



Engaging Communities

Shifting Focus from
Building to Urban Scale

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Byera Hadley
Travelling Scholarships
Journal Series
2015

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Engaging Communities: Shifting focus from building to urban scale

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success flowed from building
communities not from planning,
“the plan is not the goal”

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Introduction



In 2012 I was fortunate enough to receive a Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship to research the successes and failures of community engagement in Vancouver, Seattle and Chicago.

At the time the NSW State Government was attempting to make once-in-a-generation changes to the Planning System. At that time their proposal called for community engagement to become a pillar of that new system, a solution to the perception that planning had historically failed to engage with the general public and that this lay at the heart of the obstructionist atmosphere in which many planning issues were perceived to be stuck.

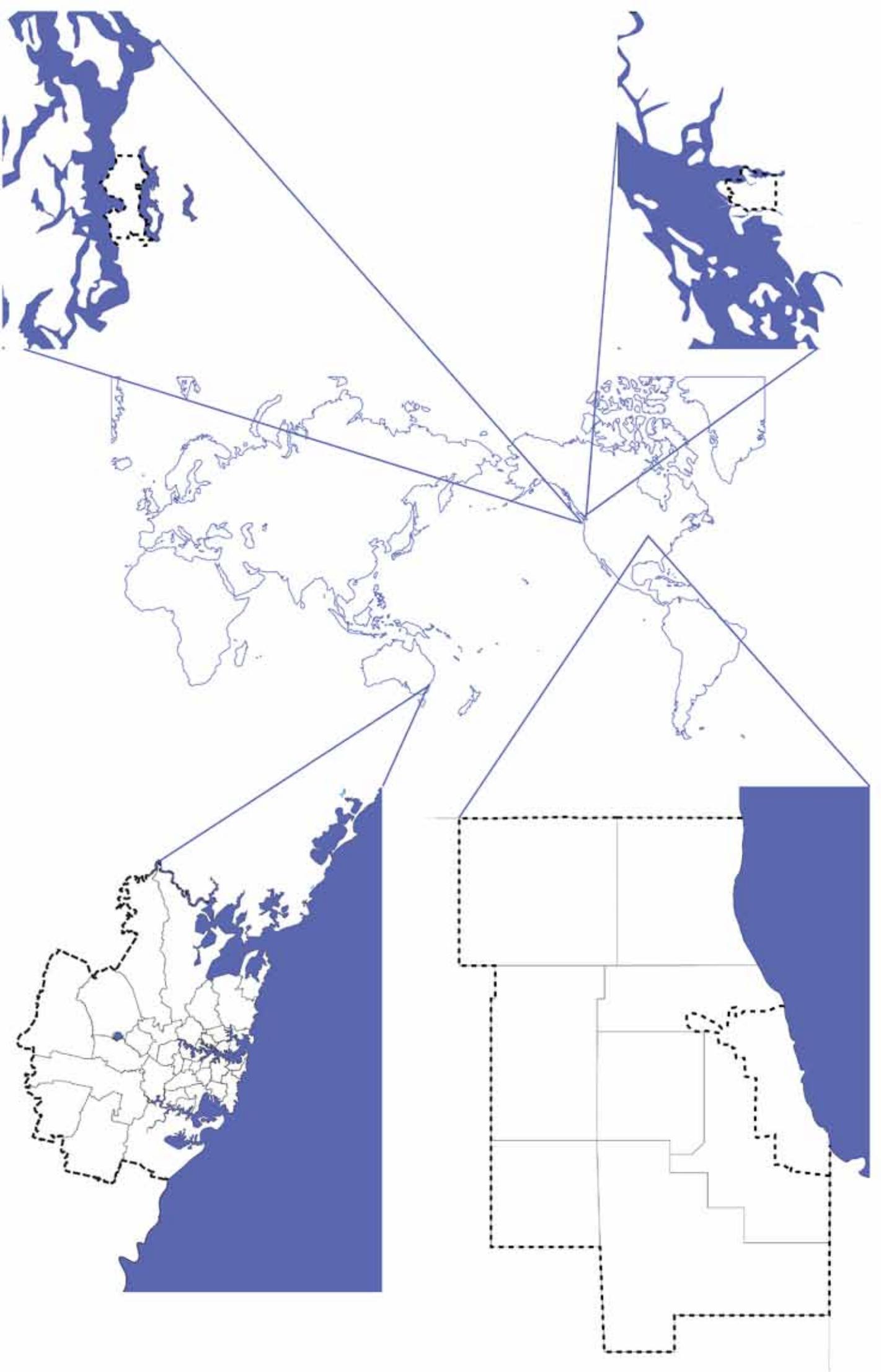
Vancouver was initially positioned by the NSW State Government as a glowing exemplar of community engagement on urban planning issues inspiring myself and others to look a little closer. Initial research drew out some interesting inconsistencies and contradictions hence the journey that leads to this report.

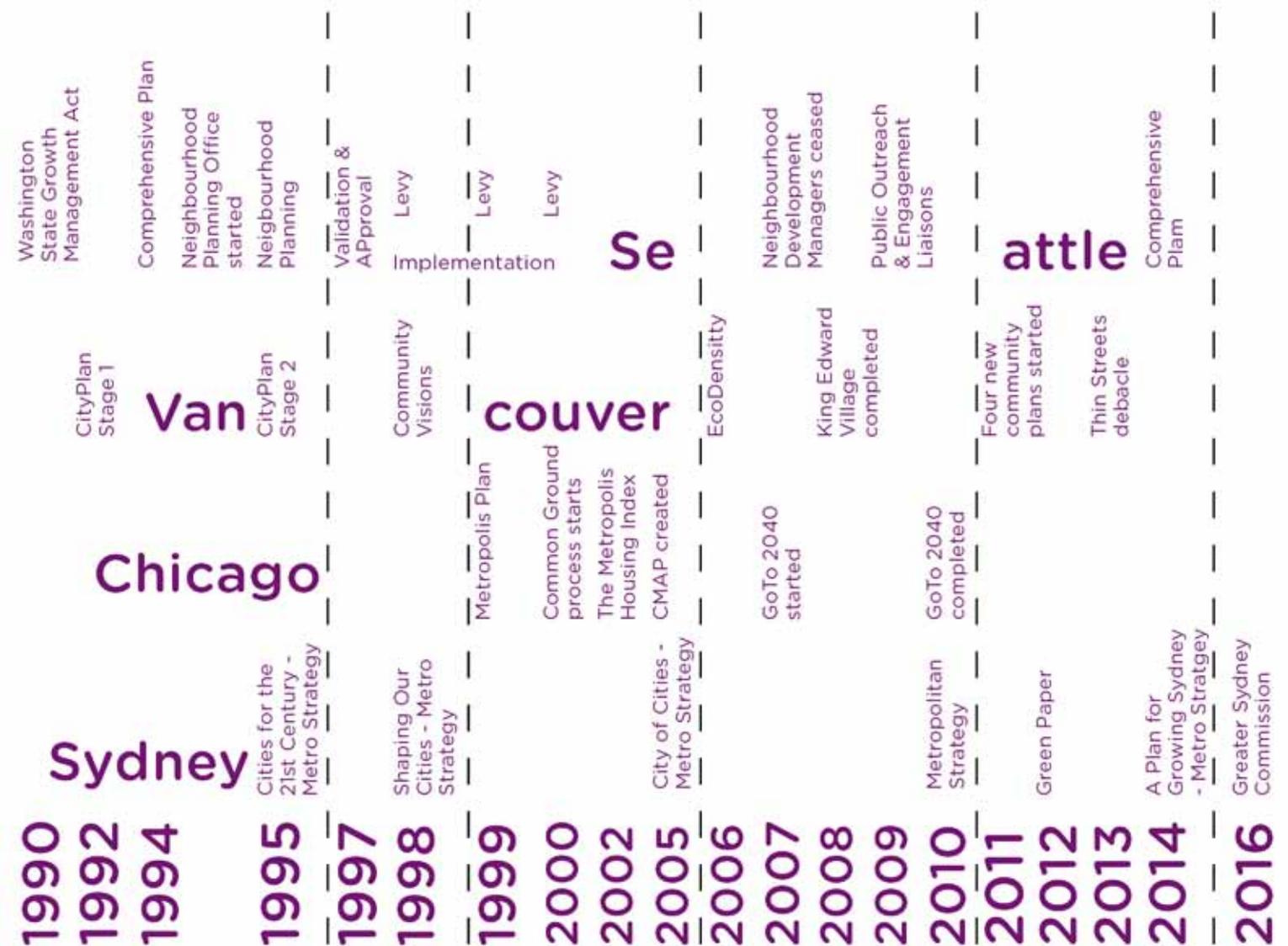
Comparisons with other cities were deemed desirable in order to add value to the Vancouver experiences. Seattle and Chicago were chosen. American cities are the closest in urban form to Australian cities; central business districts with surrounding suburbs, post-war expansion through greenfield subdivision on the periphery and a more recent focus on densification in the inner suburbs as car use declines and gentrification occurs. They had both had success with city scale planning through strong community

engagement processes, Seattle from the early 1990's and Chicago from the late 1990's when technology played a larger role.

For those seeking an in-depth recollection of the processes themselves the references provide ample opportunity. This report is seeking to answer the question; can the focus of the public be shifted from building to urban scale?

As this report is completed in late 2015 the Greater Sydney Commission has been enacted and Lucy Turnbull appointed as Chair. Tasked with reviewing and implementing a Plan for Sydney, a structure requiring no re-election and armed with the powers to override Council planning the sustainability of Sydney rests in the hands of the 13 Commissioners; we wait with bated breath to see how they engage...





Size matters. Vancouver and Seattle can both be viewed as global cities however both are smaller than Sydney at the metropolitan scale. It is important to note that the scale of this research focuses on specific processes which, by their nature, occur within the scope of influence of their instigators. For these two cities it was a city government, an equivalent to Sydney's City of Sydney rather than at state level.

The City of Vancouver covers 114km² and has a population of 600,000. The metropolitan area covers 2,877km² with a population of 2.5million.

The City of Seattle (634,00 people, 217km²) sits within King County (2m people, 5,500km²) one of four Counties within the Puget Sound Regional Council (3.4m people, 16,500km²). The PSRC is the metropolitan planning organisation that drives policy on transport, growth and economic issues across the Counties.

Chicago is considerably larger than Sydney in population (9m people versus 4.9m) and, contrary to its involvement in the history of skyscraper evolution, equally low density with a total area of ~28,000km² compared to Sydney's 12,400km². For those currently railing against Sydney's overly complex governance structure of 43 Councils bear in mind that Chicago has 284 municipalities and over 1200 units of local government.

The timeline above highlights significant events in each city.

Vancouver has experienced more policy change than the other two cities and shares more common ground with Sydney in terms of affordability issues, local resistance to government policy and the politicisation of planning.

It should also be noted that Sydney's planning and engagement landscape is heavily driven by its rapid and continued population growth; currently 1.8% per year.

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Vancouver





Council rejected the staff “Decide, Announce, Defend” process

Ann McAfee



In the 1990’s as Vancouver was building the high rise condominiums on the former industrial lands around False Creek there was an increasing need for change within the suburbs that form the majority of the City of Vancouver.

Following some ugly community reactions to a redevelopment project at Arbutus Ridge the planning department formed a model for community participation to allow for greater involvement in the planning process; this became known as CityPlan.

The City of Vancouver covers an area of 114km² with a population of 600,000. It forms the central part of the wider metropolitan region with a population of 2.2 million people.

The region had long ago identified the need to protect strategic agricultural land, as only 1% of British Columbia is agriculturally viable. The resulting Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) prevents the use of agricultural land for other purposes.

This has had the desired impact of preventing urban sprawl but creates pressure in other locations to deal with increasing populations. The ALR remains highly debated to this day and regularly comes under attack from those with an interest in developing the increasing attractive land within its boundary.

City Plan

In 1980 The Vancouver Plan was endorsed by Council it included a ten-point plan for the core but had citywide implications. It contained broad brushed statements such as “distribute acceptable housing types in all appropriate areas” that were unhelpful to the City in decision making.

In 1991, the Council asked City planners to prepare a new city plan. Former City of Vancouver Co-Director of Planning, Ann McAfee explains the origins of CityPlan thus:

Staff responded with a process typical of the time:

- (1) Staff prepares a Draft (primarily land use) Plan,
- (2) Staff seeks public input,
- (3) Staff revises the Plan, and
- (4) Staff submits the Draft Plan for public review and Council approval.

Council rejected the staff “Decide, Announce, Defend” process. Council’s concerns were the limited scope of the plan and expected reactionary response to the City’s proposals. Typically citizens respond to plans prepared by staff with “Why weren’t we involved in developing the plan?” Council responded by inviting the public to “walk in Council’s shoes”.



prepare a City Plan reflecting a shared vision for the future

Vancouver City Council

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Council proposed a process to involve citizens from the start, they wanted the public to wrestle with difficult choices resulting from limited land and inadequate funds. New minds might find solutions to old problems. Council wanted to “Hear about all issues”, “Hear from new people”, and “Hear through new ways”. These became the “Prime Directives” of the Vancouver CityPlan process.

On 2 June 1992 City Council approved that:

- The City prepare a City Plan reflecting a shared vision for the future of Vancouver; and
- the City Plan program inform citizens about the issues facing the City and present Council policies, and create, from their advice, a shared sense of direction for the City and its place in the region.

CityPlan took two and half years from conception to approved City Directions at a total cost of \$3.5m. Two new planners were hired as part of the process with many more staff seconded from other departments as required. The process was headed by the Director of Planning who formed a Sponsor Committee comprising of heads of department from across the City; this helped build collaboration and focus on implementation.

Phase 1 – Generating Ideas

The public was presented with background information on CityPlan process, context and key issues in seven languages.

A toolkit of 48 background papers explained policy development and key issues to help prompt and focus discussion. Major design issues were the pattern of growth hence the location and form of new housing. Other questions examined heritage conservation, the role of design review and extent of nature conservation within built-up areas. This was a considerable challenge for those without a background in such matters.

The public was invited to form ‘city circles’ of “individuals with similar interests or similar identities”. The City Planners facilitated this process with 250 circles formed involving nearly 3000 people.

A special program was facilitated to gain the views of young people and minority cultures. All views were summarized in the Ideas Book; over 500 submissions were made with a further 700 from youth, these ideas were synthesized at ‘theme days’ that involved the relevant groups. These ideas were then presented at a three-day Ideas Fair.

Industry engagement was relatively quiet however the Architectural Institute of BC proposed more innovation in housing through design competitions, demonstration projects and prototype development; a greater variety of housing types and densities.

The planners said that at the time industry believed that they had the ear of government and did not need to participate in the process.

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*People do understand the need
for change and are willing to
participate if asked*

Rhonda Howard
former City of Vancouver planner

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Phase 2 – Discuss and Review Ideas

The outputs of both the City and Classroom Circles were reproduced unedited in *CityPlan: Ideas Illustrated*. The 477 page document presented the ideas in the language in which they were created with English translations provided where required.

A 3-day Ideas Fair presented the 1500 unique ideas from the 3000 generated in a graphically engaging way, collated into 12 themes by Circle representatives. Graphic artists were engaged (although many volunteered) to ensure that all ideas were fairly presented avoiding disparity between the ideas of the Urban Development Institute Circle and the Vietnamese Single Mothers Circle. (Governance) Around 10,000 people visited the Ideas Fair, 2,000 filled out the ‘check book’ to provide comment.

An Ideas Checkbook was used to gauge opinion, people were asked to complete the parts they had an interest in, it was not expected that every participant would complete every section of the book.

The collation of Checkbook results allowed the Council to discard ideas that were not well supported, immediately progress two (Greenways and Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams) and, take the ones where opinions were divided to the next level of discussion with the community; these were the hardest questions, relating to housing typologies, densification and funding.

CityPlan: Ideas Illustrated showed support for:

- A city of diverse neighbourhoods where communities could determine the nature of redevelopment and ensure a diversity of housing.
- Enhanced transit growth to foster growth of the commercial core
- More mixture of uses, especially residential and leisure for defined neighbourhood centres

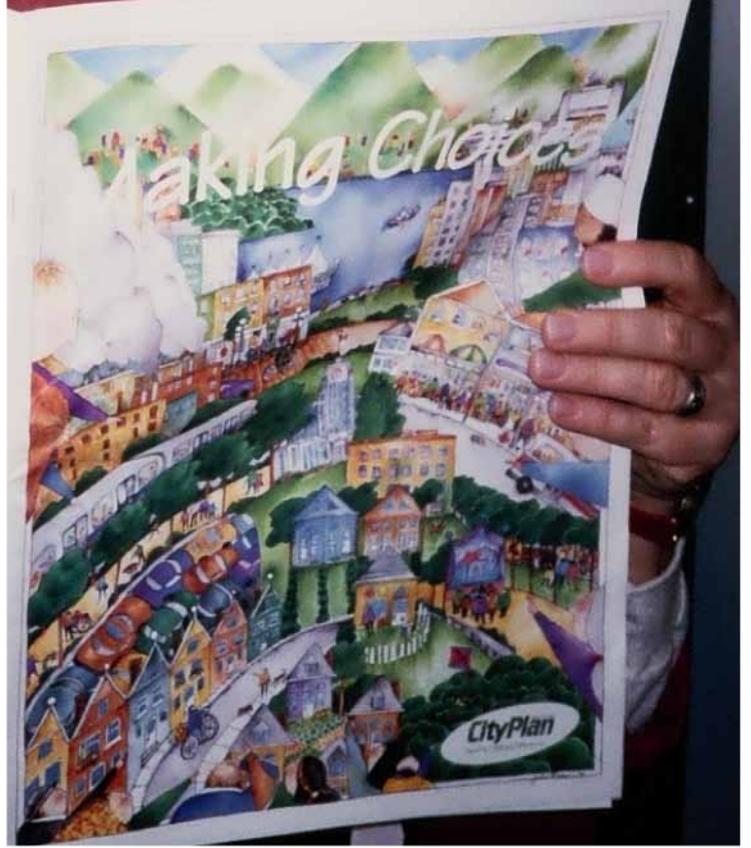
Design concerns were:

- Protection of high quality residential streetscapes
- An endorsement of design review as a way of ensuring compatible development

Other concerns were:

- Protection of green spaces and the natural environment
- The need to promote more quality public space
- Need for more affordable housing in single-family neighbourhoods
- More positive approach to secondary suites, density increases and design guidelines
- Downtown residents endorsed building height and view controls, firmer heritage provisions and tax incentives for building restoration.

The huge levels of support for the principles of increased housing choice in existing neighbourhoods should not be confused for agreement on how to achieve it. To this day there is still vigorous debate



Above: Ideas Fair Check Book & Making Choices ⁹ booklet

over the most appropriate urban form.

Professor Patrick Condon from the University of British Columbia is a vocal proponent for 4-6 storey development along transport corridors, harking back to the tramcar city while former City mayor and now MLC Sam Sullivan advocates for high rise as the most sustainable form of housing due to its small physical footprint and ability to leverage public transit investment.

Greenways (linear parks and paths managed by a Trust) received a lot of support. The idea was developed simultaneously with CityPlan (the 'City Greenways Plan') and became a useful tool to demonstrate the commitment to the Plan and process. The early identification of a broadly supported idea that can be funded and implemented swiftly successfully demonstrated to the public the benefits of being involved. The creation of a highly visible link between participation and real word outcome was a positive motivator that begins to break down the 'why should I bother?' barrier.

Phase 3 - Making Choices

City staff created the Making Choices Workbook, organized in line with the themes from the Ideas Fair. It explained the options available and outlined the impacts of these decisions.

The themes were:

housing, jobs, neighbourhoods, movement, services, safety, infrastructure, arts, public places, environment, finance, and decision-making

The Workbook was made available to the City Circles, at libraries and other Council facilities and to 6000 people on the Council mailing list. A Futures Fair toured the city, 15,000 people visited the exhibition that explained these futures scenarios. As with other printed material this was available in 6 languages to broaden the representativeness of responses.

Workbook voting resulted in broad agreement on five of the themes with uncertainty across seven. From this the City created four future scenarios as amalgamations of the opinions cast, these options were then illustrated, presented in Making Choices and voted upon. The four alternatives were:

- City of neighbourhood centres
- City of mixed residential and main-street neighbourhoods
- The central city
- The traditional city

A random phone sample was also conducted to ensure that the results from the opt-in Making Choices process were representative of the wider community; they were.

Some themes consistent across all scenarios were transportation (encourage cycling, walking and public transportation), funding (growth pays for development, redeploy existing taxes, no new taxes), variety of public places, community-based policing and environmental improvements. The four scenarios focused on the hard choices of housing choice and location, jobs, community services and decision making processes.

There was consensus on:

- Public safety
- Movement
- Public places
- Environment
- Art
- Culture

There was disagreement on:

- Housing
- Neighbourhood character
- Employment
- Community services
- Decision making

Phase 4 - Adopting the Plan

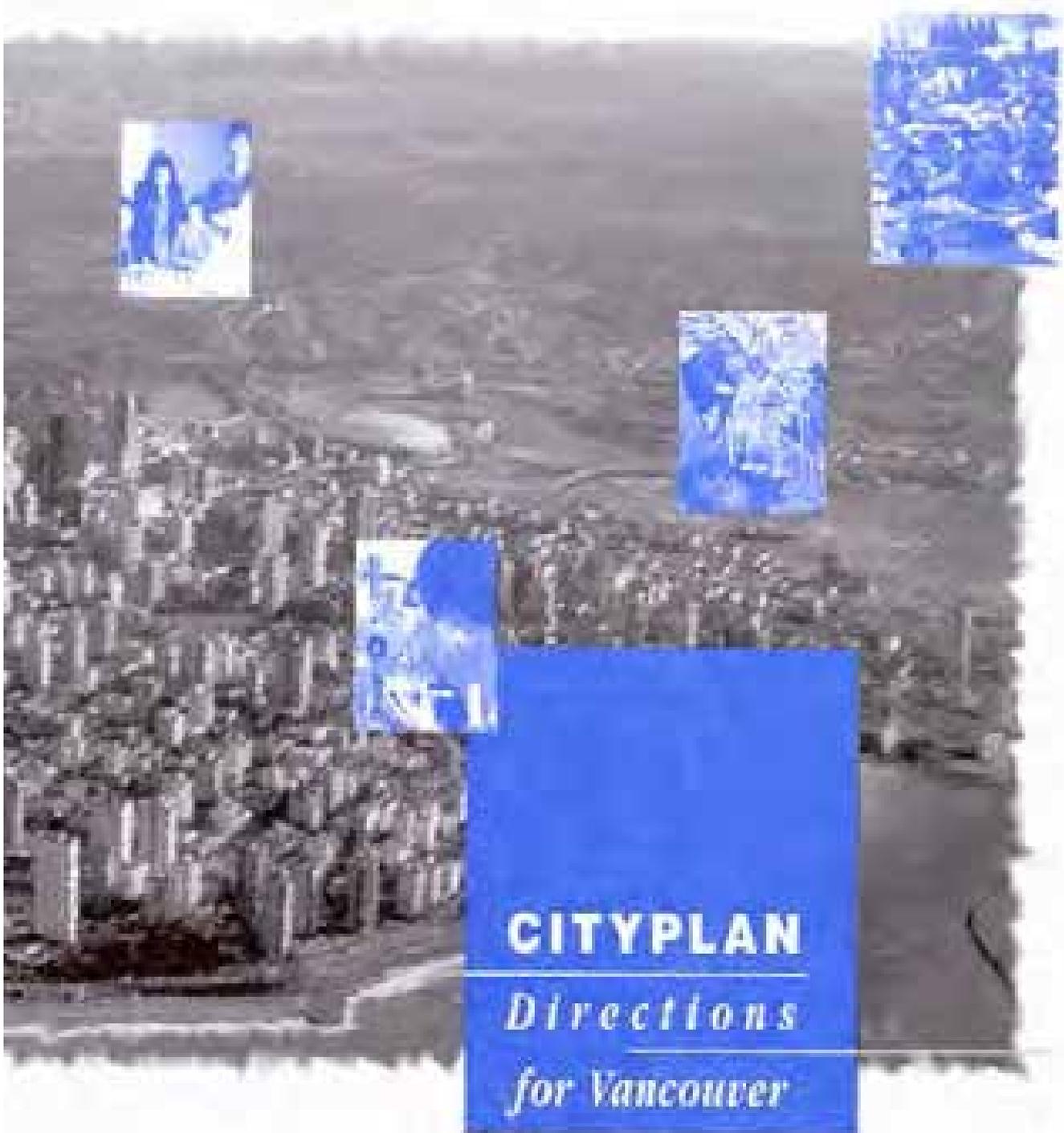
City of Neighbourhoods got 80% support yet in 1991 the Council had rejected the idea as too controversial. People had now voted to concentrate growth in existing neighbourhood centres and reduce the impact on existing low density neighbourhoods.

The results of Making Choices were distilled in to a plan by City staff before being announced, explained and disseminated through the media, open houses and the internet.

The final adoption of the plan remained with Council, a responsibility made explicit throughout the process. They voted after a Public Hearing that attracted 80 speakers. Those present recall many speaking in favour of 'their plan' although dissenters were also present, generally displeased with the densification proposed; it is unclear whether they had been engaged during the process or emerged at this final stage.

The Council, unsurprisingly, approved a plan that had the majority support of their constituents.

The plan supported sustainable development, rejected the conversion of industrial land to residential uses and focused new housing supply on low-density neighbourhoods. Council required all future budget, service, and land use reports to reference CityPlan Directions.



A Vision for the Future
From the CityPlan Process



The general feeling coming out of City Plans is that we participated in a collaborative process which engaged knowledgeable, thoughtful citizens with a responsive and innovative planning department which was in turn backed by a supportive political climate and culture. We see the results every day. Change is a threatening concept, but change is neither instant nor necessarily disruptive.

John Buckbrough



While City Plan did aim to protect existing Industrial land there has been varying success over the years. Vancouver faces challenges to accommodate jobs growth within the City, the profitability of residential development all but eliminating the creation of new commercial space in recent years. Transport data shows more people now leaving the City of Vancouver on a daily basis for work than entering.

Neighbourhood Visions: CityPlan Stage 2

CityPlan was based on the principle that each neighbourhood would develop its own detailed land use plans, design guidelines, zoning regulations that would respond to the overall direction of CityPlan.

While this level of local involvement in specialisation is highly desirable within the community it has major implications for the design and construction industry through the creation of many sets of different rules across the city, adding to complexity and costs; this inherent conflict is not specific to Vancouver but remains a challenge in all diverse cities; its complexity ensures that these tensions will always remain to some degree.

CityPlan has since been criticised by many within the planning, design and construction industry for being too vague. It did not produce an implementable plan yet managed to motivate and inspire many local residents; widely acknowledged as its enduring legacy. This created a situation of increased expectations and

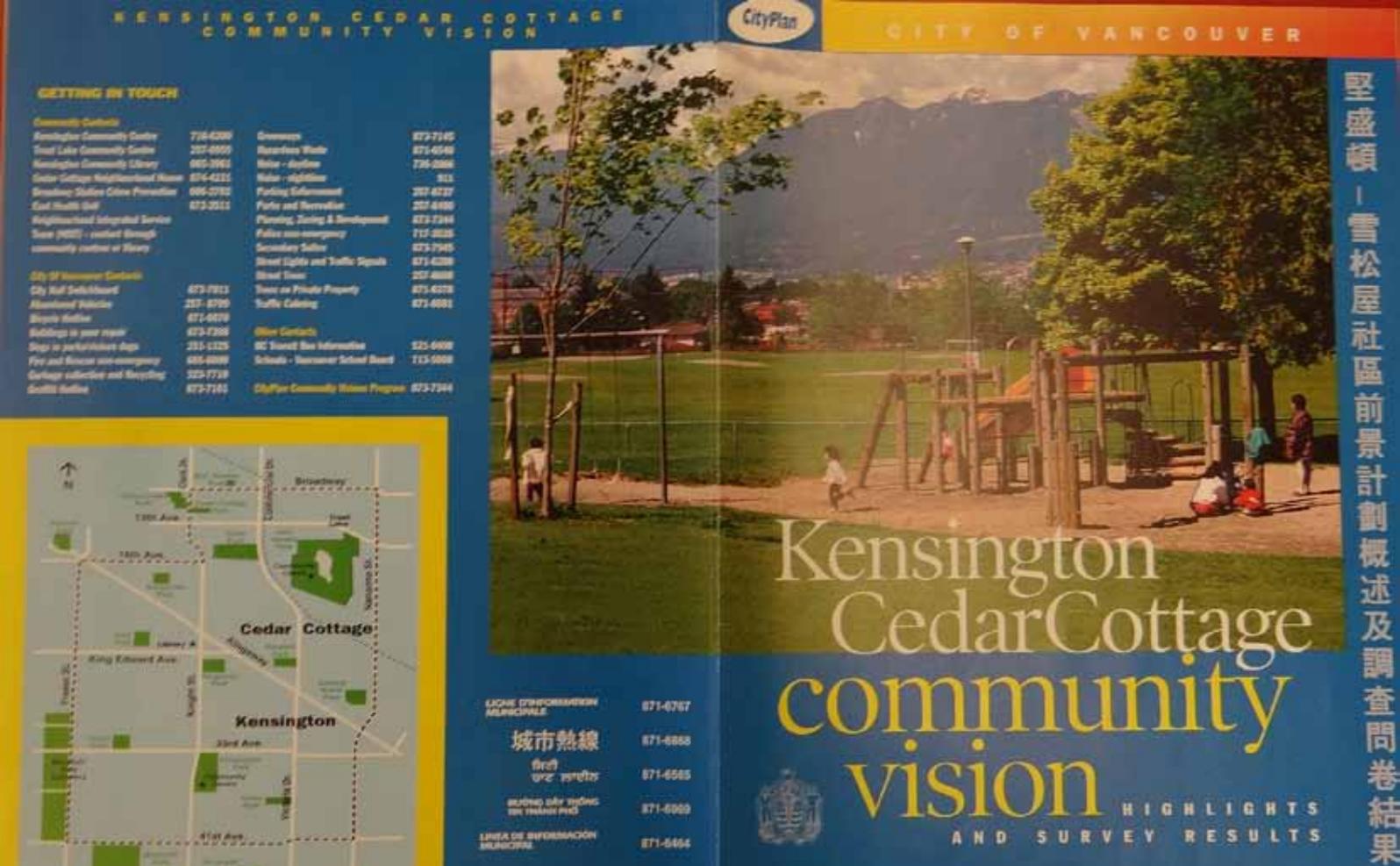
aspirations but minimal pathways to implementation with existing hurdles of zoning restrictions still in place.

Ann McAfee and others involved at the time acknowledged that this was a first step arguing that this groundwork was necessary to build the relationships and confidence within the community before progressing to the more difficult choices ahead.

In July 1996 Council approved the terms of reference for the Community Vision phase of CityPlan for each of the 13 neighbourhoods. Community Visions were to have a 30 year time frame and were envisaged to take 8 months. There were to be four steps similar to those during CityPlan:

- Getting in touch
- Creating ideas
- Choosing directions
- Finalizing the vision

As the City was only able to resource two Neighbourhood Visions at a time a single day workshop was held with five representatives from each of the 13 neighbourhoods. They were asked to identify criteria for assessing planning priorities during the morning session.



After lunch City planners presented information based on the community identified criteria, from here the participants were able to identify the areas across the city that were most in need to planning assistance. The two areas were Kensington Cedar Cottage & Riley Park.

Terms of Reference for the Community Visions process are unequivocal that the participation of special interest representatives from outside the community (e.g. heritage advocates, architects or designers, bicycle user groups, affordable housing groups, environmentalists, developers, real estate agents, etc.) will be limited to providing information or ideas through materials prepared by staff, or participating on an invited basis at workshops or meetings.

Various subgroups were formed for each Visioning area:

A **Community Liaison Group** that consisted of local residents selected by the local residents to oversee the process. This group ensured that rules, procedures and Terms of Reference conditions were followed. The group themselves had no greater influence on outcomes than other community members but were able to draw attention to inconsistencies in approach or implementation by those involved, both City staff and community members.

In interviews after the fact several planning staff outlined the usefulness of Community Liaison Groups as these roles freed up their time to focus on planning

rather than process issues but more importantly in giving a role to those in the community who care passionately for their neighbourhood but had little to offer in terms of planning issues and who historically had become difficult to deal with especially in public forums where they had tended to side-track debate into process not planning territory.

A **City Perspectives Panel**, or City Hats, was appointed comprising of people from other city neighbourhoods. Their role was to ensure that the directions being taken by the neighbourhood undergoing planning were consistent with CityPlan Objectives, to ensure that they were pulling their weight. As with the CLG this proved beneficial for planners as the community policed the process allowing staff to focus their limited time on the planning issues.

A Neighbourhood Integrated Services Team (NIST) was formed for each planning area. The NIST consisted of City staff across all departments, police, fire, parks, schools and health care. The team was designated to respond to issues requiring cross-departmental solutions therefore avoiding the Planning staff getting distracted from the task at hand.

The Community Visions Staff Team included a planner, a planning analyst, a planning assistant, and where necessary a community outreach worker fluent in the relevant language groups.



Increasing Density

The Knight and Kingsway Neighbourhood Centre plan delivered a Housing Plan that rezoned an area surrounding the shopping strip for higher density housing including courtyard rowhouses and duplexes. In Vancouver a duplex is a strata-titled building that is internally divided parallel to the street creating two homes that appear as one, utilizing the rear lane for car parking.

Since the adoption of the plan there have been several successful examples of gentle densification in the neighbourhood, both through the redevelopment of existing low density homes and surplus light industrial land adjacent to established single family homes.

Some resistance occurred initially but the Vision Implementation Committee was explicit that the decisions had been made during the planning process and that the opportunity to comment had passed. The rezoning of the land to permit the new housing types meant that the approval (subject to Building Code compliance) was assured; a similar approach to that proposed for NSW.

While these developments have increased density within existing neighbourhoods the buildings are of similar height and style. The availability of rear lane access cannot be underestimated in the success of this gentle densification model; the ability to remove the visual clutter of parking and driveway cuts from the streetscape has enabled the maintenance of street

trees that typify most of Vancouver's single-family neighbourhoods. This is a design challenge that will need to be resolved for Sydney's middle ring suburbs.

Financing Change

Vancouver uses a **Development Cost Levy** (DCL) on all new development to pay for growth related needs such as parks, transportation, childcare, and replacement (social/non-profit) housing. Differing square foot rates are charged for low density residential, high density residential, commercial, and industrial uses to reflect different service requirements. The system is similar to Section 94 contributions in New South Wales.

The **Community Amenity Contribution** (CAC) is a monetary or in-kind charge on additional density approved through rezoning. This 'value capture' system has received praise for its ability to fund public works rather than allow all profits to flow to developers.

The CAC process involves a project by project negotiation between the proponent and the City Real Estate department. Developers provide their development financials to the City who then, after review, takes a percentage of the 'land lift'.

Vancouver EcoDensity



Initiative

In recent years the City has been taking a larger share of the land lift as they come under increasing pressure to deliver affordable housing in an increasingly unaffordable city as the Provincial and Federal governments decrease their funding contributions.

There is minimal transparency to the system, fostering negative perceptions of the relationships between City Hall and the development industry. The time investment and complexity of the deals that surround the CAC's results in very few developers having the skills, patience or funds to navigate the process; it takes around 36 months to get a rezoning approved in Vancouver, compared to 24 months in neighbouring Surrey. The significant investment of time and energy does appear to encourage developers to go for the largest developments possible.

The basis of the CAC system is that most development requires rezoning. This is a convenient and profitable situation for the City as it provides a steady stream of income that assists in meeting their infrastructure needs. Unfortunately it has resulted in minimal rezoning of land ahead of a development proposal, defeating the purpose of a planning process.

It can be argued that as the least affordable city in the world 'value capture' has done little for the housing affordability crisis in Vancouver. Its proponents point to the infrastructure paid for through CACs as evidence of benefit to the public, albeit only those who can afford to live in Vancouver.

EcoDensity

A change of mayor in 2005 saw a change in pace in the push for development. Sam Sullivan along with newly minted Director of Planning, Brent Toderian formulated EcoDensity. A policy of densification in tall, small footprint towers located near high frequency transit that was awarded the Planning Excellence award from the Canadian Institute of Planners in 2009.

Unfortunately EcoDensity was a City policy developed and implemented by the City with no noticeable input from the community. While the policy itself had many similar principles to CityPlan the process of its implementation alienated many and to this day continues to be a touchstone of community anger. It demonstrates quite elegantly how deep relationships can be damaged so swiftly.

Recent Developments

In 2010 the City announced that four new Community Plans would be developed. There have been very mixed results from this latest process, page 18 details some of the issues that arose in the Marpole plan while the Grandview-Woodland plan is still unfinished and hotly contested.

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Kensington Cedar Cottage

Kensington - Cedar Cottage (KCC) was one of two pilot areas to undertake the Community Vision program, the goal to implement the CityPlan Directions.

KCC is located to the east of Main Street, a lower socio-economic area of Vancouver but relatively close to Downtown. At the time the area had an issue with street prostitution and a parallel drugs trade, the local library was in need of renovation and increased space and there was no local supermarket, the Safeway had closed down and replaced by a flea market.

The KCC Community Vision supported:

- Strengthening and improving the main shopping streets
- No support for shopping malls or big box retail
- Better designed mixed buildings on all major streets but no additional height above 4 storeys
- A narrow majority support mixed use development along the main commercial arterial roads.
- 82% support the retention of single-family areas
- 68% want secondary suites approvals to be easier and better designed.
- Liked increasing row housing, duplexes, and 4- and 6-plexes but reject further intensification
- Supported housing for seniors but not in 6-12 storey buildings

King Edward Village

The most noticeable development arising from the CityPlan era and the Neighbourhood Centre plan that followed the Community Vision is King Edward Village.

The former Safeway site is located at the intersection of two major roads, its function as a flea market was unpopular with locals who saw it as “a place to sell stolen goods” and who wanted a supermarket to return.

The City, community, developer and supermarket operator worked together to develop a design that incorporated an acceptable solution for all. The development consists of two towers of 17 and 12 storeys with 6-8 storey podium buildings defining the street edges and an internal pedestrian focused roadway.

During the design process the developer was required to buy out the restrictive covenant that Safeway held over the site, it was negotiated with the community for the tower to have an additional two levels to generate sufficient income to cover the costs, many in the community were happy to accept the additional density in exchange for the additional amenity.

A new library was provided at street level within the complex as part of the negotiations between developer and the City; the facility increased from 1,200ft² to 12,000ft².





Marpole Community Plan & Thin Streets



Marpole is on the southern most edge of the City of Vancouver and has a diverse population mix with a variety of housing types and tenures. Feedback to the broad community is given primarily through Open Houses; a series of display boards explain the emerging directions of the plan.

The community was generally pleased with the directions taken on all issues except land use. The housing workshops which operate in a World Café style focus on broad issues such as affordability, protection of existing rental stock and social housing. Discussion around density is rarely placed in context; it is couched in terms of increased housing choice and a need to accommodate growth rather than where exactly where or how this may occur.

In June 2013 it was announced that the Thin Streets concept was to be investigated for a specific street in Marpole. The concept originated from the re:think housing competition run in parallel with the Mayors Task Force on Affordable Housing in 2012; it proposes to take a wide suburban street, reduce road width by 50% and utilize the reclaimed land for housing or parks.

The potentially effected residents were informed by letter that the Thin Streets proposal was under consideration; protests were arranged, the media responded and within two days the City Council had removed the proposal from the plan announcing they had listened to the public.

The Marpole experience typifies several other things happening concurrently in Vancouver in parallel neighbourhood planning processes. The initial stages of consultation, especially the World Café workshops fostering as sense of working together and respectful listening are building good will and generally shared directions. The discussions around density and land use are not going into the depth that is required to come to a common understanding.

It appears that the City has some predetermined goals in relation to densification; both current urban planning theory and the needs of larger developers appear to be driving factors. This is not being communicated to the public during the discussions but becomes apparent when draft plans are unveiled that have rezoning proposals unfamiliar to those involved in the workshops. It is at this point that the communities are becoming enraged and ironically, more engaged.

Many of community members involved since the beginning of the latest round of neighbourhood planning believe the City's objectives for density could be achieved through an open and honest dialogue; the goodwill did exist until recently, people have demonstrated a willingness to be involved in the long term future of their areas and the current process is not politically sustainable.

3

Seattle





When citizens explain the plans and issues to other citizens you change the conversation

Karma Ruder



Engaging Communities focused on the neighbouring planning undertaken by the City of Seattle Neighbourhood Planning Office (NPO) starting in the 1990s. The origins of their work lie in the displeasure of the community at the release of 1994 Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Planning in Seattle is somewhat complex. Seattle sits with King County, which is part of the Puget Sound Regional Council that is part of Washington State.

In 1990 the Washington State Growth Management Act legislated that all new growth would occur in agreed Urban Areas; this effectively ended greenfield development.

The Act required each City to have a Comprehensive Plan, a document outlining how they will accommodate growth.

based upon the population forecast made for the County by the Office of Financial Management, the Urban Growth Areas in the County shall include areas and densities sufficient to permit urban growth that is projected to occur in the County for the succeeding 20-year period. Each Urban Growth Area shall permit urban densities and shall include greenbelt and open space areas

The process for allocating growth targets in King County is a collaborative exercise involving input from the county and cities. The allocations determined through this process are to be guided

by existing relevant policies at the regional, countywide, and local levels and are to take into account best available data on factors influencing future growth in the region¹

The allocation of growth targets has been described as part science, part horse trading as they ceased to become predictions during the processes described above.

As local government viability is heavily dependent on a healthy tax base, increasing population and business activity is desirable at the institutional level creating competition between Counties for development dollars.

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I got paid to go out in public and get yelled at.

Stephen Antupit

Towards a Sustainable Seattle - 1994 Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan was developed by the Planning Department. As was common at the time, community outreach was undertaken, meetings held, feedback sought before the Department retreated to write the plan.

From the numerous values that were discussed four key principles were identified:

- Community
- Environment stewardship
- Economic opportunity and security
- Social equity

It was specifically identified that:

“The City will facilitate and support a strong sense of community within neighborhoods. The City will strive to support people of all ages, and ethnic, economic or social groups in finding a sense of belonging and ownership, accessing needed services, and connecting with other people.”

In a move not dissimilar to Sydney’s City of Cities or the polycentric city, Towards a Sustainable Seattle proposed an Urban Village strategy linking together existing centres through improved transit. In order to respect the diversity of scale and character of various areas of the 370km² City a classification of urban areas was proposed:

- Urban Centres
- Urban Hub Villages
- Urban Residential Villages
- Manufacturing and Industrial Centres

The Plan identified increase in jobs and populations at both the Urban Village level (45% of residential growth in the five Urban Centres) and then further broken down by individual Urban Village.

These steps were relatively simple for the planners at the time as most of Seattle had a zoning capacity that was greater than the current built form allowing much of the projected growth to be allocated to existing underutilised zoning capacity. A 10% decrease in population between the 1960’s and 1990’s, an unfamiliar concept in Australian cities, was partially responsible for the additional capacity.

Regardless of the merits of the Plan it was poorly received. One planner explained his job at the time as, ‘I got paid to go out in public and get yelled at’.



“The purposes of the neighborhood planning program are to enable the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the city by:

- 1) helping people achieve their goals for their neighborhoods;*
- 2) involving the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established citywide goals; and*
- 3) creating an environment which will encourage building of community within neighborhoods.”*

Resolution 29015, October 1994



Neighbourhood Planning Office

After much outcry and some political pain Mayor Rice ordered a rewrite of the Plan from 990 pages down to slim 120 pages and announced that the finer detail of the Comprehensive Plan would be worked out through neighbourhood planning.

Mayor Rice and the Council were genuinely interested in building community and were persuaded by Jim Diers and Karma Ruder in the Department of Neighbourhoods that handing over the planning process to the neighbourhoods could allow them to achieve their goals. Despite a counter proposal from the Planning Department on how to resolve the situation in October of 1994, the City Council passed Resolution 29015:

“The purposes of the neighborhood planning program are to enable the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the city by:

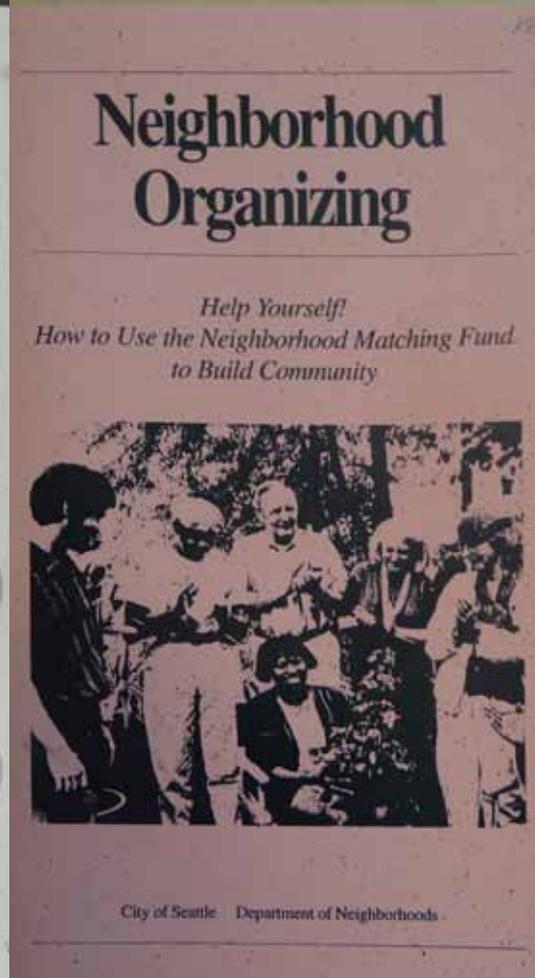
- 1) helping people achieve their goals for their neighborhoods;*
- 2) involving the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established citywide goals; and*
- 3) creating an environment which will encourage building of community within neighborhoods.”*

The Neighbourhood Planning Office was established reporting directly to the Mayors office with a budget of \$4.7m, a director (Karma Ruder) and ten project managers. The NPO was designed to run for a specified period of time (four years initially later extended by six months), both to ensure the plans were completed but also to prevent a bureaucratic desire for self-perpetuation, a structure Ruder believes was critical to the success of the NPO.

“The proposed model was based on Complexity science, the notion that you create principles that you’re really clear about, relinquish the predetermined ideas, believe in peoples ability to self-organise and set the rules and boundaries that guide the process. This way the people feel they have ownership over the work”

Managing Expectations

The majority of the objections had been flowing from the single family neighbourhoods yet they were only projected to accommodate 16% of the residential growth. The Council took that view that as the Urban Centres and Villages were taking the majority of growth they should have first opportunity for planning. If funds were left over then the single family areas were eligible to apply for those funds. All 37 urban villages accepted the offer.



Neighbourhood Planning Office resources

The potentially politically charged situation with the influential single family neighbourhoods (they represented 75% of Seattle at the time) was diffused through the statement:

We are prioritising the areas taking the greatest amount of growth, would you like more growth?

The 37 areas were tasked with creating a plan for their neighbourhoods. There was still disquiet over the targets imposed so neighbourhoods were given two options, question the underlying growth projections or find a way to make it work. As limited funding was available doing both was not viable so all 37 neighbourhoods choose to accept the targets, one area subsequently increased theirs.

The task of the community was to prepare a plan that could then be implemented. They were given funding, the power to hire their own planners and were allowed to include items that the City disagreed with although there was no guarantee it would get approved or implemented. The deliverables were set out in a formal agreement with the City.

The process was clearly laid out so all participants understood their potential influence and the various checkpoints the Neighbourhood Planning Process (NPP) would pass through.

Participation

In 1989 the City of Seattle had an established District Council system that assisted in the prioritisation of the Neighbourhood Matching Fund projects and provided a more direct pathway between the City and the people.

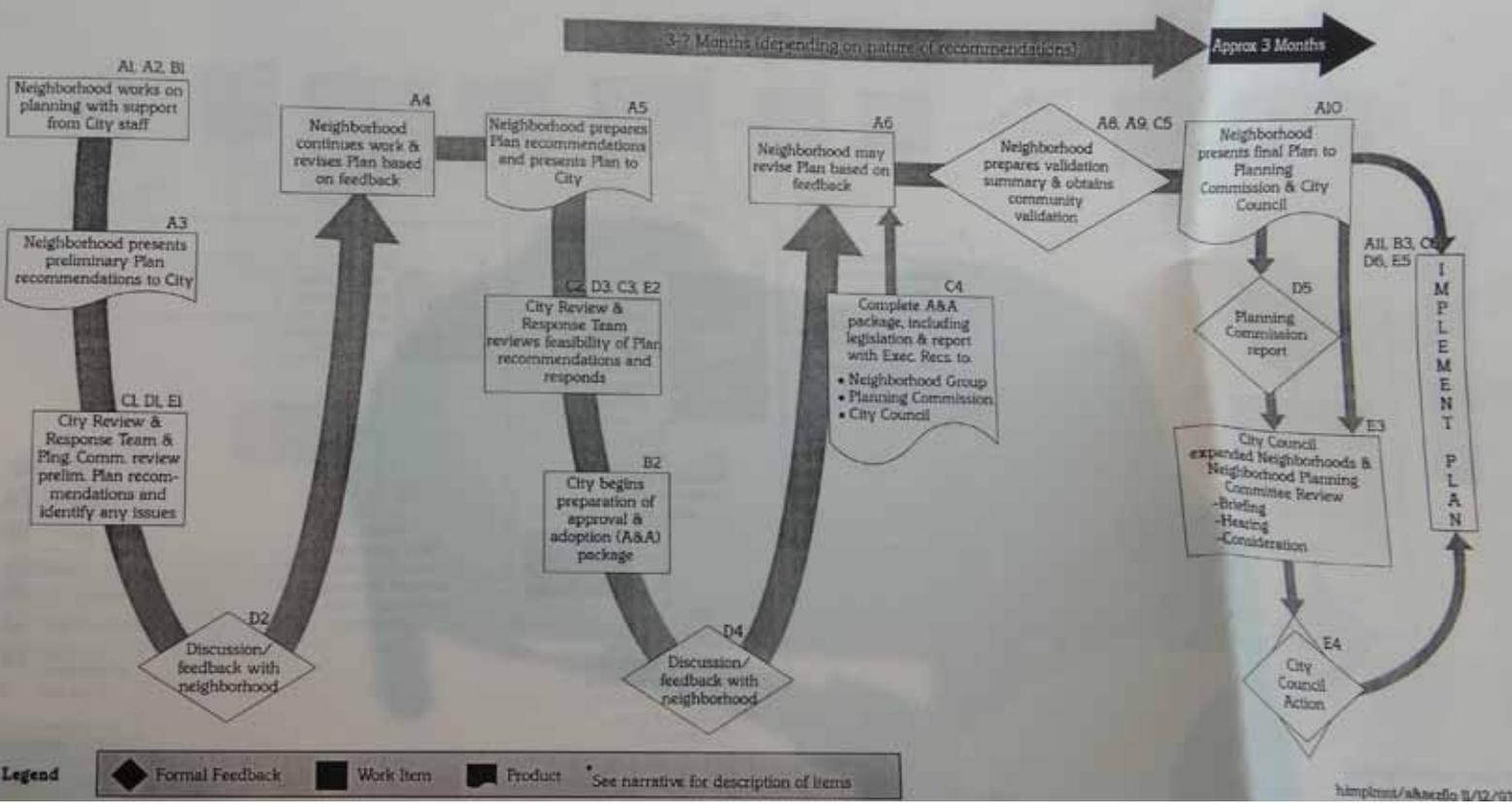
The District Councils were not used as the Planning Committees as there was a desire to broaden the base although many people involved in them also played a role in the Planning Committees. The connection is important as the more successful areas have strong District Councils still meeting monthly and progressing projects twenty years after the neighbourhood planning process began.

The NPO requirements for diversity helped ensure a wider range of participants; it was emphasised that plans that reached Council that had visible public opposition were unlikely to get approved, this ensured the vast majority of issues were resolved before getting to Council. All 37 plans were approved with only 2 required any serious mediation and amendment.

Ensuring representative groups was not always easy, it requires the project manager to understand the dynamics in the neighbourhood and occasionally for the Director to step in and insist on broader representation.

The dilution of the 'usual suspects' through

Neighborhood Plan Approval & Adoption Process- Summary



Approval & Adoption process flowchart

more representative groups and the allure of implementation drew out a much wider spectrum of people with broader views, this was critical to shifting the debate from 'if' to 'how' growth should be managed.

As Ballard resident and former Secretary of City Neighbourhood Council Jody Grage explained,

"Change is coming anyway. Developers can dictate change or we can".

The promise of a neighbourhood plan by the community that would get implemented was a big draw to those previously disheartened by top down planning and great plans left gathering dust on the shelf; as one Committee member stated:

"we understood that the plan itself was not the goal".

Twenty years after the NPP began I was fortunate enough to attend a meeting of the Ballard District Council in the Ballard Library. Jody Grage and Rob Mattson, both integral cogs in the original NPP wheel where both in attendance and still actively involved along with several other members. It is a testament to the community building capacity of the NPP and the people involved that its influence has run so deep and long.

Neighbourhood Planning - Phase One

Each area was required to form a Committee that was representative of the area based on demographic data held by the City. The NPO has to be satisfied that the Committee was representative although in reality, some were more representative than others.

This Phase was to do outreach, establish the values of the community and identify areas of focus for the Phase Two planning. Each area was allocated \$10,000 towards the costs for this phase although they received significant contributions in kind from residents and businesses. It has been estimated the City got a multiplier of 4-6 on their investment in neighbourhood planning.

The goals were defined as:

- 1: Conduct a community assessment.
- 2: Create and execute an outreach plan.
- 3: Create a neighborhood vision and report to the community.
- 4: Identify issues to address in the neighborhood plan.
- 5: Prepare for Phase 2.
- 6: Report to the City.

The Ballard and the Crown Hill areas decided early on to combine their resources and plan together as the area was a natural neighborhood with many interactions across the 'boundaries' previously determined by the planners; showing the level of flexibility that existed in the system.



I am a convener. I get people to park different sets of boots under the same table. I am a mediator. I facilitate group dialogue. . . . I find people who are frustrated and are not plugged into the process and are just throwing rocks, and I meet with them and help them understand how they can work with their neighbors, or meet with the new principal to build a relationship with the school. . . . My goal is to build relationships and a system of problem solving around these. . . . But I'm not the architect, just the convener

Rob Mattson



The area of Queen Anne attempted to subvert the process by excluding residents from a less affluent part of the neighbourhood in an attempt to locate all additional housing density away from their large single family homes. The NPO and project manager forcefully explained that as their resident group was unrepresentative it would be illegible for funding for Stage 2 of the NPP.

This clear set of rules provided a line of sight through an inherent issue in community outreach, while not easy to navigate, the governance structure in place allowed the City staff to ensure the integrity of the process was maintained. If this had not been successful it is possible that other neighbourhoods may also have attempted to game the system. The resolve of the NPO individuals can be understated in these circumstances and illustrates the importance of the right staff being hired.

The project managers were tasked with facilitating the process; most of them were not planners but community builders. They were to provide assistance to the neighbourhood planning committees so they could do the planning.

As Rob Mattson, Ballard District Coordinator said:

I am a convener. I get people to park different sets of boots under the same table. I am a mediator. I facilitate group dialogue. . . . I find people who are frustrated and are not plugged into the process and are just throwing rocks, and I meet with them and help them understand how they can work with their neighbors, or meet with the new principal to build a relationship with the school. . . . My goal is to build relationships and a system of problem solving around these. . . . But I'm not the architect, just the convener

Public meetings as well as Ideas Fairs were held to gather input as well as to recruit people to the various Committees that formed. The Ballard area had over 800 people involved in meetings at various stages and had 7 sub-committees in addition to the main Planning Committee and a Coordinating Over-Sight group that ensured consistency between the sub- committees and highlighted any potential contradictions in direction.

This Phase took most of the groups 6-12 months to complete.



BALLARD

municipal center master plan area

Design Guidelines

Effective January 15, 2001



City of Seattle
Department of Design,
Construction & Land Use

Neighbourhood Planning - Phase Two

The stages of Phase Two were clearly defined with detailed descriptions of what is expected by the City especially regarding the validation process:

- 1: Continue and intensify outreach efforts.
- 2: Create a neighborhood plan.
- 3: Validate the neighborhood plan.
- 4: Submit the final draft to City.

The second phase took between 12-24 months for most groups. The relatively long timelines required that each area was continually recruiting new participants as people moved away, lost enthusiasm or had other demands placed on their time.

In Ballard, Rob Mattson explained that each meeting was preceded by a 30 minute catch up meeting. This allowed new participants to get up to speed with the topic and previous decisions while not irritating the ongoing group members with repetitive recounts of 'how we got here'. The process required an accurate recollection of past events which ensured that any misunderstandings or contentious issues were flushed out.

A toolkit was provided to each neighbourhood that gave them detailed information they would require to plan. This includes information on zoning, transportation, housing but also on the requirements of the neighbourhood planning process and a comprehensive 'outreach tool set' that included

information on how to engage specific groups, how to run meetings etc.

The volume of information and the time for it collation should not be underestimated; it took a whole year to pull together all the Geographic Information System (GIS) data necessary to provide a DVD to all neighbourhoods so they could produce any map they could conceivable need. A 'Program Elements' binder was compiled explaining how all Council processes functioned. While a large proportion of this information already existed, it was estimated that at least 25% was newly created.

The provision of accurate, descriptive information was understood to be key to engaging with the community if the expectation was that they would be providing solutions and recommendations to the City; it would be unfair to expect them to 'just know it'.

This phase continued the Work of the topical committees (transport, housing etc) established during Phase 1 and ultimately resulted in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan.

\$60-80,000 was made available to each planning area depending on their size and demographics. Areas with a higher proportion of residents with English as a second language were expected to require more money to allow for translation and outreach costs.

II. Additional Activities

The activities listed in this section are not directly associated with a Key Strategy. For each activity, the City has identified next steps as a part of the City's work program in response to the neighborhood plan. Many of the next steps are actions to be taken by the City, but in some cases, the neighborhood or other agency will be able to take the next steps. As with the activities listed for each Key Strategy in Section I, these activities are intended to be implemented over the span of many years.

#	Activity	Priority	Time Frame (years)	Cost Est.	Implementor	Executive Response (Filled in by City)	Executive Recommended Action (Filled in by City)	Council Action Taken (Filled in by City)
Economic Development								
II ED1	Provide timely permitting of impending projects within the retail core.				DCLU	This recommendation is addressed through two current projects to examine and refine permitting processes: Regulating Construction (PIRC) and Regulating Land Use (PIRL).	Recommendation is already being implemented through department initiative.	C1 Approve Exec's Rec. Action.
Residential Development								
II RD1	Develop new regulations for accessory dwelling units in LDT, L1 and L2 zones that would allow freestanding units such as cottages and garage conversions and permit adjustments to setbacks.				DCLU	Cottage and garage conversions are already allowed in these zones. Any problems with developing such units may lie with development standards pertaining to lot coverage, setbacks etc. Land use code barriers to this type of conversion are being identified in other neighborhood plans. This issue should be dealt with citywide.	Recommendation to allow ADUs in LDT, L1 and L2 zones is already being implemented through existing regulations. Recommendation to adjust setback requirements for ADUs will be considered by DCLU in 1999 as part of its work on ADUs and the Mayor's Housing Action Agenda.	C1, C4 Approve Exec's Rec. Action with following clarification: When DCLU reviews ADU regulations in 1999 as part of its work on the Mayor's Housing Action Agenda, DCLU will work with the neighborhood to clarify its request so that DCLU can have enough information to consider the request.

The Ballard committees used their funds through several of their sub-committee groups to get professional and technical input for various policy directions. The transportation committee sought assistance on solutions for traffic calming, needing to better understand what could work both physically and financially. Professional input was also sought on Design Guidelines for the proposed Municipal Centre, a project that eventually saw the construction of the Ballard Library.

The Committees were free to work in their own ways but were contractually obliged to ensure public support for the Plans they produced. This was established through a series of 'Open Houses' where display boards expand on the ideas and values of the community, comment forms and 'dot voting' are used for feedback.

The validation process was required by the NPO at critical stages so Council could be confident that the communities broadly supported the plans and recommendations before them. The knowledge that validation would be required before the plan's approval reinforced with the neighbourhood the need to be inclusive and to build momentum behind their ideas.

All plans were required to meet the following criteria:

- Be consistent with the citywide Comprehensive Plan or identify where amendments are needed, including their justification

- Contain final urban village boundaries
- Be legal and valid under the State Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws
- Contain prioritized recommendations
- Be presented in an easily understandable format
- Document outreach processes that demonstrate and measure effort, participation, and community support for the plan
- Articulate a concrete strategy and identify available resources to realize each recommendation

Council held its own meetings before approving the plans to hear the public speak about the plan, in the vast majority of cases the commentary was supportive reinforcing the underlying approach of engaged communities providing acceptable solutions to city scale issues.

The 'concrete strategy' took the form of the Approvals and Adoption matrix, it outlined all the actions required to implement the Plan. The City responded to each recommendation line by line outlining future possible actions by relevant departments, requesting further information or promising to consider actions on in future deliberations. There were a total of 4277 recommendations across the 37 plans!

Implementation

The City was able to provide \$50,000 to each neighbourhood to begin to implement their plan; this is in addition to funds that could be secured through the Neighbourhood Matching Fund.

Six Neighbourhood Development Managers (NDM's) were hired to help deliver the plan. They were each assigned a physical area of the City and given responsibility for several of the 37 plans. Their role was to coordinate across City departments, as they had the backing of the Mayor they were quite powerful as the departments were obliged to align their work with the goals of the various plans.

For several years the Approvals and Adoption matrices were used to guide the work plans of various city departments. Anecdotally, many of the departments felt empowered by this process as their work was now aligned to community desires and expectations.

Critics of the NPP point to the relatively small projects that were implemented through the matrices and while it is fair to say that Seattle has failed to deal with its transportation issues in any meaningful way, the City has seen improvements in public amenity at the neighbourhood scale.

The input of residents into the smaller details of neighbourhood maintenance and development is evident through the care shown for parks and the continual evolution of community through initiatives such as urban forestry and cycling infrastructure.

Political changes in 2003 saw a dramatic cut to the funding of the NDMs with their complete disbandment occurring in 2007. Following the 2003 cut the Plan implementation has deteriorated with a change from the Plan driving the Departments to the Departments driving the Plan.

The success of neighbourhood planning has been in the implementation. In Ballard this can be attributed to the continued efforts of the community, the aim was always to 'plan for implementation'.





Levy System



Seattle has a Levy system that permits the Council to seek permission to increase sales tax for a specified period (generally 7 years) in order to fund specific projects.

In 1998 the City Council raised \$198m through the Libraries for All bond with 69% approval. The majority of neighbourhoods had identified libraries as being significant social infrastructure and in need of renewal, there was also a need for a new central Library in Downtown.

The Mayor has realized that support for a \$100m library in the CBD was unlikely to gain support from the widespread neighbourhoods but that a \$198m levy to create 27 new and refurbished libraries had real potency with the community.

In 1999 the City voted to extend a Community Center Levy for a further 8 years raising \$72m towards nine community center projects and two neighbourhood projects. Then in 2000 a Pro Parks Levy of \$198.2m was raised for both new and existing parks.

The Cal Anderson park in the heart of Capitol Hill was the largest project undertaken with the Pro Parks Levy. The park covered over an existing open reservoir providing an additional 4 acres of parkland into the dense, inner city suburb.

The use of the Levy system to deliver on projects that were supported across the city demonstrates that taxpayers are willing to pay for projects that they believe in.



Seattle Library



Neighbourhood Matching Fund



Founded in 1989 the Neighbourhood Matching Fund (NMF) has been recognized nationally for its innovative approach to social infrastructure. A brain child of Jim Diers and the Department of Neighbourhoods the NMF asks community members to apply for funds to implement projects in their communities.

The funding process sees the City provide a maximum of 50% of the funds required for the project. In sensible recognition of the resources available at a community scale the system allows communities to include donated time, or sweat equity, as part of their contribution.

In the first year the City allocated \$150,000, in 1990 \$1.5m and following the success of the NPP in 2002 Mayor Schell (1998-2002) increased the Matching Fund from \$1.5m to \$4.5m.

The funds are allocated by the City Neighbourhood Council and are now separated into smaller and larger project categories to better reflect the level of detail required based on the funds sought. As a citizen Council the process is depoliticized, the criteria for decision making remain basically unchanged since inception; projects must benefit community, strengthen grassroots organisations, be time limited and empower organisations to be self-sufficient in recognition that ongoing funding is not available through the NMF.

The first project funded by the NMF was the Freemont Troll located under a freeway bridge to the north of Downtown. The list of subsequent projects runs into the thousands, varying from hundred so of dollars to \$300,000, from art projects, to outreach programs to community gardens.



Freemont Troll



Community Garden



Public Outreach and Engagement Liaisons



Seattle has one of the most diverse populations of any North American city, connecting with the traditionally under-represented has always been a challenge and remains so today.

The Public Outreach and Engagement Liaison (POEL) program was first initiated in 2009 and is based on the Trusted Advocate model that was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in White Center, Seattle.

A Trusted Advocate is “a resident leaders and/or line staff with extensive experience working within their own ethnic communities” (Annie E Casey Foundation).

Individuals from target communities are hired as ‘bridge builders’. They are respected by the target community, both bi-lingual and bi-cultural and tend to already have jobs and often be high achievers within their communities. They must be able to provide simultaneous translation into English from the relevant language groups.

Before each outreach program, the POELs are trained by the City in the issues that will be discussed, it is not necessary for the Liaisons to be expert in the field as a City staff member will always be present to answer any questions if required.

The Liaisons organise and facilitate their own meetings, which are conducted in the relevant language, with notes taken in the same; they are translated later by the Liaisons for City records.

The POEL has been very successful in reaching the previously hard-to-reach communities especially in Southeast Seattle; this has assisted the City in achieving its responsibility under the Race and Social Justice Initiative to these communities. This has led to increased demands for the services of the POELs from multiple City departments.

Outreach Officer, Kerry Wade explained the professional challenges faced when attending a meeting you are unable to understand as it is conducted in an unfamiliar language; a humbling experience that fosters reflection on the experiences of the participants in everyday interactions.

As with all engagement activities the appearance of independence is important to the credibility of the POELs, to this end they are employed through a third party organization. This organisation applies a percentage charge to the POELs remuneration further increasing the cost to the City.

Since the POEL project first ran in Southeast Seattle the community has successfully applied for several Federal grants including for a new \$4.3m community centre, has influenced the design of a new art facility to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities and been used to engage with recent immigrant communities over a new local learning farm initiative.

As Kerry Wade says, “the same challenges still apply, managing expectations as the City collects ideas but does not necessarily act upon them”.



4

Chicago





“The question is not whether we will grow as a region. We will. The question is how we will grow as a region.”

Metropolis 2020

Chicago is a city of contradictions. In the country of small government the region has 272 municipalities with 1200 units of local government covering a population approaching 10 million people.

In the home of skyscraper all but the most central parts of Downtown are sprawling suburbia.

In the City renown to planners for the Burnham Plan, the last Comprehensive Plan was released in 1969.

In a city of grassroots activists, Aldermanic Privilege allows one individual to dictate outcomes at the local level.

The initial attraction to Chicago and its potential lessons for Sydney and community engagement derived from the Common Ground project begun in 1999 by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) as the journey towards the 2040 Regional Framework Plan.

A technology-heavy process for its time, it created a vision for the region. The final stage of Common Ground, Paint the Region, utilized a combination of keypad technology and GIS to create real time two-dimensional maps of Chicago linking together green spaces, residential areas, places of work and place of leisure; ground breaking at the time.

The Commercial Club of Chicago (CCC), commissioners the 1909 Burnham Plan, in parallel, but totally disconnected from Common Ground were

developing a strategic vision for the same six county region. Chicago Metropolis 2020 was a non-profit entity created by the CCC to “to advocate for better regional planning and smart investments to promote the region’s long term health.”

Metropolis 2020 stated:

“The question is not whether we will grow as a region. We will. The question is how we will grow as a region.”

The two plans shared much ground, both advocating for a strategic approach to the integration of land use and transportation. It is fair to say that Common Ground was revolutionary in its breadth and depth of engagement however my focus switched to the implications of the governance structures of Chicago and their influence on outcomes.

Chicagoans believe in Property Rights and local decision making has proven to be detrimental to the development of the region.

All zoning and building decisions are made at the local level, the same level where government income is derived from property taxes. As the elegantly explained diagram extracted from Metropolis 2020 shows there is a systemic preference for certain types of developments over others.



*there were 135 recommendations,
one was to create an organisation
to implement the other 134*

Tracey B Fleming



The NIPC plan danced a line attempting to link land use and transportation all the while knowing that they have no powers to direct transportation policy, no mechanism for municipality cooperation and an organisational need for relevance. As a non-profit, Metropolis 2020 were less constrained.

As described by Tracey B Fleming, Director of Operations at Metropolis Strategies, “there were 135 recommendations, one was to create an organisation to implement the other 134”. He further explains that the single biggest success of Metropolis 2020 was the formation of Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

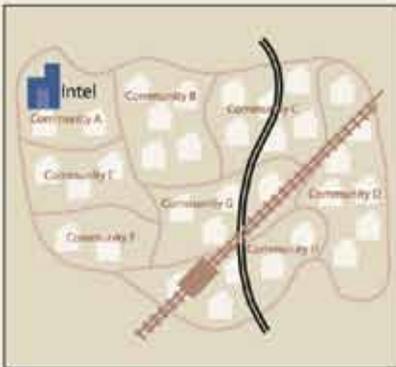
The merging of NIPC and Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) into CMAP also designating it as the Metropolitan Planning Organisation (MPO) giving responsibility for the allocation of transportation programming, regional planning, local technical assistance and data provision to local government. CMAP was tasked with producing a comprehensive regional plan.

The Go To 2040 plan sensibly utilized the great work of the Common Ground process, avoiding considerable time and repetition but still engaged quite widely. The final plan identified twelve priorities under four headings:

- Livable Communities
 - Achieve Greater Livability through Land Use and Housing
 - Manage and Conserve Water and Energy Resources
 - Expand and Improve Parks and Open Space
 - Promote Sustainable Local Food
- Human Capital
 - Improve Education and Workforce Development
 - Support Economic Innovation
- Efficient Governance
 - Reform State and Local Tax Policy
 - Improve Access to Information
 - Pursue Coordinated Investments
- Regional Mobility
 - Invest Strategically in Transportation
 - Increase Commitment to Public Transit
 - Create a More Efficient Freight Network

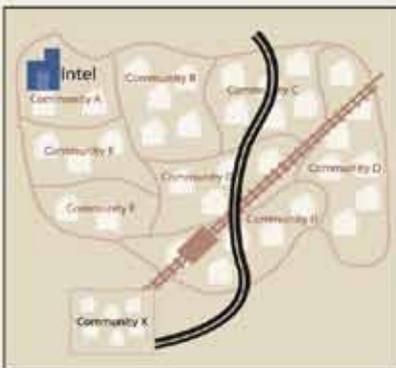
Case Study: Adam Smith's Invisible Hand Drops the Ball

How regional thinking serves all communities

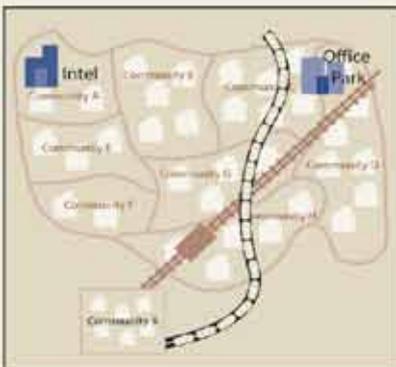


Development: Intel declares its intention to build a high-tech plant that will provide desirable jobs for workers throughout the region. Because of the state's "winner take all" tax system, communities A through G compete to attract the plant rather than cooperating to determine a location that makes the most sense for the whole region.

Result: Community A captures the tax revenue from the new plant. Yet all communities in the area must bear both the costs of new traffic congestion and the costs of providing additional public services related to the Intel development.



Meanwhile: No community has an incentive to create affordable housing for the new Intel workers because this would incur large education costs, most of which must be funded locally. Thus, many Intel workers must live in distant community X and drive to the Intel plant. The result is more traffic for everyone.



Long-term: Even community A is not a winner. Months later, the same communities compete for a new office park. Community D is the winner, creating a whole new set of traffic challenges for which the region has not planned. Again, there is no incentive for any community to create workforce housing.

A better solution: If there were a mechanism in place to promote regional cooperation, the same development could be done far more efficiently. The result would be:

- Less local traffic.
- Development that is built around existing public transit.
- More housing near jobs, shopping, and services so that residents are not forced to drive long distances.



Desperate for Development?

The majority of the 282 municipalities are poorly equipped to deal with planning issues. Many of them outsource the assessment of Code-compliant building permits to the private sector as a cost-effective solution to the high costs associated with government staff and their associated pension and health care responsibilities.

Much of suburban Chicago has low densities and suffered badly during, and since, the 2008 financial crisis. The reliance of property taxes for municipal funding encourages a 'development at all costs' model as municipalities are responsible for schools, fire and policing services amongst the usual parks and roads.

The complex relationship between local governments at the forefront of local issues and agencies hierarchically above them but without the necessary legislative power to enforce their will provides an opportunity for great innovation.

CMAP have the responsibility for data provision to the municipalities. With a small staff they are able to deliver highly effective planning assistance to areas that often have no planning staff at all through the Local Technical Assistance program.

Positive Developments

The areas of Chicago that have rail connections are seizing the opportunities of Transit Orientated Development (TOD), improving connections across the city and access to jobs.

The locally based, philanthropically-funded Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) has been pivotal in providing evidence based research to drive change. The independence of the organisation allows it to prosecute cases that a politically constrained organisation can not.

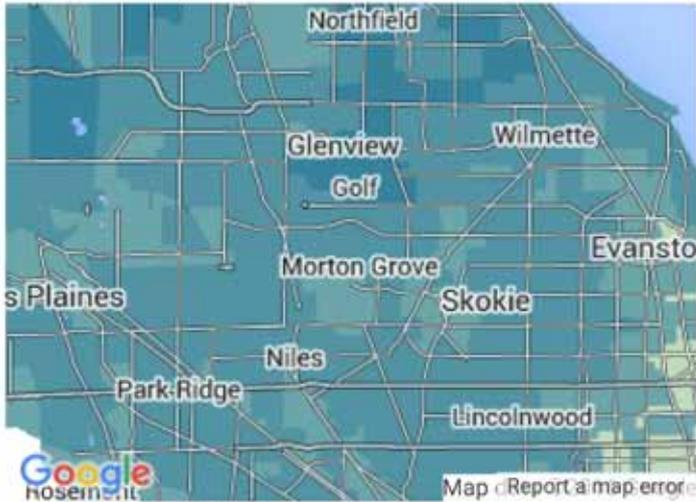
CNT work includes the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index that assess the costs of living and travelling across Chicago. It highlights the inequality that emerges from poor connectivity.



Traditional measures of housing affordability ignore transportation costs. Typically a household's second-largest expenditure, transportation costs are largely a function of the characteristics of the neighborhood in which a household chooses to live. [Location Matters](#). Compact and dynamic neighborhoods with walkable streets and high access to jobs, transit, and a wide variety of businesses are more efficient, affordable, and sustainable.

The statistics below are modeled for the Regional Typical Household, Income: \$61,156 Commuters: 1.20 Household Size: 2.72 (Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI)

Map of Transportation Costs % Income



Location Efficiency Metrics

Places that are compact, close to jobs and services, with a variety of transportation choices, allow people to spend less time, energy, and money on transportation.

4%

Percent of location efficient neighborhoods

Neighborhood Characteristic Scores (1-10)

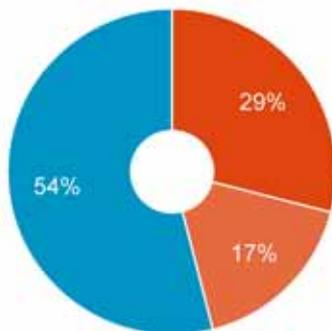
As compared to neighborhoods in all 955 U.S. regions in the Index



Average Housing + Transportation Costs % Income

Factoring in both housing and transportation costs provides a more comprehensive way of thinking about the cost of housing and true affordability.

- Housing
- Transportation
- Remaining Income



Transportation Costs

In dispersed areas, people need to own more vehicles and rely upon driving them farther distances which also drives up the cost of living.





Local Technical Assistance



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) hold no legal power over the municipalities in the Region yet are responsible for the implementation of the GOTO 2040 plan. One of their strategies is to use a Local Technical Assistance program to conduct research with, and for, the municipalities; the only requirement to receive assistance is that the project must further the goals of GOTO 2040. The municipalities are generally short of highly qualified staff and/or funding; the LTA service is greatly received and forms the planks of many local action plans.

The Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program invites funding applications from the 282 municipalities within the boundaries of CMAP. Over 160 LTA programs have been run across a wide geographic area and covering a range of topics, recurrent themes include Comprehensive Plans, Ordinance reviews, Transportation plans, and Bicycle plans as well as Brownfield Prioritisation for Solar Energy Development.

Homes for a Changing Region is an ongoing LTA program that “enables municipal leaders to understand demand and supply dynamics for housing in their communities and develop long-term housing policy plans based on sound research and input from their residents. These plans aim to create a balanced mix of housing, serve current and future populations, and enhance livability.”

A data driven approach wrapped up in a toolkit that is available to all municipalities including resources for outreach, data analysis and previous program recommendations that give a sense of the possible the Homes for a Changing Region is an exemplar of policy making.

CMAP



Metropolitan Planning Council



Homes for a Changing Region

Phase 3: Implementing Balanced Housing Plans at the Local Level



Year Five: Bellwood, Berwyn, Forest Park, Maywood, and Oak Park



Tax Increment Financing



Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a methodology for ‘value capture’ that has expanded rapidly to 170 areas in Chicago in recent years. TIF Districts cap the tax flows from properties so that they still provide the same dollars as the cut off year, all extra revenue which is derived from increased property value goes into the TIF fund which pays for improvements to that same area.

In the City of Berwyn, 16kms west of downtown Chicago, the Berwyn Development Corporation (BDC) currently manage four TIF districts for the City. The BDC are not part of the local government structure yet they are “the Economic Development and Planning arm of the City of Berwyn”.

The creation of a TIF district requires a plan for the money ahead of time yet CMAP planner Kristin Ihnchak commented that “TIFs can be quite opaque and political; boundary definitions and plans are not always too clear”.

The heavy reliance on Tax Increment Financing will be lauded by some for its entrepreneurial spirit yet it appears to focus exclusively on financial outcomes with an ‘all development is good attitude’. Both of these tools demonstrate the ingenuity of people to respond to their circumstance but, for this author, emphasise the need for the governance structures, the rule book, to be aligned to societal values.

As observed in 1999, the hyper local,

creates an incentive for communities to compete aggressively for businesses while excluding all but the most expensive housing—thereby making it extremely difficult for moderately paid workers to find affordable homes near their jobs¹.

The TIF concept is developing some momentum in Australia especially as governments increasingly look towards methods of value capture. It is worth remembering that in Chicago taxes are levied annually on the property value these taxes pay for all local services including schools, emergency services and parks. This is a greater responsibility for municipal government than in Australia but importantly illustrates that the quantum of property tax dollars is much higher.

If Australia is to embrace the TIF model then property taxes will need to increase if they are expected to cover the costs of new infrastructure. The current NSW policy of rate-pegging (i.e. limiting the annual rise in Council rates) will need to be abolished as TIF rely on the increase in property value at ‘above trend’ levels to repay the investments in infrastructure.

The TIF model can be viable in Australia however it will require a considerable change in the tax structure on properties. This may prove fertile ground for governments looking for efficiencies in infrastructure and housing delivery but will require courage too.



THE BERWYN
NATIONAL BANK

Cermak Rd

NO
TURN
ON RED

Heritage listed bank, Berwyn



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Observations

At the outset of this project I began by asking colleagues which questions they wanted answered by this research. A recurring answer was which tools to use in communicating between professionals and the public, generally in the realm of digital technologies.

After countless hours of research, talking and reflection I concluded that the tools were not the critical factor.

Chicago used the best technology available at the time and, arguably, has a great plan for their metropolitan area however it remains a divided city with poor connectivity for most.

Seattle took a community building approach to city making. This changes the focus from the physical outcomes of development to the community and social outcomes although still derived through development.

It is this difference in approach that underpins the success of place making in Seattle.

There are other components to the success of both Seattle and Vancouver, not least of which was the power of the relationships that were fostered over many years; these became the glue when things got tough.

The pragmatic requirements of necessary tools will continue to flux with time and technology but they will always be a means to end.

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The governance structures are key to reinforcing the philosophy behind any planning process with options depending on the situation, no one size fits all here either.

The other key question colleagues sought answers for was 'why bother?' Seattle answered this question by simply aligning the planning process with the work schedules of council departments. If a park upgrade was desired and agreed upon then it becomes a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) for the Parks Department next year.

The graphic opposite shows the building block nature of these concepts, as with any design project a holistic approach is required, cherry picking the fun bits rarely leads to a great outcome.

I have used the analogy of a pizza to describe these five elements. The philosophy is the base without which there is no pizza. The relationships are the cheese, the glue that holds everything together while the tools, governance and delivery are the toppings. The options are wide and varied, can and should be mixed up to seek new outcomes but they must be considered as a whole if they are to find balance and be successful.

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Philosophy



The clear enunciation of the philosophy underpinning an engagement process is key to its success. A distinction must be drawn between the purpose of, and the philosophy behind an engagement process.

Purpose itself can often be difficult to define as the complexity of urban planning produces a large number of players with varied, often conflicting priorities; it means many things to many people.

Governments are often the instigators of engagement on planning issues, their drivers generally internally understood and often explicitly stated. Unfortunately the necessity of government may not align with interests of the citizenry, for example,

“Our focus will be on good upfront strategic land use planning and removing the red tape from development assessment”¹

Professional planners will successfully argue that these goals are of importance to the public, impacting on their daily lives, their ability to move through cities, to choose between different housing types in different locations, government rely on these understandings too. Yet most people are not planners or architects, most do not have an explicit understanding of how cities function just as most planners do not understand the intricacies of the internal combustion engine or heart surgery.

1 A New Planning System for NSW Green paper, p2

So it is insufficient for purpose to be clearly stated, purpose must also be meaningful to those whose engagement is sought. It must talk to their interest and desires, acknowledge their issues and strive to make their lives better.

In Vancouver City Plan was legislated to “inform citizens about the issues facing the City and present Council policies, and create, from their advice, a shared sense of direction for the City and its place in the region”. The provision of information from the City and respectful consideration of citizen views are clearly embedded in this single sentence.

Seattle’s starting point was not a citywide vision but a neighbourhood planning program, the stated goals included delivering on “established citywide goals”. A process was provided for neighbourhoods to challenge those citywide goals but they had to provide a rationale for the disagreement and a solution to the issue in a similar way to the Vancouver ‘walk in the city’s shoes’. The acceptance of these somewhat unpopular citywide goals was palatable as the overriding desire of the neighbourhoods was to achieve “their goals for their neighbourhoods” and to “build community”.

Seattle’s philosophy principle is clearly stated here but the key to it engaging the neighbourhoods so successfully was the pathway that was clearly mapped out from involvement to implementation; people were able to answer the question ‘why should I bother?’

the most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group

Merriam-Webster dictionary

“The purposes of the neighborhood planning program are to enable the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the city by:

- 1) helping people achieve their goals for their neighborhoods;
- 2) involving the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established citywide goals; and
- 3) creating an environment which will encourage building of community within neighborhoods.”

City of Seattle
Resolution 29015, October 1994



Relationships

All planning is about people and people are all about relationships. Each of the identified principles have elements that overlap however this principle is the glue, the strongest thread of them all.

Successful relationships are built upon trust whether they are professional or personal. Trust, like a well built home can take years to build yet can be destroyed in moments with a wrecking ball.

The Thin Streets fiasco in Vancouver in 2013 illustrated the fragility of relationships, gentle abrasion over time as perceptions of dishonesty emerged over unspoken agendas leading to public outrage, a political backflip and the ejection of an idea that was never feasible anyway.

In both Seattle and Vancouver the relationships between staff and community were strengthened as both came to understand the positions, constraints and opportunities that were available. Both citizens and (sub-political appointment level) staff have a long term interest in implementation the plan directions, the first for the improved quality of life, the latter for meaningful job satisfaction and reduction in conflict.

The development of this shared vision could have been compromised by the (perceived) short term interests of consultants had they been used beyond communications advice. Allowing the experts in planning, transportation, parks, community services

to create content and debate the issues with citizens develops mutual understanding and respect; critical to long term relationships.

When faced with tough decision of which neighbourhoods should receive neighbourhood planning assistance first the City of Vancouver asked the residents to decide. Five representatives from each of the thirteen neighbourhoods gathered and discuss who has the greatest needs. Through their own process they determined who goes first and who must wait. This approach is only viable when the City has confidence that the outcome will be fair and that confidence comes from the depth of relationships they have with their citizens.

Vancouver's reputation for successful community engagement is well deserved at the principles and aspiration level. It's implementation in Kensington Cedar Cottage stands out as an exemplar of achieving broad community consensus for high density development even when tempered by the fact that a 9-month Vision process took closer to 18 and the area was in need of redevelopment. The commitment of the Vision Implementation Committee and City staff to work through issues with the developer and a tendency to flexibility demonstrate that in the right atmosphere, with strong relationships, outcomes can be mutually beneficial.



It is not the tools but the concept that you will put some level of trust in people to constructively participate that is important.

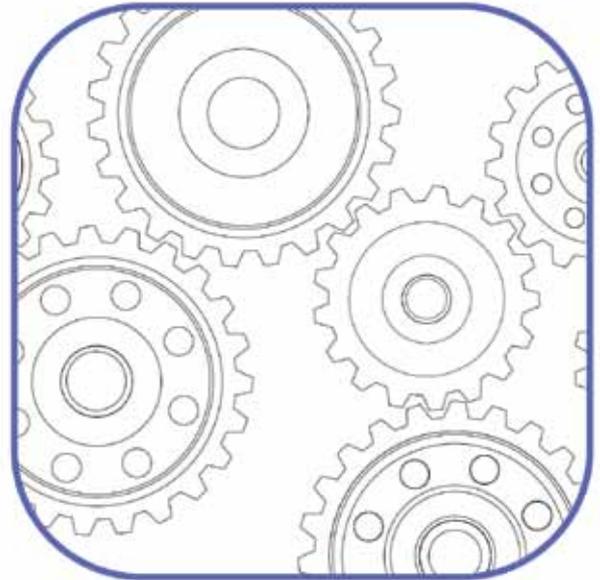
Rhonda Howard



Seattle street party

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Governance



Governance is the definition of process. It sets out the rules of play and can often be the focus of the ‘process junkies’ or the ‘usual suspects’. They have been here before and may have been burnt in the past; they understand that the rules of the game are often the game itself.

The political adage of ‘don’t call an enquiry until you know the results’ has previously seemed to be the engagement strategy of many cities. The highly successful governance structure put in place in Seattle and Vancouver dispelled those myths and reinforced the philosophy and purpose of partnering with communities to determine common goals and future directions.

Seattle’s detailed flowcharts of tasks, check-ins, reviews, validation and approvals left little doubt as to what had to be achieved. There was significant flexibility in how to undertake the work but the need to ensure fairness and equity was deeply embedded in the systemic hoops through which communities were required to jump, not only to secure their funding but also to secure the right for Council to consider their plan as the future blueprint for their neighbourhood.

Vancouver’s similar approach was enforced through the Community Liaison Groups, a self-selected group of locals who took on the role of ensuring that the process was followed. Planner Trish French recalled how ‘the detail focused people now had a constructive

role to play’ whereas they had previously derailed discussions with unnecessary interventions into minutiae as that was where their interest lay.

The liaison groups freed up the time of planners to focus on their primary roles but also built trust as all involved could see that the community was policing the rules rather than the City.

Vancouver’s City Hats ensured equity and fairness at the City level. The group representative of other neighbourhoods provided a peer review of the plans of others, touring the areas, listening to the issues from those proposing changes, asking questions, sharing their suggestions and ultimately endorsing their proposed course of action. Embedding this level of cross-city scrutiny gives confidence to the neighbourhoods that allocation of time and resources is fair and equitable while also allowing Council to build trust widely through a process committed to valuing the opinions of citizens.



*you can't stop change based on the
current generations perceptions of what
should be*

Harry Hoffman





Tools



The number of tools and strategies encountered during this project are innumerable, deliberately, more did not make into this report than did. Tools are critical to each process as they will shape interactions with citizens but they will vary from place to place, time to time.

The provision of the toolkits limited debate around factual issues allowing the focus to be on possible solutions and their potential route to implementation. This constructive use of data is a constant theme in successful engagement processes and while the technology for delivering such information has changed dramatically since the inception of CityPlan, the positive impacts of accurate, relevant information to effective decision-making cannot be underestimated.

Vancouver's Making Choices generated surprising results, 82% combined voted for Scenarios 1 & 2, to focus development in existing neighbourhoods. The use of evidenced-based strategic planning has developed an understanding within the community about the need for change, conversations explored residents future need to age in community and for younger generations to have viable housing options, alternative housing typologies were discussed.

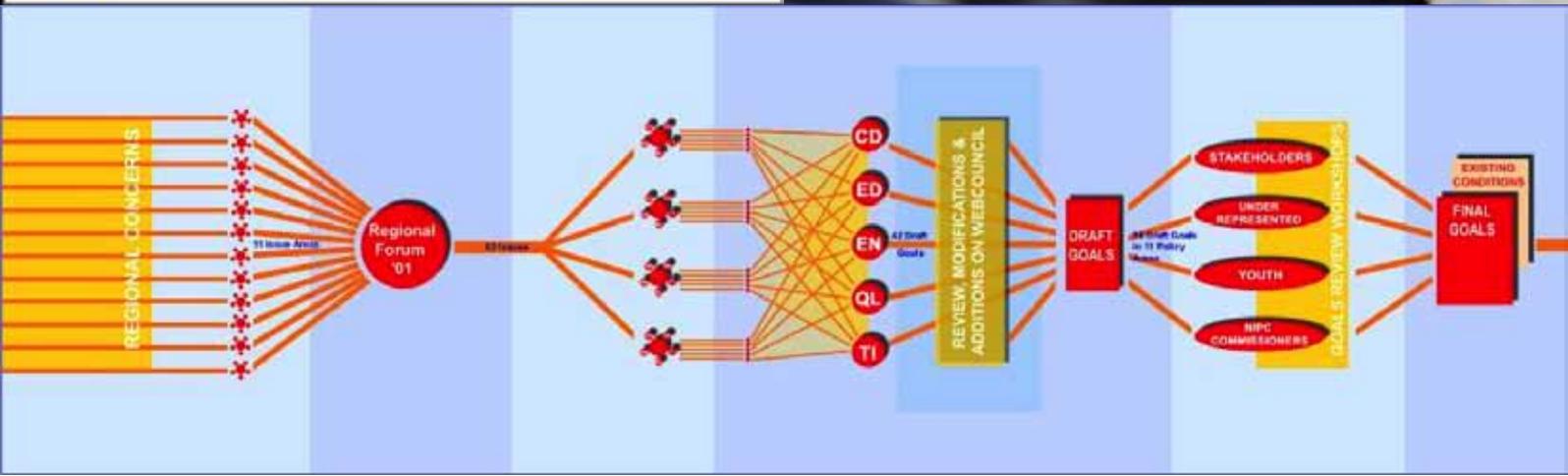
The technology used in Paint the Region was ground breaking at the time but has now been superseded in depth of detail available, speed of processing and visualization capabilities.

At the beginning of this process I had been persuaded that finding the latest and greatest piece of technology was going to solve (most) problems, if only people could see the impacts of their decisions then engagement would become easy as people would see the world through my architect eyes.



If the only tool you have is a hammer...

Abraham Maslow



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Delivery



The majority of the wonderful people interviewed for this project did not care for the plans they created, they were proud of them but what they really wanted to talk about were the positive changes they had seen in their neighbourhoods.

John Buckburrough spent an entire day touring me around Kensington Cedar Cottage, Vancouver. We wandered through countless medium density housing projects, community gardens and spent longer than I would usually admit to examining median strip planting. We also admired the King Edward Village for its achievements in community service provision while struggling with a mediocre design outcome. John regaled me with the stories of collective decision making but always through the lens of what they were trying to achieve; it was never a plan.

Jody Grage in Ballard, Seattle sparkled with enthusiasm for her place, proud of their achievements, talking with surprising optimism about a five storey apartment complex across the street from her two storey home of 50 years; "it's part of the plan"

The public will never judge the successes of planning by the plans they produce. Successful engagement paints a clear pathway from planning to action from day one. Great engagement finds easy wins along the way to motivate, demonstrate commitment to the purpose and to inspire others to get involved.

Implementation of ideas costs money and big plans often have big ideas with big costs. All governments have budgets, levers to pull and resources to allocate.

As Seattle demonstrated so wonderfully with Libraries For All, people will vote to increase their own taxes when they want the services being offered.

Vancouver's immediate adoption of the Greenways project allowed Council to show they were listening, motivated and prepared to reallocate resources to projects that received broad support. The fact that greenways also encourage physical activity and reduce road congestion means that everyone wins.



Implementation gave the Council credit as people saw things happen

Richard Conlin



Ballard Library

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What lessons are there?

Seattle and Vancouver have both taken conscious action to curtail peripheral greenfield development, a brave move in the face of development pressures but one that has permitted a more nuanced discussion over the future of their cities.

The positive outcomes in both cities have demonstrated that citizens can, and are keen to, be involved in setting the broad directions for the places they live. Historically Sydney has only done this at a local scale; when buildings are all you can influence, you try to influence buildings.

explain the why

Sydneysiders need to be convinced of the benefits of planning not the downside of not planning

Sydneysiders are cynical of government in general and planning in particular. Decades of promised projects; announced, planned, deferred and derailed has disenfranchised the majority.

The case for planning needs to be made, positively. As with action on climate change, an argument built on apocalyptic dystopian visions will enrage many and engage few.

The community wants to understand what planning can do for them, their concerns and their places. It must show the potential for positive outcomes yet not shirk from the realities of past experiences and the

inevitable challenges that face a project the size of a whole city.

metropolitan vision

A Metropolitan Vision is a Brief to professionals; it is not a plan.

A good design project is driven by a well-formulated brief; it is not the answer but the question that the design seeks to answer; cities are a big design project. There are multiple possible answers all with consequences without a strong Vision, direction will be lost and the project derailed.

The experience of gentle densification in Vancouver show that visioning can bring together community to find consensus, politicians will vote for what their electorates want and a clear understanding of the community's agreed needs can prevent disruption later at the neighbourhood scale.

This is not to say it is easy. A disconnect can still exist between the broad principles agreed at a city scale and realities of implementation at the street scale; affordable housing options for youth, of course, but not here though! An agreed Vision is one portion of the answer while the lack of a Vision leaves every decision open to the unanswerable questions; why this? why here?



the plan is not the goal

Jody Grage



empowered neighbourhood planning

Change is coming anyway. Developers can dictate change or we can.

It is our responsibility to give people a reason to turn up, dedicate their valuable time and help us shape a better future for our city. Historically we show people our ideas, seeking affirmation and praise and, occasionally accepting criticism. It is no surprise engagement has been tough.

We need to specify what we need from people, commit to do things for them too, create timelines, checks and balances, tell them what is on and off the table and then ask, “will you help us”. Seattle did just this and got great results.

Governments can retain the right to vote on all proposals, so long as the process is clear communities will lobby, debate and persuade to achieve the goals they believe in. As Margaret Mead said,

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has

quality data

rubbish in, rubbish out

Government and enlightened professionals have been calling for evidence-based planning for some time yet the quality of data is poor. Providing data to decision makers and the community alike is critical to engaging

beyond “trust us, we are the professionals”. It allows myths to be debunked, or proven, and arguments mounted for a variety of solutions.

In an era of government doing only what governments can do, data collection and its easy dissemination is a role that is only for them. Data will not solve our problems but it will increase our chances of success.

Chicago’s Local Technical Assistance program demonstrates how quality data, well presented can influence both Mayors and the public alike, facilitating evidence-based strategic planning.

Celebration

The purposes of the neighbourhood planning program are to enable the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the city

Seattle’s simple yet deeply meaningful statement of philosophy and purpose resonated through every thing they did. Celebration parties held at milestone moments to mark achievements allowed for further recruitment but most importantly they created

an environment which will encourage building of community within neighborhoods

As Jody Grage said,

the plan is not the goal

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance by my former colleagues at Cox Architecture, in particular Bob Meyer. Bob has shaped planning thought in Sydney for decades through his immense intellect, depth of human understanding and boundless energy for sharing knowledge.

Dave Bennett of Shaping Suburbia has been a constant source of inspiration and wisdom throughout this journey.

In Vancouver the assistance of Ann McAfee was invaluable as were the insights and contacts of the Australian/Canadian planner Wendy Sarkissian. In Seattle, Jim Diers proved to be a conduit to almost every door I need to enter.

This research was only possible through the generosity of many people....

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Harry Hoffman
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Tracey Vaughan

About the author Andy Marlow

I am an architect, urban designer and sustainability professional with over 10 years experience in the built environment.

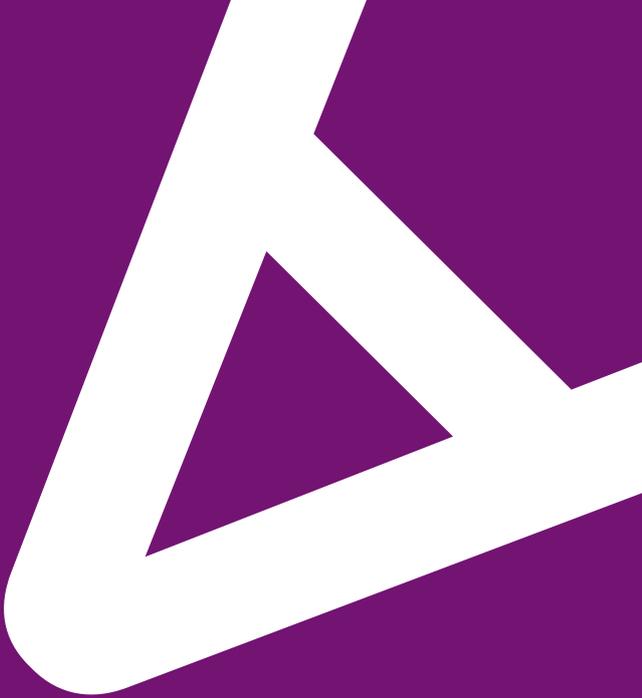
Originally inspired to work in the sector due to concerns over development patterns and their impacts on the wellbeing of residents, I have continually blended design, sustainability and social concerns into my work.

At the commencement of this project I was National Sustainability Manager at Cox Architecture although I have since left to take up a Directorship at Envirotecture with well-respected designer and author Dick Clarke.

My interest continues in how professionals negotiate the competing interests in the development of the city especially where private interests are often better resourced than public.

I have worked on a building seeking Living Building Challenge certification where the reach of the building is conceived at a global scale while acting locally.

Recent projects have seen a focus on affordability both as a capital and operational expense.



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