

MEMO

To: Andrew Pask Date: May 30, 2011
From: Peter Whitelaw # Pages 24
Re: Local Area Planning - Summary of Research

OVERVIEW

Building on a long history of city-wide and local area planning, the City of Vancouver has embarked on the Next Communities Local Area Planning program to develop comprehensive neighbourhood plans for areas that have relatively old plans. The first of these new plans, for Mount Pleasant, is complete, and three more are slated to begin soon. In advance of that effort, the City is reviewing the Next Communities program to refine and improve it. The project's purpose is:

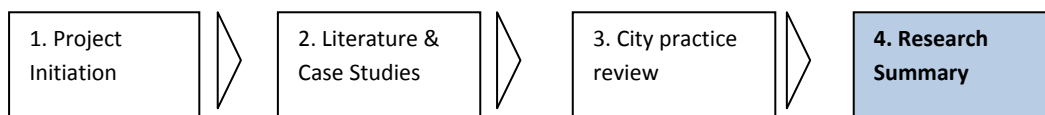
“To review and make recommendations to revise aspects of the City’s methodology for undertaking community planning, in order to make it more efficient and effective in responding to both city-wide policy and goals and community needs.”

PURPOSE AND USE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarizes research about the City of Vancouver’s more recent neighbourhood planning experience and practices elsewhere. The research is provided as one input to the City’s team which is refining the Local Area Planning program. It is intended to be used by the City to inform a public workshop about improving the Next Communities program, and to inform internal City discussions about how best to refine the program.

METHODS

To produce this report, we:



1. Worked with City staff to clearly define the project’s focus and desired outcomes;
2. Reviewed experience elsewhere:

- Identified and reviewed a broad range of literature about neighbourhood planning in North America;
 - Identified potential case studies and prioritized them based on their relevance to Vancouver's context;
 - Confirmed priority case studies;
 - Researched priority case studies, relying on both documentation and key informant interviews;
3. Reviewed Vancouver practices:
- Reviewed the history of planning in Vancouver and context for current neighbourhood planning efforts;
 - Reviewed the most recent neighbourhood planning process in Mount Pleasant, including document review and key informant interviews;
 - Identified and met with local experts to discuss recent neighbourhood-scale planning experience and opportunities for improvement;
 - Met with members of the Mount Pleasant Community Liaison Group to discuss the Mount Pleasant planning process and opportunities for improvement; and
4. Summarized results in this report.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

A Research Report on Neighbourhood Planning: This report focuses on neighbourhood planning as one component of the City's Local Area Planning program; as such it does not address neighbourhood centre planning nor planning for corridors. It is a research report whose purpose is to document current and potential practices here and elsewhere. In doing so, it synthesises and communicates information from the research described above. Any opinions expressed within the report are those of the research sources where indicated, or the authors. Finally, none of the material in this report should be construed as recommendations, but rather as information for the use of the City.

Based on the Mount Pleasant experience: Our research on the City's practices used the Mount Pleasant Local Area Plan (LAP) as a primary point of reference. Despite this, our review of City practices was not a review of the Mount Pleasant process itself. Instead, it reflects what was done in the recent Mount Pleasant process as well as what is done more broadly by the City – practices that have varied over time and from place to place. As a window into the City's practices at one point in time, this report cannot capture everything the City is doing or has done in relation to the Mount Pleasant and related processes.

A Synthesis of Sometimes Conflicting Findings:In synthesising input from local experts and the Mount Pleasant Community Liaison Group, we have produced a virtually unedited summary of what we have heard. Edits have been made primarily for clarity. In our review of the literature, we found that sources represent different perspectives on neighbourhood planning; similarly, different stakeholders have different perspectives on what neighbourhood planning should achieve and how. As a research summary, then, this report includes findings that conflict at times.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

THE VANCOUVER EXPERIENCE

A Long History of Planning: The City of Vancouver has a long history of planning, ranging from small local initiatives to major city-wide efforts, and dating back as far as the Bartholomew plan of the 1920s. The underlying values, assumptions, purposes, processes, outputs, and outcomes of this planning has evolved over this century-long history. This evolution has reflected broad social changes in North America and beyond, new planning approaches, and challenges faced by Vancouver's citizens.

For some time, the City has built and maintained a planning program dedicated to public participation in comprehensive planning. In the 1970's, Vancouver completed a series of neighbourhood plans which invited broad public participation. However, no comprehensive city-wide plan was in place, and some areas of the city lacked comprehensive local plans. In response, the City ran the CityPlan process in the early 1990's. This involved the public extensively in a city-wide comprehensive planning process that created a vision, set broad goals for the whole city, and documented community ideas for the future. From there, Vancouver returned to planning at the local level with the Community Visions program. This took CityPlan as a starting point and developed more specific goals and objectives for each of nine areas in the City that did not already have local plans in place.

Currently Renewing Comprehensive Local Area Planning: Through these programs, Vancouver now has a comprehensive city-wide plan, and a neighbourhood scale plan for every area of the city. These plans vary in age, with some as old as the mid-1980's, and in content, with variations in the topics covered and the level of detail. Given the oldest plans are now almost 30 years old, the City has begun to renew them and build more consistent levels of detail through its Local Area Planning (LAP) program. The LAP program encompasses three kinds of areas:

- **Neighbourhoods:** areas encompassing residential and commercial areas, usually centred around a definable neighbourhood commercial centre. The "Next Communities" program focuses here and aims to cover the same breadth of topics as the Visions program, but at a

higher level of detail and closer to implementation. It aims to draw on the best of the City’s previous experience in neighbourhood planning, as well as in social development.

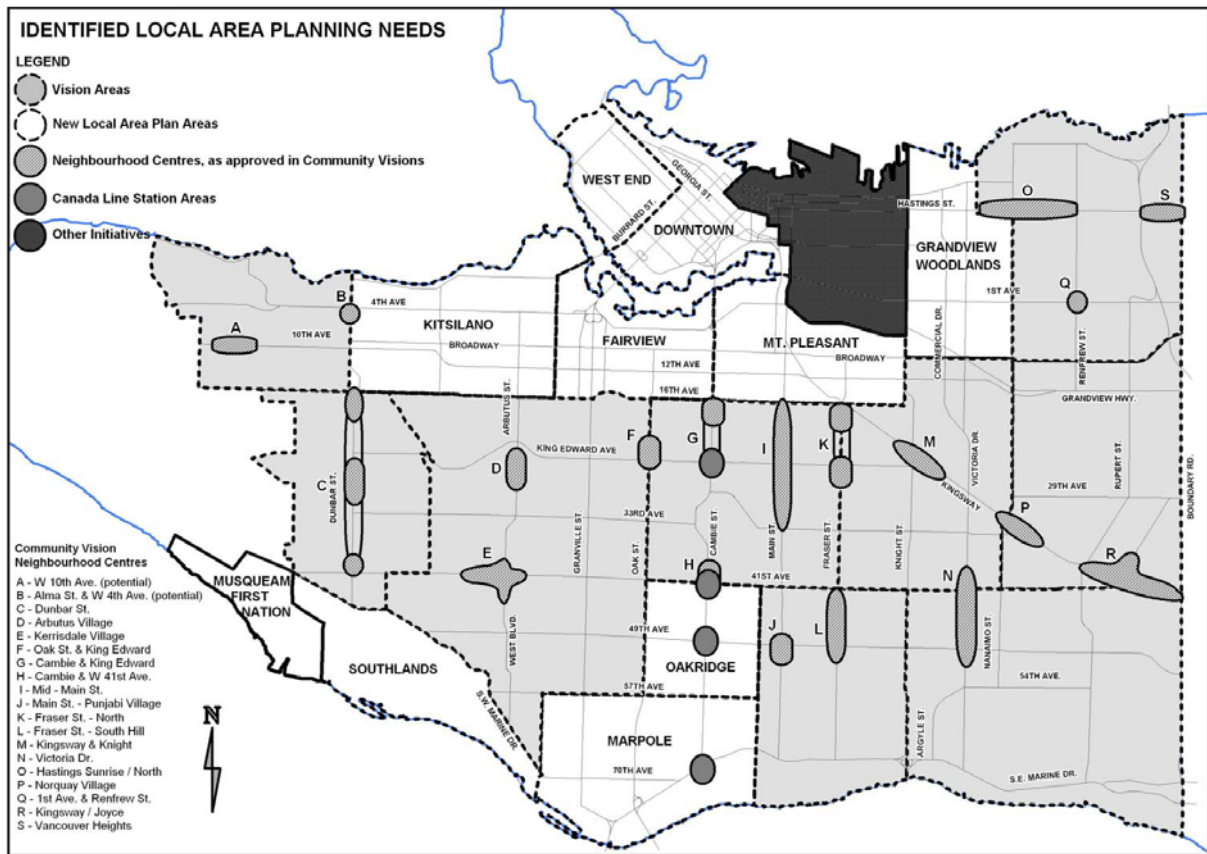
- **Neighbourhood centres:** smaller commercial and mixed-use areas and their immediate surroundings that require detailed physical planning.
- **Corridors:** longer stretches of arterials with common issues, such as the Cambie Corridor, that could benefit from comprehensive planning.

A Host of Other Planning Initiatives: In addition, the City runs other important local area planning initiatives. These have focused on large new development sites (e.g. East Fraser Lands and Southeast False Creek), community development (e.g. Social Planning initiatives) and precincts (e.g. Chinatown Revitalization).

The City also engages in topic-specific City-scale planning initiatives. The City’s Community Climate Action Plan, Project Civil City, Homeless Action Plan, the Short-Term Incentive for Rentals (STIR) program, Transportation Plans and the most recent Greenest City Plan are examples. Implementation of some aspects of these initiatives takes place at a local level and therefore may influence the LAP program.

The table below summarizes the range of the City’s planning initiatives, and the map following it describes identified local area planning needs.

Type:	Scale:	City-wide	Neighbourhood	District	Site
Comprehensive Plans		CityPlan	Neighbourhood Plans Community Visions	Corridors Neighbourhood Centers Official Development Plans	Rezoning
Specific Initiatives		e.g. Greenest City Action Plan, Transportation Plan, Climate Action Plan			e.g. Neighbourhood grants



Source: City of Vancouver

THE PRACTICE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

A fair amount of research has been conducted into neighbourhood planning processes covering both theory and practice. This provides a valuable resource for reviewing and enhancing existing programs.

Difficult to Define: The concept of local area planning emerged in North America in the last half of the 20th century. It most often deals with “neighbourhoods.” While they are notoriously hard to define, neighbourhoods may be described as “subareas of towns and cities whose physical or social characteristics distinguish them from one another.”¹ Neighbourhood planning is also difficult to define, and varies widely in practice depending on the context in which the planning occurs, including such factors as:

- Previous decisions (e.g. city-wide plans)
- Community capacity, composition, and community organizations

¹ Rohe, William C. 2009. From local to global: One hundred years of neighborhood planning. JAPA 75(2): 209-230.

- Degree of value judgement in decisions, versus technical considerations
- Government structures and culture
- Legal and other requirements

Broad and Sometimes Conflicting Purposes: Broadly, planning is an activity that considers the future, defines goals and leads to action. As such, City planning aims to facilitate action by community, developers, and city – this is one purpose of neighbourhood planning. Other purposes of neighbourhood planning commonly include:

1. Educating and informing the public;
2. Incorporating public values into decision-making;
3. Improving the quality of decisions;
4. Building trust and good relationships between the community and the City;
5. Reducing conflict in the community;
6. Using community (and government) resources effectively; and
7. Strengthening community and increasing its capacity to plan together.

These purposes can conflict, e.g. improving decision quality and building trust takes time and effort; and this must be accomplished within available time and resources. In the design of neighbourhood planning processes, these conflicts must be acknowledged and balanced to create the best process for the context. Similarly, in reviewing different approaches, the context and purposes of the processes must be acknowledged and considered.

A Useful Description for Vancouver: The American Planning Association states that “The intention [of neighbourhood planning] is to balance citywide planning goals and policies with ‘an all-inclusive and meaningful citizen oriented process’ that identifies neighborhood priorities and issues and reconciles conflicts between the two, where they exist.”² This description of neighbourhood planning is well-suited to Vancouver’s planning history and context described above.

DEFINING AND PRESENTING THE RESEARCH

The project’s purpose is:

“To review and make recommendations to revise aspects of the City’s methodology for undertaking community planning, in order to make it more efficient and effective in responding to both city-wide policy and goals and community needs.”

² Wendelyn A. Martz. 1995. Neighborhood-Based Planning: Five Case Studies, Planning Advisory Service Report No. 455 (Chicago: APA Planners Press), 3-6.

Four Defining Questions: In the first stage of work, we worked with City staff to clarify the project’s focus and outcomes. Through this process, we identified four key questions to guide our research. The questions are:

1. How can we improve the relationship between regional/city-wide and local perspectives?
2. How can we improve engagement?
3. How can we be more efficient in time and resources?
4. How can we ensure more effective implementation?

A Consistent Description of Neighbourhood Planning Process: To answer these questions, the City is considering adjustments to how it designs and delivers neighbourhood planning. We developed a set of “process design elements” to have a consistent way to describe the planning process and compare case studies. These elements were developed from the literature, and we aligned them with the titles the City used for the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Plan Terms of Reference (ToR).

The planning elements are listed below. Where they correspond with titles in the ToR, these are included in brackets ():

1. Overarching approach to planning and engagement
 - share of responsibility for addressing city-wide and regional needs/goals
 - planning philosophy and the role(s) of City planners
2. LAP process design
 - Principles
 - Scope (Planning Area, Products)
 - Topical scope of the plan
 - Level of detail and specificity of the plan
 - Degree of certainty of elements in the plan (e.g. heights)
 - Relative level of importance of topics in the plan
 - Process (Process and Schedule)
 - Communications and Involvement – details of how the process is conducted
 - Structure (Roles)
 - Resources and Budgets
3. Implementation approach

A Simple Report Structure: The body of the report is organized using the four questions as a primary structure, and the planning elements as a secondary structure.

RESEARCH RESULTS

OVERVIEW

This section describes the results of our research. It includes what we know about the neighbourhood planning the City is already doing (City Practice), and what the City could do (Potential Practices).

City Practices primarily reflect the Mount Pleasant experience: The primary point of reference for our description of City Practices is the recently completed Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Planning process. This was City-led, with extensive community involvement through two committees – the Community Liaison Group and the Social Coordinating Group, a number of urban design workshops, other public events, and on-line information. The process produced land use and urban design concept plans, detailed new City policy for the neighbourhood for a range of topics, and a social action agenda.

What Vancouver Could Do: Our review of Potential Practices included case studies of neighbourhood-scale planning in other cities. As noted in the overview of neighbourhood planning practice (above), different cities use neighbourhood planning for many purposes, and these may conflict. Furthermore, the choice of purposes dramatically influences the design of a planning process and its outputs. This makes comparing processes difficult: what works in one community may not be appropriate in another. The following describes each of the case studies very briefly (in alphabetical order):

- **Austin, TX:** The City leads neighbourhood planning, with the aim to develop and implement specific, detailed plans tailored to the needs of each neighbourhood. Broad and diverse engagement is encouraged, including a volunteer committee called the Neighborhood Planning Contact Team (NPCT). Community members generate and help to vet ideas, with staff preparing the final plan for Council approval. The plans include detailed policy and recommendations for actions, and are focused on topics within City jurisdiction, especially land use, zoning, and urban design. They have to mesh with City-wide policy; implementation is by the NPCT, working closely with City implementation planners.
- **Minneapolis, MN:** Focused on revitalization of marginalized or deteriorating neighbourhoods, planning is initiated by residents or community organizations who create a Neighbourhood Revitalization Program (NRP) steering committee. They then develop a partnership agreement with the City before leading the planning process. The process produces an action plan, which is then implemented by community organizations (typically NRP steering committee members) and the City as appropriate.
- **Ottawa, ON:** Ottawa's program is an integrated process that links land use, community services and infrastructure planning to improve quality of life. Initially City-led, major process decisions are now citizen-led. The final neighbourhood plan is co-created by community and City staff, and is a combination of high-level policy and detailed actions. Implementation of

City actions and policy changes is done by the City. This is a relatively new evolution of planning in Ottawa.

- **Portland, OR:** Portland has a long history of involving neighbourhoods in planning; this has evolved and changed significantly over time. Beginning in the 1970's, they set up a "neighborhood system" with neighbourhood associations as well as "district coalitions" made up of representatives of the associations. Part of the City's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS), the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) help associations plan through training, coordination, technical assistance and other support services. Currently, the BPS has a planner for each of 6 Districts, acting as the primary contact, liaising with all parts of the community, and acting as Bureau lead on issues that address livability and vitality. This represents an evolution towards an implementation focus.
- **Rochester, NY:** Like the Minneapolis program, Rochester's is focused on revitalization. Neighbours Building Neighbours (NBN) groups lead the process with support from City staff, who define the structure and timeline for planning, serve as resources/facilitators, and provide free training through the NBN Institute. NBN groups must fund the process themselves, except for incidental costs. The program produces action plans which are implemented by community organizations with nominal funding from the City. However, the plans also inform spending priorities for the City's annual capital and operating budget.
- **Saskatoon, SK:** Saskatoon's LAP program was set up as a result of support by citizens during the Plan Saskatoon process for more active citizen involvement in long-term planning and development decisions affecting their community. In addition, citizens called for measures to enhance Saskatoon's core and intermediate neighbourhoods. LAPs are used to identify and address neighbourhood concerns and opportunities by creating long range community development recommendations. The process is supported by staff, and led by a Local Area Planning Committee of community members. They produce action plans, with many actions implemented by community organizations. They do not directly produce new city policy.
- **Seattle, WA:** Like Portland, Seattle has an official Department of Neighborhoods, charged with supporting neighbourhood planning and implementation; like Portland, its planning model has evolved over the years. Neighbourhood planning is led by neighbourhood associations, and produces action plans for the neighbourhood. The City supports the process with funding, training, and expertise. Implementation is by community organizations and by the City; the City uses action priorities established by neighbourhood associations to help set priorities for annual budgeting.
- **Winnipeg, MB:** Winnipeg's neighbourhood planning arose from the need to revitalize inner city neighbourhoods. In this community-led model, the City provides a guide to

neighbourhood planning, sets requirements, and provides support and a flexible toolbox to neighbourhood groups. Like other community-led processes, this one produces an action plan rather than a regulatory plan, and implementation is by neighbourhood organizations and the City as appropriate.

While all of these case studies may offer important lessons, Austin and Ottawa are the most useful because of their similarity to Vancouver in terms of their purposes, processes and outputs.

RESULTS

The synthesized results follow, organized using the four primary research questions and the process design elements. In the results, the City practice is described first, to contextualize the potential practices the City may consider.

Notes:

- The following acronyms are used in this section: CLG = Community Liaison Group; MPFG = Mount Pleasant Focus Group (made up of CLG participants); TOR = terms of reference for the Mount Pleasant process.
- Local experts are those interviewed about the neighbourhood planning process as part of the research for this project.

City of Vancouver Addendum: Suggested ideas have been numbered in order to facilitate easy reference.

1. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITY-WIDE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES:

- *Effectively respond to city-wide policy and goals*
- *Be responsive to local needs*
- *Better enable City-wide policy and decision making to be informed by neighbourhood-scale activities*
- *Be responsive to on-going changes in policies, issues, and directions*
- *Take a fair share of responsibility for addressing city-wide issues*

Overarching Approach

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some City-wide plans are available to inform neighbourhood planning; and they do so in different ways. For example, the Cultural Plan sets broad directions and looks to neighbourhood plans to land these. Others may set City-wide targets, e.g. for GHG reduction, or identify specific development sites (e.g. affordable housing initiatives).
Potential Practices
<p>1.1.1 Establish and keep key elements of city-wide policy direction up-to-date to direct neighbourhood planning. These could include for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing needs based on population growth and demographic change (provide good technical perspectives on where we need different types of housing to maintain affordability for low income, service sector workers. (local experts, Minneapolis); • a social amenity plan (define the type and location of large-scale amenities)(local experts), and • a retail analysis (how retail is structured/designed and how to support (not displace) existing merchants. (local experts)

Principles

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR Principle: <u>Balance</u> the ‘rights’ and ‘uniqueness’ of the community with its responsibility as part of the City and Region. New plans and policies should <u>strive</u> to be consistent with city-wide plans, policies, and initiatives. • TOR Principle: Recognize the City’s limited mandate and resources to address social issues and that support from other levels of government and community partners is needed to address social development needs.
Potential Practices
<p>1.2.1.1 Clarify the mandates and relationships of city-wide policies/plans, the neighbourhood plan, and other neighbourhood plans. (Austin, Seattle, Ottawa, literature, MPFG, local experts). Be clear about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is city-wide policy and therefore must be incorporated into the neighbourhood plan vs. what is up for discussion at the neighbourhood plan level (Austin, Seattle, Ottawa, literature, MPFG, local experts). • Equity between areas, i.e. sharing of responsibility for addressing city-wide goals (MPFG).

1.2.1.2 Specific options for doing so in the Principles include:

- Mandate that neighbourhood plans must not conflict with city-wide policies (and neighbourhood plans will not inform refinements of city-wide plans). (Austin, MPFG)
- Define possible responses to conflicting directions to set expectations for implementation (revise local plan and adopt or amend comprehensive plan). (Seattle)
- Set as explicit purpose that neighbourhood plans should support city-wide goals and neighbourhood plans should inform refinements of city-wide and regional plans. (Seattle)
- Be clear that as the process progresses, certain issues will be dealt with through other mechanisms (e.g. at a program level), ensuring that the plan is not overburdened. (local experts)

Note: In our review, we did not find an explicit discussion of how responsibility for addressing city-wide goals could be shared among neighbourhoods. Basic principles for doing so could include:

- Fairness: fair distribution of responsibility and impacts among neighbourhoods.
- Suitability: responsibility reflecting the physical location and context, and socio-economic and environmental context of the neighbourhood. City-wide analysis, e.g. of housing, GHG emissions, transportation networks, could define this context.

1.2.2

Preliminary fairness criteria could include:

- Relative area;
- Relative population

Preliminary suitability criteria could include:

- Ability to address city-wide needs (e.g. development capacity, viability)
- Existing amenities, housing, commercial space in relation to other neighbourhoods
- Location with respect to infrastructure (energy, transportation, sewer/water), amenities (parks, community centres), employment districts, etc.

Scope and outputs

City Practice

- The neighbourhood plan (and process) produce new policy, but the TOR does not specify how the plan supports policy development and action from other departments.

Potential Practices

- **1.3.1** Require that the plan provides an overview of how the neighbourhood fits within the City and relates to its guiding policies. (Ottawa, Austin)

Process

City Practice

- City-wide interests were broken down at the start of the process and used as goals for the process. Goal statements were used as criteria to guide planning and decision-making.
- In the Setting Community-wide Directions phase, TOR identifies gaps between different sub-plans, but not conflicts.

- Conflicts between city-wide and local perspectives were rare. When they arose, they were often internal conflicts between city-wide directions, and the neighbourhood plan was an opportunity to select solutions that prioritized one over the other, or found ways to achieve both.
- Linked the planning process with on-going city-wide and adjacent processes, including local “pilots” and/or projects within Mount Pleasant.

Potential Practices

1.4.1 In the first phase, include identification of City policies/targets that need to be refined for or applied to the neighbourhood and confirmation of what is and is not on the table for discussion. Clarify why items are non-negotiable—and allow some dialogue at the front end as to whether they all must remain non-negotiable. (MPFG)

1.4.2 When city-wide or provincial initiatives land near or in the neighbourhood, establish clear relationships between the two processes, and ensure explicit links are made between them. If necessary, adjust the LAP process to respond to these initiatives as if they were priority issues identified by the community in the initial issues survey (i.e. the LAP process would place more emphasis on these initiatives) (MPFG)

Communications and public engagement

City Practice

- TOR principles and city-wide goals were communicated at the beginning of every workshop/event
- Involved both city-wide stakeholders and local people in workshops (mailing list of 500+ people included both local people and many representing city-wide perspectives).

Potential Practices

1.5.1 Enhance the City’s dialogic approach to engagement. This was characterized in a variety of ways:

- Establish an atmosphere of discussion as the basis for developing and moving on policy. Engage in the discussion even though you are strong in what you need to bring forward. (local experts)
- Design engagement by framing the debate with global, regional and city-wide goals and policies, and then allowing and supporting a free and open discussion from that starting point. Ensure the tone of the discussion itself is open. (local experts, The Change Handbook)
- Use methods that are designed to identify and resolve disagreements (within the community, between local and city-wide concerns). (MPFG, Seattle, Community Change Handbook)
- Use methods that help the community identify priorities in the context of limited resources. (MPFG) [e.g. “Sustain-a-bucks” process (HBL)]

1.5.2 Communicate early and regularly about City-wide policies and other constraints on decisions the plan can make.

- Communicate non-negotiables regularly and clarify why these are non-negotiable (MPFG)
- Educate community members about city-wide policies, procedures and programs at the outset of the process. (MPFG, Ottawa, Austin)

Roles and Relationships

City Practice

- For Community Visions, the City used a City Perspectives Panel. This was not used for the LAP process.
- City-wide perspectives were represented by inviting interest groups to participate in workshops (e.g. housing proponents) and through the involvement of staff experts from other departments

Potential Practices

1.6.1 Form an inter-departmental working group to inform and guide the neighbourhood planning process, ensuring that staff members from all relevant city departments are part of the education process on city-wide goals and policies (Ottawa, Seattle)

1.6.2 Create an oversight body that tracks processes, plans and implementation and compares outcomes of each across neighbourhoods (for fair distribution of services and funds) and from a city-wide perspective. (Minneapolis, Seattle)

1.6.3 Provide regular opportunities, formal and informal, for neighbourhood leaders across the municipality to meet among themselves and with local officials to discuss how the implementation of neighbourhood planning is going and to compare progress with their own and the community's overall goals. (Porto Alegre)

2. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT

- *help participants learn and build their capacity for addressing planning issues*
- *involve a broader cross section of people and perspectives*
- *foster a sense of collaboration between City and community*
- *build trust between the City and community*

Overarching Approach

City Practice	
The City takes a principled, strongly resourced approach to ensuring diversity. It worked to engage people in open, honest discussions in the Mount Pleasant process.	
Potential Practices	
2.1.1	Outside of the neighbourhood planning process, continue to support external change processes to create a change-supportive culture. These can include community-based social marketing, education, and other similar initiatives. (HBL)
2.1.2	Invite university researchers to oversee and document the process and share lessons learned. (Ottawa, MPFG)
2.1.3	Manage the performance of the LAP in terms of engagement, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear engagement targets, expectations. (Minneapolis, MPFG) • Obtain data on participants and analyse it to be more transparent about how much the process focuses on privileged segments of the community. (MPFG)

Principles

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR Principle: Build or enhance community capacity through the planning process, and ensure the process seeks common ground and reflects the feelings of the broader community. • TOR Principle: Provide a variety of ways for the range of [community members] to participate and ensure that the opinions of those in the directly affected area and those in the wider community are sought. • TOR Principle: Engage the broad public with a special focus on income, multicultural, and tenure diversity.... • TOR Principle: recognize Council is ultimately responsible for approval of proposed physical improvements, zoning changes (or rezoning policy), guidelines, capital spending, and policy plans. • TOR Principle: Ensure that City Council, before making decisions, is made aware of the range of community opinion, technical information, and any other necessary information. 	
Potential Practices	
2.2.1	Ensure that the Plan Terms of Reference defines success. (local experts)
2.2.2	Set clear expectations from the onset for community involvement (terms of reference). (Minneapolis, MPFG)

Scope and Outputs

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff report accompanying the Plan describes the range of community opinion about the plan.
Potential Practices
<p>2.3.1 Include a “minority report” that reflects perspectives of the minority of people who don’t concur with major directions. (local experts)</p>

Process

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the process begins by inviting broad participation and informing many people in the community about the upcoming opportunities for engagement.
Potential Practices
<p>2.4.1 Use a group decision-making conceptual framework to engage the community. This framework would build the plan progressively. The steps are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> get clarity on roles, relationships, mandate, scope, priorities, etc. develop broad directions. develop more detailed policy under each direction. confirm and refine all of the policy. <p>Each step culminates in an integrative element which draws together varied perspectives, establishes linkages between elements, confirms agreement, and identifies areas of conflict to be resolved. This approach is more efficient and improves engagement by focusing effort and integrating viewpoints at many steps along the way. (HBL, literature, interviewees)</p>

Communications and Public Involvement

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through SCG, residents were able to bring their skills to the process and to learn new ones; increased knowledge and awareness of the issues were important outcomes. Working Group sessions would have also provided opportunity for local capacity building Opportunities for public involvement included: 2 community fairs, 6 shopping area workshops, 7 theme workshops, 12 community projects, 5 open houses, 28 community liaison group (CLG) meetings, 40 focus group meetings (with youth, ethnic groups, other hard-to-reach audiences), 21 SCG meetings (social coordinating group), plan webpage A mailing list of 500+ people included both local people and many representing city-wide perspectives Urban design workshops flow from easier stuff to harder stuff (public realm to height and density), which builds trust and relationships.
Potential Practices
<p>2.5.1 Invest time and resources in broad notification/invitation to process. (Austin, MPFG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ask the community how and where best to engage them, and to meet the community “where they are, when they are” (MPFG) Continue to distribute newsletters to keep people informed of progress and schedule of the project. (Ottawa, MPFG)

<p>2.5.2 Inform public discussions with an appropriate level of technical information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use development pro-formas to inform community decisions. (local experts) • Bring in professional ideas or ideas from city-wide initiatives (e.g. laneways) in addition to issues or ideas brought forward by the community. However, do so in a completely transparent way. (MPFG) • Show examples of how other cities have dealt with similar issues or opportunities, with discussion of how that could apply in Vancouver. (MPFG)
<p>2.5.3 Enhance staff and community knowledge about the neighbourhood. Options raised include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the practice of walkabouts with cross-departmental teams and community members. (MPFG, Ottawa, Minneapolis) • Use film/video to document how neighborhoods have changed over time. Show what has worked well, celebrate successes, and identify emerging issues. (local experts) • Ensure staff are highly knowledgeable on local issues and facts when engaging with the public. (MPFG) • Have city staff attend local events in the neighbourhood planning area to connect with residents and increase understanding of neighbourhood culture. (Ottawa) • At the first meetings, explain the current City zoning regarding building use, heights, view cones and community guidelines. (MPFG) • Ensure that people on the CLG commit to an education process to learn fundamentals of neighbourhood planning. (local experts)
<p>2.5.4 Build community members' planning literacy. Provide training to committee members on developing a basic level of planning literacy (e.g. the basics of city-wide policy, development and zoning). (local experts)</p>
<p>2.5.5 Take advantage of new technologies and engagement methods to access broader constituencies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infuse communications technology into the planning process to change how we communicate with each other outside of the regular meeting model (e.g. use of laptops/ipads, kiosks, online surveys, video, photos, art other media). (local experts, MPFG) • Provide a menu of outreach tools that are clearly organized by audience type and desired outcomes along with clear instruction for use. (Minneapolis) • Set up a program that allows neighbourhoods to be linked by a computer network, providing access to city databases, GIS mapping software, 3-D virtual planning tools, secure e-mail, and a file management system. A team of volunteers, or community technology leaders, works with the city to maintain and update the network. (Rochester, Minneapolis) • Use fun, interesting ways to engage city-wide perspectives and interests not usually represented, e.g. Salons, Pecha Kucha nights, philosophers cafes. (HBL, GCAP) • Develop a partnership with the VSB to deliver youth-oriented learning and engagement opportunities (HBL)
<p>2.5.6 Stay open to input that comes in later in the process. (local experts)</p>
<p>2.5.7 To complement efficient parallel processes (e.g. BIA meetings; sub-area workshops), connect different segments of the community (e.g. linguistic groups) in integrative sessions to enable cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives and build relationships across the community as a whole. (MPFG)</p>

Roles and Relationships

City Practice	
•	A Community Liaison Group (CLG) was formed to act as a watchdog for the Mount Pleasant planning process – made up of 53 local residents with a variety of interests, they provided guidance for local outreach (note: less than half attended meetings on average)
Potential Practices	
2.6.1	Set up a non-profit organization that can support the community members and the overall process (e.g. offering citizens free training in leadership, community organizing, and technical planning skills). (Ottawa, Rochester)
2.6.2	Establish a larger role in decision-making for community groups, with City staff serving as resources/facilitators. (Rochester, Minneapolis, Seattle)
2.6.3	Enhance and clarify the CLG's roles and responsibilities. Considerations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the committee Terms of Reference defines success and representation. (local experts) • Be crystal clear that the role of the CLG is not to <u>lead</u> development of the plan. (MPFG) • Invite (and possibly resource) a core group to help set CLG agendas, ensuring trust of staff is maintained. (MPFG) • Include city-wide, development/landowner, and resident/business interests in the CLG to ensure cross-pollination of ideas and improved understanding and relationships (NEFC working group) • Target specific types of individuals or skills in the community for the CLG (e.g. historians, long-time residents, business people). (MPFG)
2.6.4	Encourage structures that enable neighbourhood collaborations, particularly for corridor/boundary issues. (Seattle)

3. HOW CAN WE BE MORE EFFICIENT

- *compress the timeline*
- *be more resource efficient*

Overarching Approach

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local area planning cover the entire city through a combination of Community Visions, specific plans for the DTES, and Neighbourhood Plans. • A priority-setting process and criteria are in place and used to select the next neighbourhood planning areas. Priority-setting balances the desire for a plan in all parts of the city and the need to address pressing local issues. 	
Potential Practices	
3.1.1	Prioritize and focus neighbourhood planning efforts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Plans mightnot be offered to every neighbourhood, but rather as a “service” to those that are facing specific issues and need. (local experts). • Focus planning projects on areas under stress and change. (local experts) • Be clear about what circumstances can trigger revisiting the plan (e.g. if major transit corridor announced or if housing affordability skyrockets etc.) (local experts)
3.1.2	Develop a standardized process for all neighbourhoods. (Austin)

Principles

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR Principle: Focus planning attention toward current priority issues while also taking a longer term, comprehensive approach to updating Mount Pleasant’s past plans. • Meet the approved program staff, time and budget limits, and deliver a range of products. 	
Potential Practices	
3.2.1	Refine or revise previous plans through the LAP process rather than creating new ones, despite the age of previous plans. At the same time, there must remain appreciation of the possibility that “big (new) ideas” will still emerge, and the process will be generative. (MPFG) ³

³ In practice, the MPFG spoke about communications (e.g. documents) that would show the following side-by-side: existing policy / existing conditions / proposed broad directions / proposed policy, reflecting the progression through the LAP process.

Scope and Outputs

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive, sustainable long-range planning guidance; • Specific plans and policies for shopping and residential sub-areas; and • Short-term action on pressing social issues (Community Action Agenda). • Plan scope evolved to focus more on height, density concerns than originally anticipated. 	
Potential Practices	
3.3.1	Reduce scope. Build the scope and level of detail around relevant and immediate issues and changes (local experts).
3.3.2	Ensure that the edges don't get left out to make implementation and change in those areas more predictable and responsive to their needs. Consider overlapping with neighbouring plan areas. (MPFG) ⁴

Process

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 month process • Four phases: (1) Start-up and getting in touch; (2) sub-area plans and community action plans/projects; (3) setting community-wide directions; and (4) completing and validating the plan. Pre-preparation and post-evaluation were also planned for, with evaluation outside the 30 month timing. • Workshops are spaced out (e.g. 1/month) to reduce the intensity of demands on community time • For the most part, directions are developed all together and at a high level of detail in the Setting Community-wide Directions phase. 	
Potential Practices	
3.4.1	Set a firm 18 month timeline to complete a neighbourhood plan. (Rochester)
3.4.2	Complete all research at the outset of the process. (local experts)
3.4.3	Focus the staff role more on technical analysis and less on "hand holding" facilitation. Let the community run their own process within prescribed guidelines. (local experts, MPFG)
3.4.4	Integrate sub-areas and specific topics earlier and/or link different conversations earlier in the process. (MPFG)
3.4.5	<p>In the first phase of the process, confirm key local issues/priorities as a means of focusing early work on priorities (MPFG). The City could build on the initial prioritization survey done in the Mount Pleasant process. Aspects of this approach include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas in which the community doesn't want to see any change at the outset of the process. (local experts) • Ask residents to comment on the scope "what do you think we should focus on?" (local experts) • Use the neighbourhood issues/loves/wants survey to focus the plan on priority issues. (MPFG) • Address "key issues" first - those things that must be addressed before effective neighbourhood planning can be done. (local experts)

⁴ Staff suggested alternative planning areas that are apolitical and that do not correspond with obvious edges (e.g. 5x5 km squares)

Improving efficiency through prioritizing issues could have two impacts on the process (MPFG):

- changing the scope by placing more effort, emphasis and detail on priorities and less on other things, or
- designing the process to start on priorities, then to shift focus to other elements as the priorities are addressed.

3.4.6 Tighten up the schedule of workshops, and consider integrated sessions in which many topics are addressed in parallel. These integrated sessions can improve connections between topics and different groups in the community, and can reduce the timeline significantly over a series of workshops. (HBL)

Communication and Public Involvement

City Practice

- the City develops Policy Sheets for a number of topics. These summarize both what the policies are, and what they mean/have meant in practice. This makes workshops much more efficient because they build on existing work and realities.
- Urban design workshops begin by developing a shared knowledge of place, which is then a basis for designing and related policy development.

Potential Practices

3.5.1 Provide plan examples to show participants the level of detail expected. (local experts)

3.5.2 Need effective information deployment methods that match the culture of the community and its subcultures. (local experts)

3.5.3 Be more direct, specific, and quantitative

- Cut to the chase in all discussions. Do not avoid difficult issues. (MPFG)
- Focus more on specific information and discussions (e.g. use # of feet high - not storeys, as these are not specific enough - to define low, mid- or high-rise. (MPFG)
- Use more quantitative input methods to enable faster data analysis and reporting, and improve transparency about the balance of participant opinion. (MPFG)

3.5.4 Plan to identify and resolve conflict efficiently

- Provide dedicated facilitation services (professional facilitator) for decision-making sessions. (Austin, Minneapolis)
- Identify key controversial topics ahead of time and prepare a presentation anticipating concerns and motivations. (MPFG)

3.5.5 Streamline CLG procedures, learning from experience:

- Adopt good procedural rules from previous processes to make committees more efficient. (MPFG)
- Ensure new and returning committee members are clear about their roles and responsibilities before the meetings start (i.e. in informal time before the meeting proper). (MPFG)

Roles and Relationships

City Practice
Potential Practices
3.6.1 Empower community groups to coordinate the process so that neighbourhood plans can happen simultaneously with clearly defined scope. Provide funding and staff leadership in the form of a dedicated project manager/facilitator and oversight committee. (Minneapolis, Seattle)

Resources and Budgets

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A LAP staff team leads the process, with consultant help on specific expertise e.g. heritage• Interdepartmental support is available, e.g. housing centre staff assist with housing workshops
Potential Practices
3.7.1 Develop more planning teams (local experts)

4. HOW CAN WE ENSURE MORE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

- *Provide certainty that enables action*
- *Ensure public input contributes effectively to implementation decision-making*

Principles

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR Principle: undertake planning work at the same time as taking action on pressing social issues....
Potential Practices
4.1.1 Set specific expectations for how the plan will direct future action. (HBL)

Process

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Coordinating Group developed actions and partnerships for implementation but this was not part of the broader planning process • The plan aimed to produce an early report of Public Realm Concept Plans, which would support redevelopments preceding approval of the final Plan
Potential Practices
4.2.1 After an initial wish list of community amenities has been defined, do some analysis of what it would take to provide these; see which can be provided through normal city programs and how quickly. What can be provided by other organizations? (local experts)
4.2.2 Prior to City Council approval, all reports are vetted through the appropriate departments to ensure each recommendation adheres to corporate policy. (Saskatoon)

Scope and outputs

City Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very detailed plan • The level of detail helped achieve clarity around conflicts that existed between city-wide directions, the neighbourhood plan was an opportunity to select solutions that prioritized one over the other, or found ways to achieve both (e.g. intersection design for traffic flow and pedestrian safety and comfort)
Potential Practices
4.3.1 Allow the plan to recommend both overarching policies and specific actions. (Ottawa)
4.3.2 Be clear what we need certainty on and what can be more flexible and why. (local experts)
4.3.3 Be more specific on heights, using feet/metres rather than storeys; also be specific on densities (MPFG).

Roles and Relationships

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Action Agenda: City and community formed a local community-based Social Coordinating Group (SCG). The SCG’s mandate was to implement up to 4 projects during the planning process – a pilot for ‘doing while planning’. 14 projects and actions were eventually completed to address key social issues identified by community (safety, supportive services, homelessness). The SCG was comprised of a membership of over 150 individuals and groups made up of businesses, residents (including homeless people), religious organizations, community groups, and service providers. 	
Potential Practices	
4.4.1	Set up a community body for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a committee sub-team (community members) solely for the purpose of implementing the plan. (Austin) Set up a Community Council with which to liaise during implementation (Portland)
4.4.2	Support direct community engagement in implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff support for community members in both planning and implementation stages. (Austin) Provide staff support for community committees to lead process, produce zoning plans and access city resources. Take advantage of community based decision-making and appetite for action/change. (local experts, Austin, Saskatoon) Task community committees with identifying a top 10 list of implementation priorities for consideration in the City’s budgeting process. (Austin) Involve neighbourhoods in implementation by inviting neighbourhood participation in the annual budgeting process. (Austin, Porto Alegre)

Resources and budgets

City Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SCG sought to build local partnerships and networks to advance priority actions/projects through in-kind support, donations, volunteerism. 	
Potential Practices	
4.5.1	Allocate staff to areas of the city rather than to project teams (such as the LAP team is) - and they balance out urgent and longer term plans as they can. (local experts)
4.5.2	Establish a strong link to implementation budgets, working with community and staff:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.5.3 Fund the implementation of specific actions through a mix of the City’s capital and operating budgets. (Saskatoon) 4.5.4 Look for buy-in from other departments in terms in re-allocating budgets to reflect priorities in each neighbourhood plan. (local experts) 4.5.5 Provide a “prize” for neighbourhoods completing the process: an implementation budget. (local experts) 	

- **4.5.6** Require residents to identify a partner(s) or partners to commit to and fund recommendations, as a requirement for approval. (Rochester)

Implementation

City Practice

- The City's role in and support for the SCG ended once the plan was adopted; and local residents and community organizations have taken on the collaboration independently.
- There is no plan for on-going formal liaison between the City and the community.

Potential Practices

4.6.1 Ensure that the fundamental implementation mechanism is a change in zoning (provide base zoning with higher zoning conditional on provision of community benefits). (local experts)

4.6.2 An indicators matrix is applied to all LAP recommendations to assign priorities for implementation. (Saskatoon)

4.6.3 Need to move to action quickly otherwise people will question value of process. (local experts)

4.6.4 City staff make final decisions on budgeting and high-level policy. (Ottawa)

APPENDIX: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Our research has included:

- Review of selected literature on neighbourhood planning
 - American Planning Association. (Adopted) April 6 1998. Policy Guide on Neighborhood Collaborative Planning.
 - Brody, Samuel D., David R. Godschalk, and Raymond J. Burby. 2003. Mandating Citizen Participation in Plan Making: Six strategic planning choices. JAPA 69(3): 245-264
 - Burkholder, Suan H. 2003. Principles of Neighborhood Planning for Community Development. Center for Neighborhood Development.
 - City of Victoria Planning and Development Department. 2008. Neighbourhood Planning: A discussion paper.
 - Dillon Consulting Ltd. 2005. Best Practices in Neighbourhood Planning – Final report. Prepared for the City of Ottawa.
 - Docherty, Iain, Robina Goodlad and Ronan Paddison. 2001. Civic Culture, Community and Citizen Participation in Contrasting Neighbourhoods. Urban Studies 38(12):2225-2250
 - Meck, Stuart, FAICP, Gen. Ed. 2002. Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook: Model Statutes for Planning and the Management of Change, 2002 Edition. Chapter 7: Local Planning. American Planning Association.
 - Morris, Vickie Jo. The Citizen's Handbook: Models of Neighbourhood Participation in Local Government. http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/models/M_Models.html, accessed Jan-May 2011.
 - Peterman, William. 2000. Neighborhood Planning and Community-Based Development. Sage Publications.
 - Rohe, William M. From Local to Global: One hundred years of neighborhood planning. JAPA 75(2):209-230
 - Rohe, William M. and Gates, Laren B. 1985. Planning with Neighborhoods. Chapter 3: The Theoretical Underpinnings of Neighborhood Planning. The University of North Carolina Press.
 - Urban Land Institute. 2005 Involving the Community in Neighborhood Planning. ULI Community Catalyst Report Number 1.
 - Wendelyn A. Martz. 1995. Neighborhood-Based Planning: Five Case Studies, Planning Advisory Service Report No. 455 (Chicago: APA Planners Press), 3-6
 - Wilke, Julie. 2006. A National Review of Best Practices in Neighborhood Planning. Student Paper for Course CRP 381: Participatory Methods in the Graduate Program in Community and Regional Planning at the School of Architecture, UT Austin.
- Review of neighbourhood planning case studies:
 - Saskatoon, SK

- Ottawa, ON
- Portland, OR
- Seattle, WA
- Minneapolis, MN
- Austin, TX
- Winnipeg, MB
- Rochester, NY
- Review of City of Vancouver's practices
 - Focus group with Mount Pleasant LAP Community Liaison Group (CLG) participants
 - Review of Mount Pleasant LAP Terms of Reference
 - Interviews and discussions with staff
 - Interviews and meetings with retired senior staff and external experts

In addition, one member of the CLG, a professional facilitator, provided further recommendations for process design improvements.