

SUMMARY OF CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY DESIGN CHOICES

MAY 2014



CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

This document describes and provides rationale for the design choices outlined in the draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly. This document also provides an overview of next steps, and a summary of the best practice research and community input that guided these choices. At the conclusion of the document, there is an accompanying set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for reference.

This Summary accompanies three other documents produced in connection with the Citizens' Assembly:

- A Report on the Community Workshops and Online Engagement related to the Citizens' Assembly;
- A Synopsis of additional Focus Group findings;
- A DRAFT Terms of Reference for the Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly;
- A set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

Readers interested in additional background information on Assemblies and best practices may also be interested in an earlier discussion paper - *A Citizens' Assembly for Grandview Woodland* - produced in January 2014. It can be found, along with the other documents mentioned, at vancouver.ca/gw.

This Summary of Design Choices was jointly produced by a consultant team of MASS LBP, Susanna Haas Lyons, and Planning and Development Services, City of Vancouver.

Contents

2	Background
5	Assembly Process
6	Guiding Principles
7	Assembly Membership and Composition
11	Engaging the Community
12	Final Products of the Assembly
13	Next Steps & Timeline

Background

In April 2012, the City of Vancouver began the process of creating a new Community Plan for Grandview-Woodland. This process involved extensive planning work and many consultations with residents and organizations in the neighbourhood.

In June 2013, the City released a set of DRAFT *Emerging Directions* for Grandview-Woodland. This document contained roughly 225 recommendations, covering areas of community-wide and sub-area policy. While many of these recommendations were well-received, there were a number of key recommendations – in particular those focusing on land-use changes and built form – that raised concerns. Community members requested additional time and consultation to resolve these issues.

In September 2013, City Council directed staff to extend the planning process, and to look at ways to enhance the engagement process. Council also directed staff to look at the creation of a Citizens' Assembly – a new type of engagement process that had not previously been used by the City.

In response, City staff undertook a literature review, expert interviews and best practices study for Citizens' Assemblies and related deliberative processes. In the winter and early spring of 2014, staff also prepared the aforementioned discussion paper and held a series of community consultations on the Assembly process.

Key Design Questions for the Proposed Citizens' Assembly

In considering the design of the Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly, the following questions were considered:

- What should the Assembly's **mandate** be?
- What sorts of **tasks** or questions should it focus on?
- What sort of **process** should the Assembly follow?
- What **principles** should guide the Assembly's work?
- **Who** should be on the Assembly? **How many** people should participate?
- How should the **broader community** be involved in the work of the Assembly?
- What sort of **final products** should the Assembly produce?

In answering these, City staff have worked closely with the consultant team to create a process that is broadly inclusive, responsive to key needs identified by the community and within the budget allowed for the process.

Mandate and Tasks of the Assembly

Mandate

As noted in the Discussion Paper, “Deliberative processes (large and small) tend to focus on a limited number of specific core tasks and/or questions. By focusing in this way, Assembly members can ‘dive deep’ into a given issue or problem.”

In general, there was broad support amongst workshop participants, online respondents and focus group participants, for an Assembly whose mandate:

- Looks at a broad scope of issues and related city-wide policy as it relates to Grandview-Woodland growth and change
- Is forward looking, and focused on a time-frame that is consistent with the larger community plan – i.e. approximately 30 years
- Provides an opportunity to look at key planning assumptions and data around growth and change
- Builds on, but is not bound by, previous engagement activities
- Responds to key issues and areas of concern, as identified through the planning process to date

The City supports these ideas and their incorporation into the Assembly’s Terms of Reference.

In addition, there was some interest – particularly on the online questionnaire – in the creation of an Assembly that “should help manage all aspects of the Community Plan process.” However, while the Assembly should have a wide scope of influence, and be able to conduct its work with reasonable independence, this influence will not extend to the management, or co-management of the overall planning process.

With these factors in mind, the City proposes the following as a **general mandate for the Grandview-Woodland Citizens’ Assembly**:

The Citizens’ Assembly on the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan will endeavour to represent the Grandview-Woodland community and develop a series of recommendations that will help guide the terms for neighbourhood change and growth over the next 30 years. The Assembly’s recommendations will be received by Vancouver City Council and will significantly inform the next iteration of the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan.

Guiding Criteria for Assembly Work

Community consultations on the Citizens’ Assembly also indicated strong support for Assembly tasks that:

- Build on the work that’s already been undertaken as part of the planning process, especially input heard during earlier stages of planning such as responses to Emerging Directions;
- Make use of input from community-wide workshops happening at the same time as the Assembly, including workshops that focus on specific “sub-areas” of the community (e.g. Broadway and Commercial);
- Focus on neighbourhood-scale issues.

The City has developed a series of proposed tasks (see below: Specific Tasks for the Assembly) that respond to these criteria, while also working to integrate community feedback that the Assembly “should use the *Emerging Directions* but not be bound by it” (in other words, is able to respond to areas of concern, explore options and suggest

alternatives). (It is important to note that the Assembly is not doing a 'hard reset' of work already undertaken, particularly given the support for building on previous planning work and community input.)

A fourth criteria for the work of the Assembly was also considered during the earlier community consultation:

- Avoid granular topics such as specific side streets or the design of a particular park

The community had mixed opinions on this item – with many participants noting that granular topics could, in some instances, be a helpful means of looking at broader neighbourhood issues. The City agrees with this. Where specific examples can help to inform the broader discussion, granular topics should be a fair topic of conversation amongst Assembly members. However, it will be important to ensure that the focus of the Assembly's work remain 'at the neighbourhood scale' – so that discussions do not get sidetracked with trying to resolve issues of a smaller scale (i.e. less pressing to the community-at-large).

Specific Tasks for the Assembly

Participants in the workshops, online questionnaire and focus groups were invited to share their ideas for specific topics that the Citizens' Assembly should cover.

Key topics identified included:

- Land Use, Density, Built Form, Zoning
- Neighbourhood character, growth and change
- Public benefits, community amenities
- Affordability and gentrification
- Other key topics: housing, transportation, local economy, social issues, arts & culture

Drawing on these topic areas, the Assembly will be responsible for producing:

- A shared 30-year vision describing the community's aspirations for Grandview-Woodland.
- A set of community values to guide neighbourhood change and growth in Grandview-Woodland.
- A set of recommendations for how the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan should address key community concerns and planning issues at a neighbourhood and sub-area scale. More specifically, these recommendations will help to resolve disagreements concerning the City's June 2013 Emerging Directions draft proposal.
- A Neighbourhood Planning Map that will identify areas within Grandview-Woodland for growth, preferred land-uses, and high-level built form and building height directions. Note: high-level built form and height directions is understood to mean "general" commentary about building scale and typology (e.g. "low-rise," "mid-rise" – within a given range, versus specific floor heights or specific densities.

Assembly Process

Based on best practices, the Grandview-Woodland Assembly will follow a five-stage process:

1. **Recruitment** – a representative group of community members will be convened to serve as members of the Citizens’ Assembly on the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan.
2. **Learning** – about key topics & perspectives. Assembly members will build their knowledge of community planning and Grandview-Woodland through presentations from a variety of speakers, a review of existing planning documents, and various learning exercises.
3. **Listening** – to the broader community. Assembly members will engage the broader Grandview-Woodland community on key issues, and ask for feedback to help with their decision-making.
4. **Deliberating** – weighing issues and trade-offs. Assembly members will work toward consensus and make recommendations.
5. **Delivering** – a report with recommendations to Vancouver City Council.

Based on time and allowable budget, Assembly members will convene for approximately 10 full-day Saturday meetings. Assembly members will also participate in additional roundtable consultations with the community at large at key stages of the process.

A few additional clarifying notes are important to know:

The **recruitment and design of Assembly materials will be undertaken by a third-party, consultant – MASS LBP**, a leading practitioner of deliberative public engagement process. This arms-length support will ensure that the Assembly is able to function with a high degree of independence, while also being resourced by practitioners with a great deal of experience running processes like this. (Since its founding in 2007, MASS has hosted 23 assemblies and reference panels in three provinces).

The learning process will be a cumulative one. Just like a college or university course, each component of learning builds on the previous work. Therefore, one of the defining features of the Assembly process is that the members are expected to participate in each Assembly meeting. This is in contrast to a more conventional community planning engagement approach where community members are able to participate in the topic areas that are of interest and omit others if they so choose.

Learning materials will be open-source – meaning that all materials will be available to the broader community, and presentations, etc. will be recorded so that everyone can follow along with the work of the Assembly.

City staff note that some Assembly processes have benefited from the creation of an **Advisory Committee** (typically academics, subject matter experts, experts in curriculum). Given the precedent-setting nature of the Grandview-Woodland Citizens’ Assembly, staff are proposing to use a similar approach.

Guiding Principles

Both the literature on Assemblies and actual Assembly processes reference a number of common principles that are used to guide the work of these sorts of deliberative processes. In the discussion paper, eight ‘process principles’ were proposed: Openness and Transparency; Representation; Legitimacy; Independence; Well-informed; Balance; Respect; and Democratic decision-making.

As noted in the consultant’s report, the January and February engagement activities revealed strong support for all these principles, in particular: Representation, Openness and Transparency, Legitimacy, Independence, and Well Informed.

During the consultation process, a number of additional principles were proposed by members of the community. These additional principles include: Accessibility, accountability, authority and influence, clarity, community engagement and connection, evidence based, Healthy City for All, quality of discussions and decisions, make a positive impact, and publicity (see the consultant’s report for details).

The City is therefore proposing to use the following modified principles to guide the work of the Assembly:

- *Accessibility and transparency* – The Assembly will strive to ensure that its activities are open and inclusive, enabling local residents to participate in various ways that are appropriate and conducive to enabling democratic expression.
- *Accountability and Legitimacy* – The Assembly will work within a defined mandate on behalf of all members of the Grandview-Woodland community and strive for consensus concerning the long-term interests of its residents and businesses.
- *Effective Representation* – The Assembly will endeavor to ensure that it is broadly representative of the interests and demographics of the community. Members will be charged with the responsibility to speak on behalf of all residents and businesses and to work to understand their needs and concerns
- *Independence* – The Assembly will enjoy independence to determine how best to fulfill its mandate. The integrity and impartiality of the process are paramount.
- *Well-informed* – The Assembly will work to ensure that its recommendations are sound and informed by a range of perspectives and sources of expertise. Its activities will promote community development and learning.
- *Balance* – The Assembly will work to ensure that a diversity of voices and perspectives inform its deliberations and recommendations.
- *Respect* – The Assembly will conduct its activities in ways which exemplify a conscientious, fair-minded and respectful sensibility both in its deliberations and with respect to community which it serves.

Assembly Membership and Composition

Number of Participants

Through both of the consultation processes, there was reasonable support expressed for an Assembly of “up to 60” members. Online respondents were approximately 7/8 in favour of Assembly sizes ranging between 12 and 60 members. Only 12 per cent supported an Assembly of “more than 60” members. Participants in the two workshops were approximately 2/3 in favour of following the 12-60 precedent regarding size.

With this in mind, **staff propose to proceed with an Assembly comprised of 48 community members.** There are a number of reasons for this size:

- This size is large enough to ensure a broadly representative Assembly, without being so large as to diminish the opportunity for deeper deliberation. Both qualities were raised as important during community consultations. As noted in the DRAFT Terms of Reference, “it is a membership size that will afford members an optimal and collegial experience;”
- The 48 figure is easily divisible for small group discussions, which are a central feature of the Assembly model;
- This figure is manageable in terms of the approved budget for the Assembly, and will work well with existing venues, available staff supports, etc.

Staff note that there was a minority interest in an Assembly of “unlimited” or “open-ended” size, specifically to:

- Allow space for anyone who wanted to participate; and/or,
- Not omit participation from community members that had been part of the process up to date.

In response to these issues, staff are committed to providing opportunities for all community members to participate in the Grandview-Woodland planning process, including open workshops and direct interactions with Assembly members.

Representative Composition

Citizens’ Assemblies are meant to function as a representative ‘mini public’ - a group that looks and feels like the community as a whole.

As noted in the City’s discussion paper, this is usually achieved “by selecting a series of demographic qualities and matching the composition of Assembly members to these qualities (e.g. if 50% of the community is male and 50% female, then an Assembly that was created to match this demographic feature would see 50% of its members male and 50% female).”

Staff propose to use the following demographic traits as the selection criteria to recruit a representative Assembly:

- **Geography:** Participants from all areas within the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood boundaries (City study area), in proportion to the census
- **Renter/Owner status:** A mix of housing situations, including co-op, in proportion to City and census data
- **Age:** Allow participation from community members age 16 and older, in proportion to the census
- **Gender:** A mix of men and women, in proportion to the census
- **Aboriginal identity:** in proportion to the census

In order to maximize the diversity of the Assembly, eligibility in the will be limited to one person per household.

Among the 48 members, three spaces will be reserved as follows:

- Two spaces for **business owners** who operate in the commercial (“C” zoned), light industrial (I” zoned) or manufacturing (“M” zoned) districts found within the study area
- One space for a **property owner** who does not reside in the study area

A few additional qualifications are also included:

- Business owners and property owners cannot transfer their eligibility to an employee.
- Prospective candidates may only submit their name to the civic lottery once. Multiple applications will result in the candidate’s disqualification.
- Only one application to the civic lottery can be made per household or business address. Selected candidates will be required to confirm their eligibility by providing proof of address before they are accepted as Assembly members.
- Employees of the City of Vancouver Planning Department , as well as elected municipal officials are ineligible to serve as Assembly members.

Staff note that workshop and online participants also supported selecting members according to additional demographic traits: including a broad ethnocultural mix, income status, sexual orientation, and tenure in the neighbourhood (a full list can be found in the consultant’s report).

As noted during the workshops, previous uses of the random selection method have resulted in participant diversity beyond the specific selection criteria. For example, selecting members according to geography and age will also result in diversity of income. Requesting income or other sensitive information is a privacy concern that has been shown to significantly lower response rates.

It is also important to note that the more attributes that are included in the Assembly recruitment process, the more complex the selection process can be. Trying to make an Assembly that perfectly matches the community would be challenging, if not impossible. This difficulty is only heightened when some of the variables (sexual orientation, time lived in the neighbourhood) have no census based figure on which to develop a comparison.

Based on previous uses of this recruitment method, the consultant team and City staff are confident the 48 Assembly members will be a diverse group that reflects many aspects of Grandview-Woodland’s community.

Defining Community Members

In addition to the aforementioned traits, online, workshop and focus group participants identified a mix of views on whether members should be:

- Residents only, or
- Limitedly involve those who work or own businesses in the neighbourhood, are property owners and/or those living in adjacent areas

In response, staff propose an Assembly wherein the strong majority of members are residents of the Grandview-Woodland study area: North - Burrard Inlet; South - East 12th Ave (south side to Lakewood), South Grandview Highway (south side, Lakewood to Nanaimo), North Grandview Highway (south side, Nanaimo to Kamloops); West - Clark Drive (east side of street); East - Kamloops Street (west side of street).

A smaller number of spaces (three out of 48) will be available for people who own businesses and/or property in the neighbourhood.

Other individuals with a stake in the future of Grandview Woodland, such as those living in adjacent areas will be encouraged to participate in City-led workshops and public roundtables hosted by the Citizens’ Assembly.

Recruitment Process

The City proposes to use a two-stage recruitment process that is consistent with previous Assemblies:

1. Community-wide call for participation;
2. Random selection of eligible respondents based on key demographic criteria (as described above).

As noted earlier, the recruitment will be conducted by a third-party consulting team (MASS LBP). Members of the Citizens' Assembly will be randomly-selected by **Civic Lottery** – a mechanism that ensures that a broad, representative cross-section of local residents and business owners are selected to participate. Each household and business owner in Grandview-Woodland will receive or may request an Invitation to the Assembly and a Candidate Card. The members of the Assembly will be selected from among those applicants who register for the Lottery by returning their Candidate Card before a specific date.

In testing this idea with the community, staff note this was the area in which there was the greatest divergence in opinions on the design of the Grandview-Woodland Assembly. Online respondents were evenly split in the number of comments identifying strengths (81) and weaknesses (81) of the random selection method. And while workshop participants placed a much higher emphasis on the *diversity* of members (181 votes) over how members would be *selected* (25 votes), there was still a substantial amount of discussion about random versus self-selection of participants.

Research on engagement practices shows that self-selected processes do not create optimally diverse groups (see, also consultant's report on January and February engagement). This suggests that if the City is committed to the community priority of member diversity, then it should follow the best practices used by other Assemblies and use a random selection process.

It is important, however, to acknowledge and respond to the specific reasons that supporters of the "self-selected" process listed in advocating for their position. Among the key concerns raised:

- This form of representative recruitment might 'leave behind' those who have made an active or enthusiastic commitment to the community plan process already;
- It could result in lack of representation of key hard to reach demographics;
- It will mean that not everyone who wants to be involved, can be.

It is important to the City that there is ample opportunity for everyone who wants to be involved in helping to draft the Community Plan. Therefore, the City will host workshops and the Assembly will host opportunities to hear and receive feedback from the community. Staff understand that there may be some disappointment from people who are not ultimately selected, but the City hopes that everyone will support Assembly members to be successful in their endeavours.

Supports for Assembly Members

In discussing the composition of the Citizens' Assembly, community members noted that they felt appropriate supports should be provided to enable the broadest sort of participation. Suggestions for specific supports that might be needed included:

- Childcare and elder care
- Transportation costs
- Food

- Honoraria
- Translation services
- Support for visually or hearing impaired individuals
- Peer support or the presence of case workers (for members of at-risk or vulnerable populations that may choose to participate in the process)
- Accessible materials (meaning written in clear language and free from excess technical 'jargon' and access to key data and planning assumptions)

The City is able to provide most of the supports that were requested. Due to budget limits, the City will not be able to provide honoraria, or translation of materials and/or on-going discussions into other languages. Additional types of member support may be approved on a case by case basis; however, the City is not able to provide financial assistance for members support outside of those detailed above.

Staff note that knowledge of English (that is, a census respondent's assessment of his or her ability to conduct a conversation in English) is almost 95 per cent in the Grandview-Woodland Local Area.

Engaging the Community

Input from the workshops, questionnaire and focus groups supported a range of approaches for the Assembly to connect with the broader community. In response, the City is attempting to create a process that utilizes as many avenues as possible, within the allowable time and budgetary constraints that exist.

The City proposes the following ways to ensure regular engagement of the community-at-large:

1. The Assembly will post regular updates about their work to a website;
2. Materials produced for the Assembly's learning (backgrounders, documentation, etc.) will be made available to the general public;
3. Members of the community will be invited to attend periodic open sessions of the Assembly (e.g. some "expert" presentations and plenary sessions). (Note: Attendees may not disrupt the Assembly's process. Small group discussions will not be open to observers);
4. A variety of community stakeholder perspectives will be integrated into the Assembly curriculum;
5. "Expert" presentations to the Assembly will be recorded and made available for viewing online;
6. At key points in the process, the Citizens' Assembly will have a number of roundtable check-ins with the larger community - and the community will have the opportunity to provide input to the Assembly through a number of avenues (in-person and on-line);
7. The community-at-large will also have the opportunity to participate in City-led sub-area workshops taking place in early 2015. The workshops will complement the activities of the Citizens' Assembly, and the results will be presented to the Assembly and integrated into their work;
8. Other work, from previous Grandview-Woodland community planning engagement processes, will also be provided to the Assembly.

One suggestion received in a focus group was to publish Assembly materials in a variety of formats (text, graphic, comic book). The City will work to make its materials broadly accessible, but because of time constraints and budget it will likely not be possible to produce multiple versions of the same materials.

Final Products of the Assembly

During the consultations on the design of the Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly, participants were provided with a description of the proposed final products and related process:

"The City is currently thinking that the Assembly will produce a report with recommendations that will (a) receive a formal response from city staff; (b) be incorporated into the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan; (c) be shared with members of the public; (d) be presented to City Council along with the draft plan."

Participants in the consultation were supportive this approach, noting that it furthered the goals of an open, transparent and accountable process, bolstered the legitimacy of the Assembly, and allowed for a formal response from the City.

At the same time, there was some desire for greater clarity around the Assembly's opportunity to report directly to Council – versus submitting a report to planning staff. In response, **City staff propose the following amended process** that connects the Assembly's work directly to Council:

The Assembly will produce a report with recommendations (covering the areas outlined in Mandate and Tasks). This report will

- a) be presented to City Council and shared with members of the public;
- b) at Council's discretion, be referred to staff for formal response;
- c) incorporated, where appropriate, into the Draft Grandview-Woodland Community Plan;
- d) be presented to City Council as an Appendix to the Draft Plan.

Assembly members, like all members of the public, will be able to participate in public discussions and provide feedback about the City's Draft Community Plan.

Next Steps & Timeline

The DRAFT Terms of Reference for the Citizens' Assembly was shared with the public on May 8, 2014. Members of the public have an opportunity to provide feedback until **Friday, May 23, 2014** via email or through the City's vancouver.ca/gw webpage. Using this feedback as well as ongoing work by City Staff and its third-party consultants, the Terms of Reference will be finalized in early June 2014. At that point in time, it is anticipated that the Citizens' Assembly for Grandview-Woodland will be formally launched.

The following provides a general sense of the next steps in the process. Note that the neither the Assembly curriculum, nor meeting dates have been finalized - so the following is subject to change.

May 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release Summary of Assembly Design Choices and FAQ, consultant report on community engagement, focus group synopsis, draft Terms of Reference
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize Terms of Reference • Prepare to recruit members of the Assembly • Assembly planning begins (e.g. materials, guest speakers, venue, logistics, etc.)
June-July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit Citizens' Assembly members
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Citizens' Assembly
Fall 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning phase of Citizens' Assembly • Community-wide round-table
Winter 2014-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-led community-wide sub-area workshops
Winter and Spring 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly deliberations • Assembly consultations: community-wide round-tables • Preparation of recommendations