

Vancouver City Planning Commission

A Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Project Report

July 28, 2011

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Framing question

“How can Vancouver evolve into a sustainable city of sustainable neighbourhoods in ways that meet neighbourhood needs while advancing city-wide goals?”

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Project Timeline

2010 July - 2011 January

- Meetings with groups to gather input:
 - Neighbourhoods Advisory Group
 - City staff
 - Non-profits, private sector organizations

2011 April 8

Symposium: public event
Sustainability from global to local

2011 April 9

Symposium: community organizations
Sustainability in neighbourhoods - strategies

2011 June 1

Action planning meeting: community organizations
Concrete action steps

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Outreach: Organizations

Neighbourhood groups
1 from each 'neighbourhood'

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Shaping the symposium

-Neighbourhood groups

- 3 meetings with advisory group

-City staff working in neighbourhood sustainability

- Workshop
- Discussion

-Sustainability practitioners in private and non-profit sector

- Workshops

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Symposium Program

Friday public event:

What is sustainability?
Perspectives of neighbourhood residents

Saturday community organizations event:

Identifying Strategies and Actions

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Top strategies

1. Invest in building neighbourhood capacity and empowerment
2. Involve neighbourhoods from the beginning and throughout the process
3. Need overall sustainability goals for the city developed and articulated in collaboration with neighbourhoods

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Top Action Directions

- Convene a meeting to develop a practical action plan for building capacity and representation in neighbourhoods.
- Establish criteria for improved consultation processes.
- Organize a workshop to scope a process for establishing sustainability goals for neighbourhoods and developing neighbourhood-based sustainability plans that could help to shape a city-wide sustainability strategy.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Top actions

- Inventory/map/profile of neighbourhood groups/activists and sustainability projects
- Liaison advocate for each neighbourhood (neighbourhood pilot)

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Observations
Lessons Learned
Next Steps

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Sustainability for neighbourhoods

While important, sustainability whether narrowly seen as 'greening' initiatives or in the broader sense is not the main priority for neighbourhoods in Vancouver at this time.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

What is a 'neighbourhood'?

Most 'neighbourhoods' in the city do not self-identify by their planning area boundaries.

Vancouver's 'neighbourhoods' are not homogeneous.

A broader understanding of inequities among 'neighbourhoods' is needed.

The concept of a 'neighbourhood' profile or unique fingerprint was identified as helpful.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Who speaks for a 'neighbourhood'?

There is no truly representative or accountable organization that the City can tap into.

Neighbourhoods have sub-communities which may not have a voice in planning dialogues.

Even active groups do not necessarily know about other groups in the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood groups and newcomers have no easy way to connect with others.

There are competing claims for who speaks for a neighbourhood.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

What is neighbourhood capacity?

Capacity = infrastructure items necessary for success:

- Human resources
- Material resources (i.e., space, office equipment)
- Financial resources
- Policies/procedures
- Organizational structure
- Systems (IT, communications etc.)
- Partnerships, collaboration, community connections
- Skills and training
- Community support
- Leadership
- Vision/strategy

Vancouver City Planning Commission

How to build neighbourhood capacity?

Lack of a comprehensive list of contact information for neighbourhood groups is a major challenge.

Neighbourhoods lack a portal or point of contact for engagement.

Currently difficult to put together city-wide neighbourhood conversations about any topic or issue.

Consultations are in silos rather than cross-cultural and inclusive.

Relationships among people in neighbourhoods are the foundation for collaborative action on sustainability.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

How to improve City-'neighbourhood' relationships?

Resilient relationships take time and effort to build. Compressing processes due to resource limitations can prove counter-productive when resources must be diverted to damage repair.

Lack of a City contact person with neighbourhood knowledge conveys the impression that the City does not really support the idea of a 'city of neighbourhoods.'

Lack of clarity about the City's discretionary zoning policy is associated with an experience of lack of transparency.

Often not enough time for groups to become informed about issues or developments in neighbourhoods prior to them coming to Council.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

How the City could help

Future neighbourhood planning processes could include the development of a pilot project on representative structures.

Use City's data base on groups such as grant applicants/recipients as the start of a self-updating online inventory of groups.

City could list, or even designate, free or cheap spaces in each neighbourhood for neighbourhood groups to meet.

Formal recognition of volunteer groups

Acknowledge implications of the City's discretionary zoning process for community plans and communicate its role in financing amenities.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

How the City could help (cont'd)

Incorporate dialogue on shared values, especially regarding social equity and justice, into planning processes

Ensure that sufficient time is allowed to build relationships and trust, and to enable residents to inform themselves before a Council decision

Host network of multilingual volunteers willing to translate invitations /notices for neighbourhood groups and help with distribution to multicultural groups.

Re-frame sustainability to reflect social values relevant at the grassroots level

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Future Directions

We heard that neighbourhoods want to strengthen their organizational capacity.

The City needs to listen to and support grassroots efforts in this direction.

Vancouver City Planning Commission

*'If you want to travel fast, go alone.
If you want to travel far, go together.'*

African proverb