wall. Give a pre-formatted "Breakout Session Sheet" to each group. The sheet records the topic and the main points of the discussion, but the major focus for the group is to develop a list of "Actions to Implement".

11:00 - 12:00   **Open Space Breakout Session #2:** Form into 4 to 6 groups with the remaining topics from the agenda wall; give a "Breakout Session Sheet" for each group to complete. Post all posters on main wall at the end of this session.

LUNCH

12:30 - 13:00   **Lunch:** Light lunch is provided to all attendees. Relax, mingle and review all the posted Breakout Session Sheets. 'Dotmocracy' votes are cast by all participants to indicate their preferences from among all the "concrete/doable actions" suggested during all the different breakout sessions in the morning.

AFTERNOON SESSION

13:00 - 13:15   **Vote Results:** Highest-ranked "concrete/doable actions" are identified, merged and established by the participants as three topics for the afternoon breakout sessions.

13:15 - 13:45   **Open Space Breakout Session #3:** Form into three groups with the three topics from the morning breakout session; give a "Detailed Actions Sheet" for each group to complete on their topic. Post all of these posters at the end of session.

13:45 - 14:00   **Closing Session:** Agree that the attendees will receive detailed notes of the meeting discussions, and the recommendations. Planning Commission expresses appreciation of the effort made by participants to comment on this report and topic.

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