

# DISCUSSION GUIDE – Afternoon Breakout Groups

## THEME 1—BALANCING

global, regional and city-wide challenges with neighbourhood perspectives

### Key question:

How do we balance city-wide aims, wise responses to global and regional challenges, and neighbourhood-specific desires, in creating community plans that will serve us for 20-30 years?

Some considerations:

1. What is a **great way to check** for neighbourhood agreement with the broader challenges (global, regional and city-wide in scope) identified by City staff and Council?
2. What is the **best way to educate** participants in any community planning initiative about city-wide aims? And vice versa:  
How can planners be better educated about neighbourhood initiatives?
3. **If neighbourhood representatives do not** perceive the same broader challenges (global, regional and city-wide aims) as City planners, what then is the best approach to take?
4. What **approach—what specific actions, steps, sequence of steps**—will ensure that **both** neighbour interests and global / regional / city-wide challenges are effectively addressed, and well balanced?
5. How do we bring **more rigorous analysis**—including prioritization criteria and weighting—into our deliberations with community? Use what exercises, what criteria, for priority-setting?
6. **Who** is responsible for the balancing?  
How do the responsibilities vary for the different players in the process?
7. How should we **start**? Given that city-wide goals and policies cannot be ignored, and neighbourhood interests and goals are also important, what activities, inquiries, conversational focus should happen first? Does the sequence of what information is provided, and what local input is sought, matter?
8. Other insights or ideas to offer?

## THEME 2—ENGAGING

### Key question:

How do we improve public engagement in the creation of community plans?

Some considerations:

1. What **outreach tactics** work wonderfully? Are particular **communication vehicles** important to use?
2. What is the best way to **keep people** engaged, through the whole process of creating a comprehensive community plan? Does it matter if they stay engaged for the whole process?
3. Who tends to often be **excluded or not heard**, to the detriment of decision-making? What works to include them?
4. In engaging a diverse range of community members, what approaches work best to **resolve conflicting viewpoints**? Are there specific actions, sequence of steps, methodology for group work, sharing of responsibilities, new practices or communication approaches you advise?
5. Are **parallel processes** (engaging different stakeholder groups separately) helpful? When and with whom, to what extent, and why? Overall, do they increase or decrease efficiency? If parallel processes are used to engage some stakeholders, what **integration** mechanisms do you also advise?
6. What are terrific ways to **support learning** while still keeping the process fast-paced? (Consider, for example, whether, how and why to use GIS and 3D visualization tools, alternative scenario simulations, logic models, more information on contextual conditions, different ways of gathering or presenting data, walkabouts, gender lens on the various issues, etc.)
7. What **length of process** is ideal for optimizing engagement?
8. How do we build local area capacity for **ongoing stewardship** of community agreements and implementation initiatives?
9. What should we **not do**?  
What should we **do instead**, because it is more efficient and/or more effective?
10. What does the City **not do enough of**? Of all that we do already (or could do), what would be the **best use of City resources** in reaching out to community members?
11. How do we heighten **enjoyment** of the process? Other insights or ideas?

## THEME 3—RESPONDING to DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES and AMENITIES DEMAND

### Key question:

How do we manage development pressures during plan-making and following plan approval, and also address high expectations regarding local amenities?

Some considerations:

1. What **actions (or criteria)**, if adopted, would help us move from long wish lists of community amenities to a local area agreement on the **highest-priority amenities**?
2. How can we **better meet** the neighbourhood demand for amenities?
3. While community plans are being established and are not yet confirmed by either neighbourhood or Council, **what kind of interaction between neighbourhood members and proponents** of specific development proposals is a good idea?
4. What change in notifications or other procedures would help **reduce tension** regarding spot rezoning or other development permit applications? What would be good for developers to do? For city staff to do? For community members to do?
5. What would **streamline** the process of reaching agreement across neighbourhood members, and with developers and also with City staff, about what development is a **good fit**—and therefore need not be delayed even if a comprehensive community plan is not yet complete?
6. What action could enable us to quickly bridge any gap between the priority list of desired amenities and **what is actually feasible** on a given site?
7. If there are divergent perspectives about a desired outcome, at what point do we agree to disagree? If neighbourhood voices conflict with city policies and Council-approved city-wide aims, under what conditions do we say **enough consultation** has been done? How do we know when “enough” is?
8. In establishing robust community plans (meant to serve us long-term, yet still allow some flexibility to suitably respond to unforeseen challenges and innovative ideas that may arise later), what **level of detail** do we need to reach?
9. Do we need to sustain **Community Liaison Groups and Social (Action) Coordinating Groups** for longer-term effectiveness? How? Adapt these components how, once planning phase is complete?
10. Other insights or ideas?

## THEME 4—STREAMLINING

### Key question:

How do we create more efficient processes, while being thorough and giving due process to the key issues?

Some considerations:

1. What changes in the whole process would save large amounts of time for City staff?  
For all participants? What are the **biggest time-savers** on which to focus in the planning phase?
2. Could a shorter process actually result in **additional positive outcomes**? How?
3. Could some of the many topics often included in community planning be left out, when engaging some neighbourhoods? Is it okay to do a scoping exercise at the beginning, in every neighbourhood? What should be the **minimum requirement** of what gets covered?  
**Best way to sharply focus (define / narrow) scope** of the planning project? And vice versa: might terms of reference need to be broadened (e.g., considering public commons, or local food precincts, etc.) , to help with streamlining by focusing on the issues most important to a given neighbourhood?
4. **Inter-neighbourhood synergy** If community planning is undertaken in two or more neighbourhoods simultaneously, how could neighbourhoods (or the assigned City teams) work together to reduce the resource requirements for the City? and for the community members involved?
5. How could **city-wide organizations** support the development of community plans more efficiently, if plans are being created in more than one local area at once?
6. What would get **sacrificed** in compressing the process in any neighbourhood to 18-24 months? Is that okay?
7. What are **efficient ways of educating the broader public** (beyond those directly engaged in creating the plan), once a community plan has been created and approved by Council?
8. How do we **stay efficient throughout implementation**? What would be the most effective AND efficient ways of staying on track? What procedures, notices or other steps would help ensure City staff and neighbourhood stakeholder efficiency in the follow-up stage? (i.e., in ensuring that what happens in a community after Council approves a community plan is consistent with that plan and keeps boosting community awareness, understanding, involvement and well-being?
9. Other streamlining insights or ideas?