The members of the Task Force dedicate this report to Waldo Briño. Born in Chile, Waldo eventually settled in Vancouver and dedicated a great deal of volunteer time to organizing music, film and dance festivals and exchanges. He also worked to bring people together through the written word, establishing the newspaper *Milenio Periodico de Vancouver*. Recently, he worked within the local Latin American community to help build a centre to support continuing efforts to strengthen cross-cultural relations.

Waldo served on the Board of Directors at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, where he helped to create a local newspaper, establish community support for the homeless, and organize inclusion dialogues. Waldo was a member of the City of Vancouver’s Multicultural Advisory Committee and also served on the Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force.

Waldo became sick in the summer of 2013 and passed away a short time later. He was awarded the City’s Cultural Harmony Award posthumously. Task Force members appreciated Waldo’s determination that every Vancouverite should have the opportunity to participate in his or her neighbourhood and city. We dedicate this report to Waldo in the hope that the actions flowing from it will honour his memory for years to come.

NOTE: Except where noted, photos included in this report came from the City of Vancouver or Engaged City Task Force members.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A city is not just a collection of buildings and infrastructure: it is our home.

In October 2012, Vancouver City Council approved the creation of the Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force to provide recommendations on how to increase Vancouverites’ sense of belonging and inclusion, deepen their electoral engagement, and address frustration regarding access to municipal decision making.

This important work was sparked in part by the Vancouver Foundation’s Connections and Engagement report which put hard data behind what many intuitively know: it’s hard to make friends in Vancouver, our neighbourhood connections are cordial but weak, and that many people are retreating from community life. These factors not only undermine social connectivity, but also directly impact resident’s engagement with their local government.

In December 2012, a group of 22 residents from a diversity of backgrounds and a range of ages, living in neighbourhoods across Vancouver, met for the first time and mapped out a work plan.

It’s always a challenge to bring a diverse group of residents together to find shared agreement but the work of this Task Force was particularly difficult. While other cities have already explored some of the same issues that Vancouver has tackled, such as Greenest City and Affordable Housing, almost none have focused on engagement as a formal policy development area. Even the definition of what engagement is had to be developed from scratch.

The Task Force took their work directly to residents through meetings, world cafés, small gatherings, kitchen table discussions, and dialogues. Members joined events throughout the city, hosted a design jam and set up an online forum to accept ideas.

Regardless of the community or demographics, four themes strongly emerged as the building blocks of an Engaged City. These were the need to 1) Build Knowledge, 2) Build Capacity, 3) Build Trust, and 4) Build Power.

From there the Task Force developed 19 Priority Actions for the City, six Recommended Ideas for the Community, and agreed on a set of metrics to measure progress.

Each of the recommendations varies in its potential to address the gaps and barriers identified in this report. They should not be considered in isolation and they are meant to work together, reinforcing each other in a process that builds momentum towards a stronger culture of participation and engagement in Vancouver.

Finally, this report is not an end but a beginning. Building knowledge, capacity, trust, and power is an ongoing process – one that is fueled by a commitment to come together to address shared challenges and to build a shared future that reflects the best of our individual and collective capacity.
### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTIONS

#### General
1. Incorporate the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)’s Spectrum of Public Participation into guiding principles and evaluation
2. Develop specific strategies for engaging under-represented groups
19. Undertake an annual “Civic Engagement Report Card”

#### Build Knowledge
3. Establish Citizen Academies
4. Promote 3-1-1, with a focus on non-English-speaking communities

#### Build Capacity
5. Invest more in public engagement resources
6. Expand and improve the distribution of notification mailouts
7. Develop an evaluation criteria for online tools
8. Create a Public Space Action Association
9. Support Community and Cultural Spaces

#### Build Trust
10. Support face-to-face engagement
11. Pilot a neighbourhood liaison position to assist neighbourhoods with a high proportion of newcomers and new immigrants

#### Build Power
12. Develop a Charter of Roles, Rights and Responsibilities for the Planning Process
13. Pilot the use of Community Reference Panels
14. Increase the number of “positive cues” to encourage voting
15. Target Voter Registration
16. Investigate extending voting rights to permanent residents
17. Use the election ballot to get feedback on voter satisfaction with the current voting system
18. Take Action on campaign finance reform

### RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

A. Engage local artists in the electoral and other civic process
B. Rethink condos for social inclusion
C. Just Say Hello campaign
D. Use food to bring people together
E. Community Bulletin Boards
F. Conversation Tables
Do personal connections matter? Does trust in government matter? Does happiness matter? As members of the Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force we would all respond with a resonant “Yes!” We have all experienced the power of community, of collective action, and of working with government to effect or influence change. And we all applied to join this Task Force not only because we see a crisis of disconnectedness in our city—among residents as well as between the City and its populace, but also because we see the need and the potential for a truly Engaged City.

In 2012, before we convened as a Task Force, we read with dismay the findings of the Vancouver Foundation survey report, Connections and Engagement. The report illustrated the level of local disconnectedness. It found that it’s hard to make friends in Vancouver, that our neighbourhood connections are cordial but weak, that many people are retreating from community life, that there are limits to how people see diversity as an opportunity to forge meaningful connections, and that the affordability issue is affecting people’s attitudes and beliefs. The report notes that “Despite evidence that getting involved in community activities benefits us personally, many of us are retreating from civic life. We vote less, give less, volunteer less and join less. This fraying of community leads to indifference, a corrosion of caring and compassion and a retreat from the very things that make our community a better place to live.”

1 The City of Vancouver as a municipal government organization is referred to as the “City” or “City Hall” throughout this report.

2 The mandate of the Engaged City Task Force relates to the City of Vancouver’s engagement practices. Other municipal boards, commissions and agencies, which have their own governance structures, were not part of the scope of this Task Force. (These include the Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Police Department, and Vancouver Public Library.)
Vancouver is experiencing Canada-wide trends such as low voter turnout and broad mistrust in the institution of government. In 2011, for example, an international survey identified that 45% of Canadians lacked trust in any level of government. In another poll on trust conducted in the same year, Vancouverites scored better than the Canadian average with only 27% lacking trust in municipal government, but the numbers are still depressingly high.

Meanwhile, there are huge tensions in Vancouver neighbourhoods where the local community feels the City has embarked on planning processes without adequately consulting and collaborating with those living there. In turn, the City has expressed frustration with the criticism, noting the high number of opportunities for engagement it has offered.

Among all of this frustration it’s interesting to note that our city is home to one of the world’s most renowned happiness researchers, John Helliwell, Professor Emeritus of Economics at UBC and co-author of the first World Happiness Report in 2012. As noted in the Huffington Post, the UN General Assembly invited all member governments to lend more importance to happiness as a goal of public policy. It called for the Happiness Report and then held a conference as part of the process.

“This means that there is now high world-level support for the demand that governments pay more attention to the happiness of their peoples when they form their policies,” the Huffington Post reported. “This is...a matter of helping societies to find a path to what really matters more deeply and lastingly for well-being.”

– Huffington Post

With these thoughts swirling in our minds, we first met as a Task Force in December 2012. Our mandate: to increase Vancouverites’ sense of belonging and inclusion, deepen their electoral engagement, and address frustration by residents and stakeholders regarding access to municipal decision making.

We are a group of 22 residents from a diversity of backgrounds and a range of ages, living in neighbourhoods across Vancouver. What we share is a deep interest and experience in engagement,


4 Justason Market Intelligence, October 31, 2011 http://www.justasonmi.com/?p=2345

5 “The Happiest Countries Are in Northern Europe”; Huffington Post, 03/30/2012 12:10 pm http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-helliwell/happiness-report_b_1391510.html

whether through community experience or professional practice, and often both. (See a full list of Task Force members in Appendix A.)

Over the past year we met with residents, including members of underrepresented demographics, but did not succeed in achieving as broad a reach as we would have liked, due to limitations of time and resources (see Scope of the Task Force’s Work, below). We reviewed city programs and policies, sought out best practices from other cities, and brainstormed on the different ways a city – the formal institution as well as the individuals, organisations, and communities within it – could improve engagement.

In May 2013 we released our Quick Starts report, which focused on immediate steps the City could take to make simple, tangible changes to improve the way it communicates, interacts, and dialogues with residents, as well as some easy things residents could do to become more engaged.

The purpose of this, the final report, is to dig deeper into the roots of a disengaged and disconnected population. What is it that we really want to address? Is it whether people feel they are being listened to? Is it a lack of connection between neighbours—be it ethnic or geographic divisions? And what are the limits to what a civic government can do to address these issues? This report is built upon feedback from meetings and conversations with individuals and groups, and outlines some of the ways the City can address the big questions we face around civic engagement.

THIS REPORT PROVIDES:

**A VISION FOR AN ENGAGED CITY**

A philosophical framework for how the City of Vancouver should conduct its civic engagement.

**PRIORITY ACTIONS**

Steps the City can take to address civic engagement gaps in programming and processes across neighbourhoods.

**RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION**

Opportunities for groups, organizations, businesses, and individuals to continue to create an Engaged City.

**TOOLS TO MEASURE PROGRESS**

A set of benchmarks to inform and guide the City on its progress in building civic engagement and community connections in the years ahead.
It is clear from the feedback the Task Force received that there are common areas of concern but also shared aspirations for an Engaged City. People want to see: stronger voter turnout; greater neighbourhood capacity and staff resources for engagement; enhanced clarity in City programs, decision making, and collaboration; broader knowledge and understanding of planning issues among residents; and increased respect and dialogue between the City and neighbourhood residents.

The Task Force believes that this report delivers a guide for the City and residents to enable these aspirations, but we are under no illusion that it will be done overnight. Enhancing civic engagement will require sustained effort from the City and residents. Achieving some goals, like greater voter turnout, will likely take years. We feel strongly, however, that the benefits of such efforts—that is, a more dynamic, informed, resilient, engaged and happier population—are goals worth striving for and that the actions we take today will have a long-term impact.

On their own, each of the recommendations varies in its potential to address the gaps and barriers identified in this report. It is important to recognize that the recommendations should not be considered in isolation; they are meant to work together, reinforcing each other in a process that builds momentum for a stronger culture of participation and engagement in Vancouver.

In writing this report and creating a vision for engagement in Vancouver, we embraced a concept used by architects: loose fit. This notion acknowledges that it’s best not to plan just for the present but for the future as well. Each room in a building—for example, a hospital—is designed for current needs but retains sufficient flexibility that future modifications can easily accommodate additional or changed needs. With this approach in mind, the Task Force scanned the current environment in government and in the community for best practices and innovative engagement approaches. We are presenting a list of recommendations that suit Vancouver’s current needs, but we hope that our recommendations are flexible enough to suit future needs as well, as our city grows and develops.

It’s important to be clear that City Hall cannot drive this process alone. We call on organizations like the Vancouver Foundation (whose work as a community foundation was one of the sparks for this discussion) and other formal and informal community groups, residents of all backgrounds, architects and developers, and businesses large and small to examine the recommendations and determine what role they can play to help support an idea and bring it to life. Many of the ideas identified in this report cannot succeed unless championed and given life by the diverse groups and individuals who call Vancouver home. Ultimately, the impact of the Engaged City Task Force cannot be measured by the actions prescribed in this report, but by the outcomes we achieve together.

At the launch of Vancouver-based Charles Montgomery’s book, *Happy City*, in late 2013, an ebullient John Helliwell made the point that happiness grows from community connections and engagement—the work we do together. He then playfully led those present in the anthem of community connection, singing “The more we get together, together, together, the more we get together the happier we’ll be.” And the more engaged we’ll be, as well.
THE VISION FOR AN ENGAGED CITY
One of the first challenges the Task Force faced was to understand what it means to be engaged. We identified two kinds of resident engagement: City-driven engagement (for example, the community planning process) and community-driven engagement (for example, a block party, a strata potluck, or a neighbourhood event). Both types of engagement can generate connections but the quality of that connection is dependent on the design of the process. In conducting our own engagement activities with residents, we came up with a definition and the building blocks of an Engaged City.

What is an Engaged City:

An Engaged City brings people together for conversations to address issues of common importance, to solve shared problems, and to bring about positive social change. It involves people in the decision-making process such that it improves the resulting decision and, over time, builds the trust that is needed for fully empowered communities to actively create a common future.
In addition to this made-in-Vancouver definition, we recommend adopting a recognized framework for engagement to guide the City, residents, and stakeholders in formal engagement processes.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) is dedicated to the advancement and improvement of public participation practices. One of its tools, the Spectrum of Public Participation, defines different engagement activities based on their level of decision making and influence, from inform to empower. The Spectrum provides a framework that clearly outlines the outcomes and expectations involved in different kinds of public involvement, and offers a credible and common language that can be used by participants and decision makers.

In 1996, Vancouver City Council adopted guiding principles for public participation. Although these principles are still relevant, we recommend they be refreshed with an eye to incorporating the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (or a modified version of the Spectrum) that suits the needs and realities of Vancouver. These principles should then be used as the evaluation framework for the review of every engagement project.

**Incorporate the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation into guiding principles and evaluation**

**How might that work:**

Upon reading a beautifully designed public sign (INFORM) that describes the proposal for a new community centre in her neighbourhood, Jenny is intrigued by how City Hall engages with citizens on what kinds of amenities will be available in the centre. She finds out about a design charrette (INVOLVE) being organized that weekend by the joint community–City planning team (COLLABORATE) and decides to attend. While there, she feels that her community’s need for more vegetable garden plots could also be involved on the site and consults with decision-makers on including space for this, who then EMPOWER the community to work together, so that a year later, 30 new plots are established and the whole neighbourhood rejoices!
Members of the Task Force would have loved to create engagement opportunities for all Vancouverites with their neighbours, local groups, or the City. However, we knew this simply wasn’t possible. The Task Force had a set mandate, faced strict deadlines, and tried to remain realistic about what could be accomplished. As busy, engaged people working within City Council’s assignment to us, we tried to learn, question, and consult as broadly as possible to create a vision of engagement that we hope will inspire and encourage deeper and long-lasting change within our city.

Vancouver City Council approved the creation of the Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force on October 3, 2012, with a goal:

“To examine innovative best practices for civic engagement, and seek to make progress on priority issues including improving the way the City communicates with citizens, engages newcomers, new immigrants and youth, consults on policy, increases voter turnout and enables community connection at a neighbourhood level.”

**SCOPE OF THE TASK FORCE’S WORK**

**CITY COUNCIL ASKED THE TASK FORCE TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON:**

1. **Enabling neighbour-to-neighbour engagement**

2. **Increasing civic literacy about, and opportunities for engaging in City processes**

3. **Enhancing how the City engages with residents, and vice versa**
City Council requested recommendations that would be relevant to all age groups but asked the Task Force to put a special focus on residents between the ages of 18 and 35, a demographic that, as highlighted in the Vancouver Foundation’s research, is particularly disengaged. It also asked the Task Force to explore opportunities to expand engagement through the use of new technology. As well, since the Task Force had members from a number of cultural communities, we decided to also make special efforts to engage newcomers and new immigrants. However, we recognize that this had limited success, given the need for long-term processes of relationship and trust-building.

First, the Task Force studied major City policy initiatives and current engagement practices, both in Vancouver and other cities. We then set out to open discussions with those in our city who are engaged as well as those who are disengaged or even isolated. We tried to model different approaches to engagement, both in person and online. We held or attended meetings, world cafes, small gatherings, kitchen table discussions, and dialogues. We joined events throughout the city and hosted a design jam. We set up an online forum to accept ideas and made an effort to respond to the emails our efforts generated. (For a full list of the documents we reviewed, staff presentations we attended, experiences we had, and resident and stakeholder input we received, please see Appendix B).

Though we worked hard to gather input, we also recognized our limitations: as a group of volunteers we simply could not meet with as many people and groups as we would have wished. Further, we understand that there are many complex factors affecting engagement, such as social and economic inequality, housing affordability, trust, power, discrimination, and a rapidly changing media landscape. It was difficult for us to overcome all of these challenges in the time we had, and this meant that we were limited in our ability to connect with people from traditionally under-represented demographics.

We feel it’s important for us to acknowledge the absence of voices from Aboriginal communities in this process. Many of us participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission events held in Vancouver in September 2013 and were reminded of how Canada’s history of colonization continues to have a significant impact on the development of an Engaged City. The Vancouver Foundation report, Connections and Engagement, included survey responses from urban Aboriginal people, identifying that Aboriginal people are more likely than others to feel that they don’t belong in their neighbourhood, and are among the most likely to have experienced discrimination. Clearly, more intentional and culturally competent outreach to these communities will be essential in future engagement efforts.

It’s important to note that the mandate of the Engaged City Task Force related to the City of Vancouver’s engagement practices. Other boards, commissions and agencies, which the general public may consider municipal bodies, in fact have their own governance structures and so were not part of the scope of this work. These include the Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Police Department, and Vancouver Public Library.

Finally, in the interest of maintaining a manageable scope of work and providing recommendations, the Task Force did not directly address planning processes that were underway at the time of the report’s development.

**Priority Action #2**

**Develop specific strategies for engaging under-represented groups**

Three demographics stood out in both the Vancouver Foundation research and the Task Force’s work as particularly disconnected from formal civic engagement:
1. 18 to 35-year-olds;
2. Newcomers and new immigrants; and
3. Urban Aboriginal peoples.

The Task Force recommends developing specific engagement strategies that meet the needs of each of these three demographics, recognizing that each group is diverse and has many points of community connection, but that the City is currently not connecting adequately to these access points.

These strategies should include metrics for measuring the impact of action, and should strive to ensure the active engagement of these three groups in numbers that mirror their demographic representation. The strategies also need to be adequately resourced by City Council to ensure they can be successful.
The first five months of the Engaged City Task Force’s work was focused on developing a set of Quick Starts. The Task Force met with several staff departments including 3-1-1, Planning, and Social Policy, reviewed current city plans such as the Greenest City Action Plan and the Digital Strategy, and studied best practices in engagement from other cities.

The result of this initial work was the Engaged City Quick Starts Report, released on May 21, 2013. It contains an ambitious set of 16 recommendations for implementation within a six-month timeframe that focuses on four areas.

The Quick Start recommendations, which range from a mobile City Hall kiosk and an open doors day for City facilities to involving the public earlier in major rezoning proposals, were put forward with the goal of the City showing progress on implementing them within six months. They are intended to be short-term and focused more on tactics than strategy. Longer-term changes for how the City and its residents can work to improve civic engagement were to be the focus of the final report.

The Task Force presented the Quick Starts report to City Council on May 28, 2013; Council approved it on June 11, 2013. To date, the City has implemented six of the Quick Starts:

- Public signs that are more engaging
- Permanent voter registration sign-up on vancouver.ca
- An Engaged City listserv
- An online engagement panel – Talk Vancouver
- An Engaged City Twitter handle
- Strong recommendations to developers about engaging community members early in their processes and prior to applications.

A full list of Quick Starts with progress to December 2013 is attached as Appendix C.
WHAT WE LEARNED: BUILD KNOWLEDGE, CAPACITY, TRUST, AND POWER

The process of reaching out to different groups, listening, asking questions, and seeking feedback delivered an expansive collection of content for the final report. It has been challenging to translate that feedback into actions, to determine which problems are urgent, and to identify which solutions should be priorities.

Despite the breadth of information and feedback, common themes did emerge as areas where the City and residents can focus their efforts to address shortcomings and enhance opportunities. These four thematic areas are described as the need to 1) Build Knowledge, 2) Build Capacity, 3) Build Trust, and 4) Build Power. The Task Force subsequently adopted these thematic areas as the building blocks of an Engaged City.

Not all of the ideas and solutions in this report can be driven by government. Those that government can drive have been recommended as Priority Actions, while those that can’t are included as Recommended Ideas for Community Action.

There are so many great ideas here, and so many that can be implemented with no help from City Hall. Book-shares, block parties, disaster planning, public art... don’t wait for the government to do it for you. Do it yourself.”

– IdeaScale Participant
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

In our consultations we learned that while there are hundreds of formal and informal engagement initiatives in Vancouver, it can be difficult for people to learn about them or to feel that they have the information needed to participate. These challenges are particularly important to consider in a city that has as diverse a population, as we do in Vancouver, where linguistic and cultural barriers can prevent large groups from accessing engagement opportunities. For these reasons, we identified the need to Build Knowledge as one of the four building blocks of an Engaged City.

REACHING OUT TO MORE AUDIENCES

The City has a responsibility to build community knowledge through more proactive and effective communication about issues, events, services, and programs. This is of particular importance to seniors, youth, and recent newcomers and new immigrants who, in stakeholder sessions with the Task Force, spoke of not knowing which government responsibilities fall under the local government’s jurisdiction, how City processes work, and where to go to get information about them. They expressed reluctance to travel to City Hall because of transportation challenges or feelings of intimidation with formal public meetings. Many did not know about the City’s 3-1-1 service, which is designed to provide a one-stop resource for City information and is available in 175 languages. Though there were many reasons for a lack of awareness about civic issues and processes, we found that those who have language barriers or do not use computers and social media are particularly likely to be isolated from important issues and decision-making processes.

This problem is exacerbated with complex planning issues. Technical zoning requirements and terminology used in local neighbourhood planning processes can be mystifying, whether or not residents have English as their first language. While the prospect of change within neighbourhoods is often inherently challenging, we heard that accurate information from a trusted source, in a convenient location, delivered graphically and/or in first languages is crucial to engaging community members in a way that will encourage participatory and meaningful dialogue about options and potential futures.

CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION

In order to share civic issues information more broadly, the City needs to move beyond technical, one-way communication and become more creative when communicating about issues that are typically seen as boring or less relevant to the majority of the population. Vancouver’s local arts community could be a valuable resource and ally in the process of reimagining how the City shares information.

The use of creative communication tools was repeatedly raised as a strategy for engaging youth, newcomers and new immigrants, and others who are less likely to be involved in the electoral process or civic issues. To create a culture of civic engagement, the City needs to ensure that these groups are informed on the City’s roles and responsibilities and on opportunities to interact with City Hall—not just around election time, but on an ongoing basis. It is imperative that City Hall empower people with the information they need to get involved in important debates and decisions on issues such as housing, transportation, finances, and neighbourhood planning.
PRIORITY ACTION #3

Establish Citizen Academies

While information is available on vancouver.ca, one of the Task Force’s Quick Starts recommendations calls for a “City Hall 101” that employs graphics and animation to describe City processes.

Building on this strategy and previous work done by the City such as YouthPolitik⁸ and CitizenU⁹ the City should work with other partners, such as colleges and non-profit organizations, to create presentations on basic City processes like planning or rezoning.

This could include a peer-to-peer component where residents could be trained to offer presentations (in English and other languages) in their neighbourhood or community.

We recognize that this recommendation requires dedicated budget and staff time and should be combined in an overall programming approach with the following Quick Starts: City Hall 101, City Hall Storytelling, Mini City Halls, and Open Doors City Hall.

PRIORITY ACTION #4

Promote 3-1-1, with a focus on non-English-speaking communities:

The City provides significant amounts of information targeted to people of different backgrounds and languages, especially newcomers and new immigrants. Many people are unaware, however, of available services and are not familiar with options for addressing concerns in their neighbourhood. For example, we found that many Vancouver residents are not aware of the 3-1-1 service, with this being particularly so among newcomers and new immigrants. The City should seek opportunities to increase awareness of 3-1-1 (through civic facilities, but also community groups, churches, etc.), paying attention to its promotion in languages other than English.

RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (A)

Engage local artists in the electoral and other civic process

The local arts community has a lot to offer in creating new ideas to promote civic discourse and elections. This could include a rethink of posters and signage leading up to elections and civic events, and design contests for new ways to get people informed about the civic election and other civic processes. Music, film, creative writing, and theatre could be used to celebrate the election period while also providing information on how, where, and when to vote.

How might that work:

Project Managers Kathleen and Erin meet up after work to hit the gym, inside the leisure centre they pass the bulletin board filled with posters for Zumba classes, African drumming lessons, a yogi who promises to “make you bend in ways you never realised!” and an awesome, eye-catching poster for an event called Storm The City which features an illustration of several Storm Troopers holding voter cards (instead of blasters) busting down the door of City Hall. The event turns out to be by local comic troupe The Stormbloopers, who make “political satire that gives you A New Scope”. Not usually the voting kind, curiosity gets the better of them and Kathleen and Erin head to Storm The City a week later, have a great time and find out how they can make Vancouver even more awesome.

⁸ YouthPolitik was the City of Vancouver’s civic education and civic leadership development program for young Vancouverites, developed and delivered in partnership with the Vancouver School Board, the Vancouver District Student Council and other community partners. The program was offered from 2006 to 2012, was free to participants, and open to all Vancouver residents between the ages of 15 and 20. http://www.vancouveryouth.ca/youthpolitik

⁹ CitizenU was a three-year citywide Action Research Initiative (2010–2013) designed to engage Vancouver youth and their families in addressing racism, discrimination and bullying, and in building community across cultures, faiths and generations. CitizenU was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and delivered by the City of Vancouver and PeerNet BC.
“By spending resources and designing cities in a way that values everyone’s experience, we can make cities that help us all get stronger, more resilient, more connected, more active and more free. We just have to decide who our cities are for. And we have to believe that they can change.”


To significantly improve civic engagement in Vancouver, we must invest in the resources required to support new efforts. This is challenging when, on the one hand, public opinion surveys conducted by the City indicate low public support for financial investments in engagement, while at the same time the strong desire from some members of the public for an authentic dialogue requires more intensive investment of staff resources. As a result, feedback from both current and former City staff is that they often work under rushed timelines and/or reduced budgets that make it hard to reach a broad, increasingly diverse community while also investing time into deep engagement processes demanded by those citizens who are already highly engaged.

Proactive use of social media could help the City to highlight key civic issues that need attention and galvanize and motivate communities to engage in these issues. For those who engage in social media, this could be a way to find out about City issues and provide the City with feedback and ideas.

However, nothing can replace the importance of in-person engagement between the City and the community, or the provision of spaces and opportunities for community members to engage with each other.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Capacity is defined as “the ability or power to do something.” When it comes to engagement, there are many kinds of circumstances that, while outside the City’s direct control, have an impact on the degree to which residents have the ability or power to participate in their communities and City processes.

For example, we know from the Vancouver Foundation survey that people who live in high-rises often struggle to feel connected to their neighbours and neighbourhoods. Their capacity might be limited by the culture and physical design of their living situations. We also know that issues of social and economic justice have a significant impact on residents’ power or ability to engage and participate in civic life. Barriers such as income, language, literacy, and physical access can limit one’s capacity to engage. While some of these factors are identified in this report, we recognize that creating an Engaged City is interconnected with many other processes that are working to create more connection, equality, and empowerment throughout our city.

PUBLIC, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURAL SPACES

We know that Vancouver’s community, cultural, and public spaces play a special role in bringing people together. Two similar and recurring themes in the Task Force’s discussions with community were: (1) people enjoy the new public spaces created in the City over the past few years through VIVA Vancouver, and (2) many organizations are struggling to find, access, and retain affordable (private) spaces in which to bring people together.

City-owned roads, sidewalks, and parking lots comprise 32% of Vancouver’s land area. While essential to transportation for part of the day, week, or year, in off-peak times these public assets present a great opportunity as public spaces where residents can convene and deliberate—activities vital for an Engaged City.

Initiatives such as Car Free Day, and the establishment of the City’s own VIVA Vancouver program that partners with residents, artists, community organizations, and business associations to promote pedestrian use of public spaces, have helped to identify these public space opportunities. CityStudio, a collaboration of the six post-secondary schools in Vancouver, has pioneered some innovative and successful small-scale public gathering spaces. But much more could be done.

With private space and issues of inaccessibility, solutions are more complicated but not insurmountable. Affordability is a key issue but we also heard about the challenges cultural groups have in trying to address the many regulations and restrictions that hinder their ability to find creative solutions to venue needs.
AFFORDABILITY

We cannot talk about the conditions that create an Engaged City without addressing the high cost of living in Vancouver. A lack of affordability can hamper the innovation that builds and encourages vibrant communities: a business owner or artist may be unable to take creative risks because the financial burden is too high. Young families, who often require two working parents, have little free time to spend learning about neighbourhood issues or volunteering and engaging in their community. Lack of affordable housing also puts pressure on those with middle or lower incomes to leave the city, uprooting existing community connections.

Although outside the scope of the Task Force’s work, we felt it was important that other initiatives aimed at increasing affordability, such as the Mayor’s Task Force on Housing Affordability, continue to be pursued.

PRIORITY ACTION #5

**Invest more in public engagement resources**

High-quality engagement practices do not have to be costly but they do require concerted effort, time, and staff resources. In recent years, the City has taken important steps in the right direction, hiring dedicated public engagement staff, piloting new online engagement tools, and partnering with community and arts groups on public events.

The City needs to recognize that authentic and high-quality engagement in decision-making activities cannot happen without appropriate time and staff resources. The City should continue to invest in and expand public engagement capacity within City Hall.

We recommend that all internal project briefs include a dedicated budget line for communications and engagement and that proper staff time be allotted to facilitate building relationships with stakeholders.

PRIORITY ACTION #6

**Expand and improve the distribution of notification mailouts**

Under current practice, rezoning application notifications are mailed to property owners who live within a two-block radius of the proposed rezoning. In cases where a proposed project has a broader community impact, the City should expand the distribution of notifications to inform all affected residents and provide an opportunity to participate in the process.

An additional challenge is Canada Post’s treatment of City mailouts as “unaddressed mail” similar to any other flyer a resident may receive. As a result, residents who participate in “no junk mail” campaigns do not receive City notifications of this kind. The City should work with other municipalities to advocate that Canada Post provide special treatment to unaddressed mail from municipal governments so that it is more consistently delivered to its intended recipients.

PRIORITY ACTION #7

**Develop an evaluation criteria for online tools**

Tools such as Twitter, Facebook, online polling, surveys, and discussion forums can be important mechanisms for encouraging involvement from a larger and broader range of residents. Such tools can provide a more convenient and accessible opportunity to participate in decision making and share ideas. There are a multitude of online tools to choose from and the City has been piloting a number of them to understand their use and potential. We recommend that the City develop an evaluation framework for the selection and monitoring of online tools to ensure that their use remains relevant and appropriate. We also recommend that considerations for selecting these tools should include a preference for companies with servers established in Canada, to ensure compliance with Canadian and BC privacy legislation.
**Priority Action #8**

**Create a Public Space Action Association**

The City should support citizens in leading and participating in public space initiatives and encourage the construction of small-scale community gathering spaces in order to foster localized community building and resident-to-resident engagement.

We recommend the creation of a Public Space Action Association consisting of City staff, experts in public space and urban design, artists, designers, media-makers, and inspired citizens.

The goal of the Public Space Action Association would be to accelerate the creation of fresh kinds of public spaces that include services, objects, interactions, and experiences created specifically to encourage engagement between neighbours and residents travelling through our city’s public spaces.

**Priority Action #9**

**Support Community and Cultural Spaces**

Community, arts, and cultural venues provide essential, formal and informal opportunities for residents to gather and form community connections. Access to these spaces is critical to fostering creative culture and a shared sense of belonging. However, in a city as expensive as Vancouver, more needs to be done to protect our community, artistic, and cultural assets. Specific priority actions:

- Provide clearer and more accessible information around regulatory requirements for independent cultural operators
- Revise bylaws for live performance venues and continue to pursue the Performance Venue Pilot Program, to better enable amateur and start-up artist groups
- Collaborate with the Arts and Culture Policy Council to report annually on the number of performance venues in Vancouver, segmented by small/medium/large audience size, as well as the amount of square footage gained or lost annually.

**Recommended Ideas for Community Action (B)**

**Rethink Condos for Social Inclusion**

There is the opportunity for an innovative group or community organization to work with local property developers, managers, and strata councils to develop a condo toolkit that helps residents to determine their building’s assets and identify opportunities to promote social inclusion.

Many of the spatial and social arrangements of condos could be improved to promote social connections among residents. A toolkit could provide options or ideas for improvement such as shared bike repair or cooking spaces and “livable” stairwells to promote interaction. In addition, the toolkit should establish roles and responsibilities for the creation of condo committees. These would be informal groups comprised of both owners and renters, allowing an opportunity for renters to provide and receive feedback, as well as a chance to discuss more enjoyable topics that go beyond the usual strata council discussions, such as current events or sharing recreational interests and hobbies.

How might that work:

Local property developer NineStar Living, contracts Vancouver’s Higgson Zuah Architects to develop a new, but different kind of condo in the Fairview neighbourhood. They use the Creative Condos toolkit and checklist (which they helped develop) to ensure that the building’s design includes amenities and assets that encourage tenants and neighbours to interact with and ‘bump into’ one another more frequently. Far from discouraging privacy, they design a building that strikes an intricate balance between our biological needs as social beings and our need for solitude, rest and reflection.
Mayor's Engaged City Task Force

Final Report

Photo courtesy of Paul Krueger
Building Trust

The need for trust to be built at all levels was a theme that emerged repeatedly in the course of discussions about the Task Force’s work. Without trust, there is no foundation for residents to work with each other or the City, or for either side to take risks to seek common ground on difficult questions.

The element of trust arose in different contexts: residents’ feelings towards City Hall; the relationship between elected officials and staff, between the City and residents, between residents and developers, or between longer-term residents and newcomers or new immigrants. It’s clear that all groups must work to establish and increase trust among one another so that they can achieve common objectives, particularly in the planning and development process.

Time

To build trust, several stakeholders stressed the importance of providing extra time for complex planning issues. Past and present City staff spoke of how neighbourhood residents, communities, and elected officials have expectations around the nature of planning and that these expectations have changed dramatically in the last 20 or 30 years. Zoning changes are now taking place in neighbourhoods where large numbers of people live, as opposed to 30 years ago when rezoning took place in neighbourhoods like Yaletown, which was largely industrial. What worked in the past does not necessarily work today.

We heard that trust is built over time and is not something that can be rushed. The City must dedicate more time on large projects to provide clear information and deeply engage local communities to find the people who have opinions but may hesitate to speak because they feel they have nothing to offer, feel intimidated, do not have English as a first language, or simply don’t know how to get more informed and involved.

“Nothing to Offer”

One of the more poignant lessons on trust came from the Vancouver Foundation report, which found that many people shy away from engagement opportunities because they feel they have nothing to offer. This concern was prevalent across demographics and geographic areas, and was also identified as a more significant barrier to participation and engagement than a lack of time. While the complexity that underpins issues related to an individual’s perception about themselves and their capacity are beyond the scope of this report, it is important to note that the degree to which we have an Engaged City also reflects the degree to which we have a healthy and happy population who trust their own ability to contribute as well as each other.

Face-to-face Meetings and Online Tools

Engagement almost always requires face-to-face meetings. The City’s four current community planning processes involve substantial face-to-face discussions between staff and residents. Online engagement tools are complementary to this process. One participant in the Building a Culture of Participation workshop pointed out that face-to-face meetings as part of community planning in Renfrew-Collingwood led to deep conversations and helped different groups really hear each other and identify compromises between different interests.

Opportunities for neighbourhood-based engagement and relationship building were routinely cited as a way to foster connections at the neighbourhood level and create a grassroots foundation for trust. Although large-scale festivals like Car Free Day bring people into public spaces, they don’t necessarily foster neighbourhood-based relations since people come from across the city. Participants at the Design Nerd Jam, and several comments on the IdeaScale forum, referenced the need for smaller, localized opportunities for engagement to complement those that are citywide.

Online tools can work together with face-to-face meetings. They are useful for sharing information on upcoming in-person events, to tell the story after the fact, and to provide residents who cannot participate in person with a way to have their say. Online engagement can also help reach those who may not feel comfortable or able to participate in person, as highly charged meetings can be an intimidating forum for some people to voice opinions. While online tools are a useful way to broaden the conversation, face-to-face meetings are critical to building trust and shared understanding, especially when trade-offs are required. As new technologies become available the City must resist the pressure to scale back in-person meetings.
The concept of food as an opportunity for reaching across traditional divides emerged as a repeated theme in developing trust. At the intercultural dialogue there was agreement that “food encourages people to come out when nothing else will draw them.” Food provides a starting point for engaging different cultures and ages together in a city where too often people don’t reach out across perceived divides.

What emerged as perhaps the most common theme was that although everyone faces challenges, whether it is time, work requirements, shyness, language, familiarity with new technology, or geographic proximity, there is an unmet appetite from residents to be engaged. If provided with information in a format that meets them on their terms, people will use it. If an effort is made to meet with people in person, where they feel comfortable, in an atmosphere that allows them to discuss their thoughts openly and where their input is valued, they will share their opinions. We believe that starting from the assumptions that people want to be engaged and that their thoughts and opinions are valuable is essential to foster trust across the city.

10 IdeaScale is an online tool for the collection of feedback and ideas. Based on the principle of crowdsourcing, residents contribute ideas and then vote those ideas up or down in a process that allows the best ideas to rise to the top.

**Priority Action #10**

**Support face-to-face engagement**

City engagement efforts, particularly for planning and development issues, should continue to make face-to-face meetings between planning staff, elected officials, and local residents a priority. Face-to-face meetings are critical for building relationships and fostering dialogue on complex issues. The use of technology can enhance, not replace, in-person meetings as further opportunities for dialogue and creative processes to engage on complex issues.

To support face-to-face engagement, the City should provide regular facilitation training opportunities for staff and work to develop guidelines on the elements of a productive meeting. These guidelines could include expectations not just for the City, but also for the public and other players, such as developers.

The City should also leverage online tools to complement face-to-face meetings—to raise awareness of the event, to document the activity at events, to welcome input in the meeting from those who are off-site, and to provide a follow-up connection after the face-to-face meeting is over.

**Priority Action #11**

**Pilot a neighbourhood liaison position to assist neighbourhoods that have a high proportion of newcomers and new immigrants**

Many newcomers and new immigrants are not confident enough to participate in official civic forums. They do, however, care about their neighbourhoods and express a desire for more opportunities to have comfortable, small, neighbourhood-based dialogues to discuss local or citywide issues. Many said they would be most comfortable learning and expressing their thoughts to a trusted person working in their neighbourhood. The City should undertake a pilot project in up to three neighbourhoods (where there is a disproportionate number of newcomers and new immigrants or residents who do not speak English as a first language) to support the creation of a temporary, part-time neighbourhood liaison position. The role of the liaison would be to: reach out to those who have not been engaged but would be interested in learning more and, possibly, participating; explain neighbourhood and citywide issues and processes to newer residents; facilitate discussion; and assist residents in communicating feedback and ideas to City Hall.

Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force Final Report
RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (C)

Just Say Hello campaign

Vancouver has a reputation as a polite city but it can be hard for newcomers and new immigrants to get beyond the polite exterior to meaningful connections. Those living in apartment buildings describe how people keep to themselves and rarely acknowledge one another in the hallway. In these conditions, it is challenging to build the kind of relationships, sense of community, and connection to place that support a culture of engagement.

Those who had taken the small step of saying hello to their neighbours described it as transformative; it led to improved relationships and more caring between neighbours. Residents agreed that to get people engaged in their community and caring about bigger issues, we need to start by helping people to build a sense of trust and caring about their neighbourhood.

Initiatives such as Say Hi Vancouver, Be My Amigo, and the Hello Pledge are all examples that could be supported or used as templates. Public gathering places like Neighbourhood Houses, community centres, and libraries could support a social marketing campaign around “Just Say Hello,” focusing on areas such as rental apartments or condominiums where people are more likely to feel isolated.

Two years ago Cedric moved from the French town of Romans-sur-Isère to Vancouver. He’s moved three times throughout the city and currently lives in a condo in Renfrew-Collingwood. Cedric is shy and, despite passing many of his neighbours in the hallway or elevator, he opts to either nod and smile, not seeing anything immediately in common with them and never quite finds the right English words in those short, sporadic moments to start a conversation. When the City initiates the ‘Just Say Hello’ campaign in combination with actions from ‘Rethink Condos For Social Inclusion’, one of Cedric’s neighbours, Simon, strikes up a conversation at a game stand set up in the elevator! The week after, Cedric invites Simon over to his house to eat with him and they talk with ease since Simon is from Quebec. The weekend after that they go on a skiing trip with Simon’s buddies and Cedric starts to open up, learn more English and feel more at home. They remain friends even when Cedric moves to a different building with his Canadian wife Nanzia, whom Simon introduced him to while skiing.

RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (D)

Use food to bring people together

We heard repeatedly how food can serve as a bridge between people of different cultures. Food is the most likely lure to draw a group of relative strangers together, which is the first step in connecting people to each other, their neighbourhood, and their city. In the Quick Starts report we recommended a Block Party Day. We soon heard from residents that one of the greatest challenges in Vancouver is getting people together in winter months when it is dark and wet. A Winter Potluck Weekend on one weekend during the winter would encourage residents to hold a potluck dinners. In a neighbourhood block, the potluck could be at one person’s house, or in a high-rise the dinner could be arranged in a common room. The recent Share Thanksgiving project where residents open their homes and dinner tables to a family from another culture is an example of sharing food that has caught on.
RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (E)

Community Bulletin Boards

Some streets, like Prince Edward and East 37th, have a community bulletin board. Located near a park bench or an equally intriguing community-created lending library, it is a small, simple board where neighbours post local notices like babysitting services, dog walking, and event information. An online toolkit with plans and a description of how to build and install a bulletin board would make it easier for neighbours to share information, especially in areas with a concentration of rental apartments or condos.


RECOMMENDED IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (F)

Conversation Tables

Conversation tables have already sprung up around Vancouver, in restaurants that host long-table nights that seat strangers together to share a meal. Similarly, formal and informal groups, such as Alfresco, coordinate outdoor potlucks where people meet by bringing and sharing food. Supporting these kinds of opportunities, through collaboration with the Business Improvement Associations and others, creates space for conversation and community dialogue.
BUILDING POWER

The groups we met with, and the Task Force itself, often raised questions related to power and influence in the context of civic debates and decisions. The question of power is not just about ability to access resources and exert influence in the context of City decisions, but also relates to issues of accountability and the need for people to understand how their input will be used and the processes by which decisions will be made.

Traditionally, accountability has been viewed as a one-way street with elected officials held accountable by voters every three years. The complexity of planning decisions and the processes to reach them has evolved to the point where it is no longer accurate to see the accountability question as one focused only on politicians. Neighbourhood groups, city staff, businesses, and developers all play significant roles in today’s community planning processes, and as such have their own emerging standards of accountability.

City staff are accountable for reporting to elected officials and the public with their best professional advice (in ways that are clear to the elected officials and the public), as well as their understanding of community concerns. Developers need to be more accountable to the public about what is being consulted on and what can change as a result of the consultation process. Neighbourhood groups need to be more accountable to those who hold diverse opinions within their community and to acknowledge the legitimacy of a variety of views and perspectives on issues.

ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

While we recognize that engagement and participation are critical between elections, electoral reform is also needed to empower a broader group of voices in City decision making. Some residents, for example, expressed frustration with the voting system, which they felt did not guarantee a representative City Council.

In addition, the large sums of money raised and spent in civic elections fosters cynicism towards City Hall’s decision-making process and discourages or prevents new voices from getting involved, particularly youth, newcomers and new immigrants. Vancouver currently has no rules around campaign finance in municipal elections, and over the past three elections campaign spending has increased by 175% with $5.2 million spent in the 2011 election. Addressing campaign financing is a step toward increased transparency and electoral accountability.

ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT

Efforts to build power among people who feel disenfranchised requires an increase in voter turnout. A focus on getting more people to vote, and to do so at a younger age, came up as a recurring theme from many stakeholders. Strong voter turnout, especially among young people, newcomers and new immigrants, was seen as one of the foundations for creating a truly Engaged City.
PRIORITY ACTION #12

Develop a Charter of Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities for the Planning Process

Debates over planning decisions in Vancouver often become heated, as residents debate each other, developers, city staff, and elected officials over competing visions for neighbourhoods. Sometimes the interactions become very challenging and uncomfortable for many participants. Some of those who have opposed a vocal majority at a public meeting said to us that they felt fearful to express a divergent opinion in front of their neighbours. To help ensure an open and comfortable environment, the City should establish a clear 3Rs policy that applies to all rezonings and planning decisions: the roles, rights, and responsibilities for all participants. The policy would provide a guide for “rules of engagement”—a set of expectations for listening, information sharing, decision making, providing feedback, debating, and collaboration.

PRIORITY ACTION #13

Pilot the use of Community Reference Panels

Many residents expressed an interest in becoming more invested in neighbourhood and citywide decisions, yet were concerned that some groups dominate consultations and can intimidate others with alternative views. Community Reference Panels are noncompulsory, randomly selected public juries who participate in consultation processes to provide policy advice to the public and elected officials. The City should explore the use of Community Reference Panels in future decision making, which would empower a broader spectrum of local residents in decision-making processes.

PRIORITY ACTION #14

Increase the number of “positive cues” to encourage voting

Vancouver does not currently have a culture of participation in local elections. Little of the municipal election is covered in the media and there are few positive cues, symbols, or actions that reinforce key information and encourage participation across a wide range of communities and in the daily lives of residents.

The City should increase the number of positive cues that motivate citizens to pay attention to the election, evaluate their choices, and encourage them to vote. This would help to create a culture of voting. These cues could include a campaign to have neighbours encourage each other to vote, lawn signs that say “Be part of the 100,000 who vote,” and local celebrities who promote election registration and voting. A sophisticated social media campaign would also support the voting process and encourage voting.

In addition, the City should look to other municipalities for inspiration on the development of positive cues. For example, during the 2009 and 2011 municipal elections, the City of Regina successfully increased voter turnout, predominantly through a savvy social media campaign that elevated the election in the public eye. The City of Regina used video to great success, filming public addresses from all of the candidates and then sharing those videos on YouTube and posting them on the City of Regina’s website. Younger and more diverse candidates were elected following these efforts. Drawing on Regina’s success, the City of Vancouver should engage in a strategic social media campaign during municipal elections and use a similar approach to provide information for voters about those who are running for election.
**Priority Action #15**

**Target Voter Registration**

We know that registration is important to voter turnout. Young people are less likely to register to vote and less likely to turn up at the polls. By focusing on registration, the City can work to create a lifelong habit of voting that starts at an early age. Studies show that voting in the first three elections in which one is eligible is a vital determinant of future voting habits.

The City should also work with the local post-secondary institutions on a voting registration drive in the year leading up to the municipal election, to ensure that first-time voters are aware of their rights and are registered—or at least understand how to register—to vote. In the lead-up to the last provincial election, Elections BC entered into discussions with the University of Victoria to register students to vote through their school registration system. The City should follow up with Elections BC and seek similar opportunities for municipal voter registration.

The City should also enter into discussions with large organizations (for example, BC Hydro) that have frequent contact with voters to participate in the electoral process, and would help people who are seeking to put down roots in Vancouver to feel more welcome.

**Priority Action #16**

**Investigate extending voting rights to permanent residents**

Vancouver has long been a hub for immigration from a variety of countries. Currently, permanent residents pay taxes and use services like schools, community centres, and libraries but are unable to vote in municipal elections. The City should initiate a process to review whether or not to lobby the Province of BC to extend voting rights to permanent residents, which would enable thousands of currently excluded residents to seek opportunities for including election registration and awareness notices in their mailouts or electronic billings.

Further, the City should advocate at the provincial level to allow people as young as 16 to register to vote, as was proposed by some political parties in the last provincial election. Even registering up to two years in advance makes people more likely to vote and, in the case of 16- and 17-year-olds, more likely to vote in their first election.
PRIORITY ACTION #17

*Use the election ballot to get feedback on voter satisfaction with the current voting system*

The City should use the 2014 election to get voters’ perspectives on the current electoral system. While alternate voting systems have been put to referenda, voters have not had an opportunity to provide their opinion on their satisfaction with the current system overall. Referendums, whether on the voting system or another issue, can increase electoral engagement, making it a possible tool to increase turnout.

PRIORITY ACTION #18

*Take Action on campaign finance reform*

While the power to create campaign finance rules rests with the Province, Vancouver City Council has advocated for changes for more than a decade. This culminated at the 2013 Union of BC Municipalities Convention where an overwhelmingly majority of municipalities supported Vancouver’s call for the Province to allow the City to make its own rules to limit the size of campaign donations, impose spending limits, and ban corporate and union donations.\(^\text{12}\)

To further support its case, the City should take the issues of contribution limits and spending limits, as well as a ban on corporate and union donations, directly to voters via a referendum. If voters support these changes, and the Province is successfully engaged, the size of contribution and spending limits should be determined through further consultation with residents.

\(^{12}\) [http://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions-and-Policy/Resolutions/Resolutions%20Book%202013.pdf](http://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions-and-Policy/Resolutions/Resolutions%20Book%202013.pdf), pgs 84-85, B95 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN FINANCE RULES
Successful plans identify measurable outcomes. While our recommendations represent our belief in the strategies that will improve engagement in the current context, over time it’s the outcomes identified below that will determine whether or not the City is successful at engaging residents.

Just as finding a definition for engagement was challenging, so too is defining measurable targets that will accurately capture progress. Other cities have already explored some of the same issues that the City of Vancouver has tackled, such as Greenest City and Affordable Housing, but few others have focused on engagement as a formal policy development area—so there are few precedents to draw from. Given these challenges, we are recommending that the City establish benchmarks during 2014, and then reconvene the Task Force by early 2015 to establish targets for the year 2025 based on a realistic assessment of the benchmarks and the City’s early progress.

Where benchmarks have already been researched, we have recommended the 2025 targets (as bolded bullets in the following table). The non-bolded bullets show the type of metric we will likely choose, but the target for that metric has not yet been established.

### MEASURING PROGRESS

**CIVIC LITERACY**
- Percentage of residents that answer yes to the question “I feel that I am aware of local issues” and name a current neighbourhood issue (last 12 months)
- Percentage of residents who can name a current citywide issue
- Percentage of residents who are able to provide the last name of the current Vancouver mayor
- Percentage of residents who are able to provide the last name of a current councillor

**SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**
- Percentage of residents that identify support networks of four or more people

**COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SPACES**
- Increase, in the number of square feet, of community and cultural spaces in each of the five sections of the city (NE, NW, SE, SW, DT peninsula)
- Increase in the number of community spaces and cultural spaces in each of the five sections in the city
- Increase in the number of people using community and cultural spaces

**TRUST IN NEIGHBOURS AND COMMUNITY**
- 85% of residents answer “yes” to the question: “How likely is your neighbour to return a lost wallet?”
- 50% of residents answer “yes” to the question: “How likely is a stranger to return a lost wallet?”

**SOMETHING TO OFFER**
- Percentage of residents who feel that they are contributing to increasing social capacity in their community
- Increase in number of residents participating in “Talk Vancouver”
- Increase in the number of residents who attend City-sponsored public engagement events

**SENSE OF BELONGING**
- Percentage of residents who answer “no” to the question: “Are there places in your community where you feel unwelcome?”

**SENSE OF PERSONAL AGENCY**
- Percentage of residents that answer “yes” to the statement: “I feel I can have an impact on decisions in my community.”

**VOTER TURNOUT**
- Increase voter turnout to 75%

**PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**
- Percentage of residents that give a positive response to the question: “In the last 12 months have you done any of the following...?”
  - Contacted a politician, senior (provincial or federal) government official or local (municipal) government official?
  - Worked in a political party or action group?
  - Worked in another organization or association, worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker, or signed a petition?
  - Taken part in a lawful public demonstration or boycotted certain products?
  - Attended a community meeting or volunteered in the neighbourhood?
PRIORITY ACTION #19

Undertake an annual Civic Engagement Report Card

The City should not only adopt the measures recommended in this report, but should also commit to reporting out once a year on the efforts made by City Hall to enhance civic engagement, informing the public on progress made while also highlighting gaps and challenges. To ensure the report card is closely aligned to the work of the Task Force, the City’s Public Engagement staff should reconvene members of the Task Force in advance of the report cards to review progress. In the first year (2015), the Task Force will be reconvened to establish 2025 targets based on the benchmarks established in 2014.
**NEXT STEPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing through 2014</td>
<td>Implement Quick Starts (see Appendix C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>Final report to Council for debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – August 2014</td>
<td>Staff develop implementation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff establish benchmarks for Civic Engagement Report Card metrics (see Measuring Progress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2014 and onward</td>
<td>Task Force reconvenes to establish 2025 targets for Civic Engagement Report Card metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members of the Task Force may be invited to reconvene in order to implement some Priority Actions (e.g., Develop a Charter of Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities for the Planning Process)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSION**

Knowledge, capacity, trust, and power—these are topics whose roots go deep into the foundations of our communities and greater society. For this reason, we recognize that the recipe for creating an Engaged City cannot be neatly summarized in a single document. In fact, it may not be a recipe at all but an ongoing process—one that is fueled by a commitment to come together to address shared challenges and to build a shared future that reflects the best of our individual and collective capacity.

While we have tried to present recommendations that represent the diversity of ideas we heard through this process and that tackle some of the most pressing issues that we identified, we know our mandate has not been fulfilled. Ongoing efforts within the City and among Vancouver’s diverse communities are needed to drive the change within institutions, organizations, neighborhoods, and systems that move us towards an Engaged City.

The stakes are not small. Vancouver faces global challenges such as climate change and shifting economic times, as well as local issues such as housing affordability and a growing population, not to mention the possibility of a disaster. Our ability to respond to these issues will be directly affected by our ability to engage with one another and with our government in a way that leaves us more connected, resilient and, yes, more engaged.
Let’s find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

– Chief Robert Joseph of the Gwawenuk First Nation
APPENDIX A
ENGAGED CITY TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Waldo Briño
Vice President of the Vancouver Latin American Cultural Centre; member of the City’s Multicultural Advisory Committee.
Deceased September 2013

Mark Busse
Managing Partner, Industrial Brand; Host, CreativeMornings/Vancouver & Interesting Vancouver; Past President, BC Chapter of the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada

Elisa Campbell
Director of Regional and Strategic Planning at Metro Vancouver; formerly with Prince’s Foundation for Building Community and UBC Design Centre for Sustainability

Dennis Chan
Former Chair and current Director of S.U.C.E.S.S.

Samuel Chen
Doctorate student (EdD) at SFU studying transformational change; Lead Consultant at Connected Legacies Learning; President of BC Organization Development Network

Hanna Cho
Curator of engagement and dialogue, Museum of Vancouver; former Project Manager for Youth Outreach, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Catherine Clement
Executive Director of Communications at Vancouver Community College; former director of Vancouver Foundation’s “Connections and Engagement” survey

Curtis Davey
Volunteer/Operations Director of KitsFest; Director of SLIDELUCK Vancouver and the Playground Interactive Society

Richard Delaney
President of the Canadian Institute for Public Engagement

Olive Dempsey
Facilitator and engagement strategist; former communications coordinator with Get Your Vote On

Meharoona Ghani
Community Engagement and Diversity Specialist; and Former Co-President/Director of Community Engagement, Outreach and Strategic Planning at Reel Causes

Jennifer Gray-Grant
Executive Director at Collingwood Neighbourhood House

Peter Greenwell
Past Chair, Vancouver City Planning Commission and former Director, Gathering Place Community Centre

Lizzy Karp
Co-founder of Rain City Chronicles; Engagement Coordinator for CityStudio

Colleen McGuinness
Current member of the City’s Seniors Advisory Committee; director with the Dunbar Residents Association

Tara Mahoney
Co-founder of Gen Why Media

Lyndsay Poaps
Former Vancouver Parks Commissioner; former Urban Fellow with the City of Toronto. Co-Founder of Check Your Head

Scott Sheldon
Co-founder of Vancouver Change Camp

Marten Sims
Director of Communications and facilitator with the Vancouver Design Nerds; Sessional Faculty at Emily Carr University

Paul Taylor
Executive Director of Gordon Neighbourhood House; former Executive Director of the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House

Julien Thomas
Specialist in arts-based community engagement; facilitator of Late Nite Art series; Park-a-Park; Gather Round; and Stick Shift public art projects

Tesicca Truong
Board Chair of Sustainable SFU, student senator on SFU Senate, VSB Sustainability Conference Chairperson.

CITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES
Mayor Gregor Robertson
Councillor Andrea Reimer

THANK YOUS
The Engaged City Task Force would like to thank the dedicated assistance of City staff, especially Tracy Vaughan, Amanda Mitchell and Kevin Quinlan who provided invaluable support to our work.

We would also like to thank the many community members who offered time, ideas, space and other resources to the Task Force to assist in our investigations.
APPENDIX B
DETAILS ON SCOPE OF WORK

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED
NOTE: UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED, ALL DOCUMENTS ARE FROM THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

- Connections and Engagement Survey (Vancouver Foundation)
- A Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods (Vancouver City Planning Commission)
- Digital Strategy
- Healthy City Strategy
- Public Engagement Strategy
- Bold Ideas Towards an Affordable City: Mayor’s Task Force on Affordable Housing
- Greenest City 2020 Action Plan
- Guiding Principles for Public Participation
- World Happiness Report (Earth Institute, Columbia University)
- The Fourth Wall: Transforming City Hall (Dave Meslin)

STAFF PRESENTATIONS

- 3-1-1
- Planning & Development
- Festivals, Events and Viva Vancouver
- Healthy City Strategy
- Digital Strategy

EXPERIENCES

- Mystery Shopping exercise
- Creative Mornings
- Good Bomb demo
RESIDENT & STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Following the release of the Quick Starts in May 2013, the Task Force launched an extensive consultation process to get feedback from the public that would inform the final report. This included individual meetings with stakeholder groups, public meetings and events, forums, and opportunities for open feedback by way of Twitter and an online ideas forum. Individuals and groups were invited to speak with and present to the Task Force based on demonstrated expertise on issues relevant to the Task Force’s work: the individuals and groups sought out the Task Force and expressed interest in its work, while the Task Force identified key issues based on the Quick Starts and public feedback and invited people to take part based on their connection to that issue.

The Task Force’s work seeking input on how to build a more Engaged City included the following meetings and programs:

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION WORKSHOP
May 30, 2013
Jointly presented by Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue, SFU Public Square, and the City of Vancouver, Building a Culture of Participation explored opportunities for increased citizen political empowerment in official City decision making. The workshop brought together City of Vancouver staff and members of the Engaged City Task Force with a diverse group of community leaders and residents-at-large. Feature guest and community organizer Dave Meslin presented examples of ways that citizens can be engaged in civic issues, and local success stories were presented by Nathan Edelson, Peter Whitelaw, and Shirley Chan.

CAR FREE DAY
June 16, 2013
Task Force members set up a public booth at Car Free Day on Commercial Drive to solicit input from people about what makes Vancouver feel like a community. A wide variety of suggestions and comments were provided, from more block parties, public spaces and pedestrian-only streets to pocket libraries, more co-op housing and preservation of local independent businesses.

BIA MEETING
June 18, 2013
Senior staff of the Collingwood, Point Grey, West Broadway, and Cambie Village Business Improvement Associations took part in a discussion with Task Force members on how the City and BIAs can work together to promote civic engagement. Topics of discussion included the need to enhance consultation due to evolving neighbourhood expectations, better education of City staff on the operation and needs of small businesses, and improving information sharing between BIAs.

YOUTH CO-DESIGN
June 30, 2013
In collaboration with the Co-Design Group, the Task Force invited Vancouver youth to take part in a dialogue on how the City engages with young people. Participants discussed topics such as how they see their relationship with City Hall, how could it be more useful, and what the barriers are to getting involved. Many people said they found City Hall intimidating and did not know where to start if they wanted to get involved or find information, and expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage with councillors in a number of different forums.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
July 10, 2013
Four Task Force members met with board and senior staff members of the Urban Development Institute (UDI), the non-profit association of the real estate development industry. Attendees from the UDI included Anne McMullin, the President and CEO of UDI, as well as Jeff Fisher, the VP and Senior Policy Advisor of UDI. The discussion focused on improving civic discourse around planning and neighbourhood needs, engaging residents earlier in the development process, and enhancing clarity in neighbourhood plans and expected amenities.

DESIGN NERD JAM
July 12, 2013
Task Force members teamed up with the Vancouver Design Nerd collective to host an engagement design jam, which was held at The Hive, a co-working and collaboration space in Gastown. The jam was open to the public and specifically invited everyone who applied to be a member of the Task Force. Participants spent the evening brainstorming on different ways the City could foster civic engagement through funding, bylaw changes, partnerships, and creative programming.
ARTS AND CULTURAL VENUE MEETING
July 15, 2013
Task Force members and City staff met with people involved in cultural venues in Vancouver: owners, operators, and performers who have struggled with maintaining, opening, and operating out of small-scale venues. Participants discussed regulatory and cultural barriers as well as opportunities and best practices from other cities.*

ANN MCAFEE, FORMER CO-DIRECTOR OF CITY PLANNING
July 17, 2013
Task Force members met with Ann McAfee, the former Co-director of Planning for the City of Vancouver, to discuss the City Plan process, which was a program from 1992-1995 that developed neighbourhood-specific plans for future development.

INTERCULTURAL WORLD CAFÉ DIALOGUE
August 8, 2013
Approximately 60 people participated in a world café-style dialogue to discuss ways people could get to know their neighbours better, get involved in volunteering, and better connect with City Hall. Held at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, the Task Force made an extra effort to ensure that there was a wide range of ages, first languages, and cultural backgrounds.

ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS
August 14, 2013
The Task Force convened residents who had a background in electoral reform issues to discuss the question: “How do we double voter turnout in Vancouver’s next municipal election?” Discussion included the obstacles to increasing voter turnout, the need to understand why people don’t vote, and how the electoral system itself affects turnout.

RETIRED CITY STAFF CONVERSATIONS
August 14, 2013
Seven city staff who worked in planning, tenant assistance, and graphics at City Hall (whose time with the City ranged from 22 years to 32 years) provided feedback on how the City has involved the community during the last several decades. They discussed the philosophical changes within City Hall over that time, the evolution in staff and resident expectations, and the lessons from past major projects like City Plan and the Renfrew-Collingwood Neighbourhood Plan.

DUNBAR SALON
August 27, 2013
Task Force members with connections to the Dunbar neighbourhood invited a group of local residents to discuss the Task Force’s goals and draw lessons from what has helped build community in Dunbar and across the city.

CITY STAFF CONVERSATIONS
August 2013
The Task Force interviewed five current City staff members who are involved in engagement from a variety of perspectives including stakeholder involvement, community planning, and policy design. Their length of employment at the City ranged from over a decade to less than one year. Participants discussed their vision for engagement at the City, the current challenges and successes, and steps the City could take to improve engagement.

@ENGAGEDCITY TWITTER HANDLE
Two members of the Task Force volunteered to use Twitter to tweet out ongoing engagement events, provide an opportunity for feedback, and solicit ideas from the public.

IDEA SCALE
May 23 – September 14, 2013
As part of the release of the Quick Starts, the Task Force launched an IdeaScale online platform where people could vote and comment on the initial recommendations put forward by the Task Force as well as provide ideas of their own. During a four month period, IdeaScale received thousands of visits and gathered a total of 1,118 votes spread over 96 ideas, as well as over 150 comments as citizens expressed their views on variety of topics. Ideas were presented in three categories: Engaging with City Hall; Neighbour to Neighbour; and Voter Turnout. The most popular ideas were as follows:

ENGAGING WITH CITY HALL: Earlier public involvement in major rezonings; bringing 3-1-1 online; and rethinking public signs and notices

NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR: Declare a city-wide block party day; create a crowdsourced venue list; participatory budgeting for neighbourhoods

VOTER TURNOUT: Change the voting system; allow for voting online; and making City information available online in simplified, easy-to-understand language

*To see the full list of recommendations put forth for supporting and protecting small-to-medium-scale arts and culture venues in Vancouver, turn to p46.
**ARTS AND CULTURE VENUE MEETING**

We engaged a group of small-to-medium-scale venue owners and the following represents the recommendations they put forth for supporting and protecting small-to-medium-scale arts and culture venues in Vancouver:

- Relax the current restrictions on grants for small-to-medium sized arts/cultural venues in order to lower the barrier to entry for new venue projects;
- Increase investment in the cultural sector through tax breaks to the building owners that house small-to-medium sized arts/cultural venues;
- Speed up the City’s Regulatory Review on Live Performance Venues;
- Create resources for small-to-medium sized arts/cultural venues to help them get the information they need, especially when venues face barriers or potential closure.
- Collaborate with the Arts and Culture Advisory Council to report annually on the number of performance venues in Vancouver, segmented by S/M/L audience size, as well as the amount of square footage gained or lost annually.
- Revise the performance venue pilot program: In particular, the processing timelines and permitting fees should be reduced where possible, and the City should more aggressively promote the program to build awareness that it is available.
- Review City by-laws, particularly around noise levels, to be more supportive and sensitive to the demands of all sizes of live performance venues.

Among ideas that were submitted by the public through the IdeaScale forum, several are included by the Task Force in the final report. These include:

- More community bulletin boards
- Conversation tables at restaurants
- More support for public venues for gatherings
- Supporting electoral reform
- Advocating for permanent residents to have the right to vote

**NOTE:** What we learned from this experiment was that Vancouverites demonstrated a willingness and even desire to engage with City Hall online, leading to the launch of Talk Vancouver as a permanent engagement tool
www.talkvancouver.com

It is worth noting however that a number of citizens indicated that these communications were too ‘one way’, worked without acknowledgement or official response from City Hall and that this type of engagement communication requires resources to monitor and maintain.
# APPENDIX C

## QUICK STARTS

### Engagement at a Neighbourhood Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Start</th>
<th>Status at January 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bring City Hall to the Community</td>
<td>In progress – combined approach with QS1, 5, 6, and 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participatory Budgeting for Neighbourhoods</td>
<td>In progress – money allocated in 2014 budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Declare a City-wide Neighbourhood Block Party Day</td>
<td>In progress – aiming for second half of 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Neighbourhood Councillor Liaisons</td>
<td>On Hold – difficult to implement in election year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Improve Civic Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Start</th>
<th>Status at January 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Open the Doors to City Hall</td>
<td>In progress – combined approach with QS1, 5, 6, and 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. City Hall 101</td>
<td>In progress – combined approach with QS1, 5, 6, and 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Make it Easy to Register to Vote</td>
<td>DONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. City Hall Storytelling</td>
<td>In progress – combined approach with QS1, 5, 6, and 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Improve the Development Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Start</th>
<th>Status at January 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Earlier Public Involvement in Major Rezoning Proposals</td>
<td>In progress – staff compiling best practices report. Developers have been strongly advised to incorporate earlier public involvement into planning in the interim in anticipation of new policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Enhanced Notice of Planning Changes</td>
<td>In progress – staff compiling best practices report. In the interim, more notice is given where feasible (e.g., public comments on drafts of new community plans).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Rethink Public Signs and Notices</td>
<td>DONE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Social Media for Civic Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Start</th>
<th>Status at January 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Bring 3-1-1 Online</td>
<td>In progress – RFP issued for platform, social media strategy being developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Crowdsourced Venue List</td>
<td>On Hold – likely better to do through community partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Create and Promote an Engaged City Listserv</td>
<td>DONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Create and Promote an Online Engagement Panel</td>
<td>DONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Create and Promote an Engaged City Twitter Handle</td>
<td>DONE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX D
HOW TO RUN AN ENGAGED CITY TASK FORCE

If you are feeling inspired to create an Engaged City Task Force in your own city or town, we recommend three things to help it run smoothly:

1. Create a budget for an Engaged City Task Force and a budget for the engagement work they will undertake
2. Employ a professional (non-partisan) facilitator and a note-taker/graphic recorder to capture meeting notes.
3. Just do it

BUDGET

As obvious as it might sound, hosting and producing outcomes with an Engaged City Task Force (as well as the engagement work that the Task Force recommends) costs money, which often needs to be discussed months in advance of the formation of a Task Force as the city reviews its budget and allocates funding toward future operating expenditures.

Specifically, a Task Force requires a budget to pay for the following things: hosting community events; resourcing people such as facilitators and emcees; props, meeting supplies, and venues; food and drink; report writing and editing; designing, illustrating, printing, advertising, marketing, and distributing the findings; checking in with support groups; consultation on the process and content, and project management. Without dedicated financial resources assisting the work of the Task Force, your experience will be slow and sporadic, which may frustrate members of the Task Force, the public, staff, and officials as they lose track of the process and progress gained.

To achieve funding for your Engaged City Task Force or the engagement work that it recommends, you will need to present evidence to a committee or Council for the approval of an operating budget. This may be a daunting task since “engagement” can often sound like a “nice to have” fluffy, rainbow-spewing unicorn rather than the more stern, demanding “must have” facility and service realities of the police, fire, sewers and water, that – according to Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ – make up the baseline rungs of city expenditure.

Abraham Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs’

Knowledge, Respect, Confidence

Growth, Creativity, Problem-Solving

Love, Belonging, Connectedness

Security, Health, Employment

Psychological (Homeostasis)
Demonstrating the positive effects of investing in the four building blocks of knowledge, capacity, trust and power (through engagement and connectedness) to skeptics, those invested in current or previous engagement paradigms, and financial departments requires a solid presentation of both quantitative and qualitative evidence. In building an argument in support of a significant budget for the work of the Engaged City Task Force and the engagement work that will follow, it is important to underline that engagement has serious and far-reaching financial impacts and social payoffs when done well. When combined with other factors (for example, parks and community services), good engagement can improve residents’ quality of life by preventing negative outcomes such as loneliness, poor health, and even death. Community engagement work that prevents negative social outcomes should therefore be given equal weight to the operating expenditures devoted to the police and fire departments or hospitals, which are designed to save or fix people after they are broken.

Engagement is a holistic, preventative tool, easily recalled in the old adage by Benjamin Franklin, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” which, if taken seriously, future-proofs society against some of the larger, more intractable financial and social problems that our police, rescue, and health departments increasingly come up against. To further your understanding and knowledge of the evidence to support these claims, check out Vancouverite Charles Montgomery’s book, *Happy City*, cited earlier in this report. This book provides a wealth of detailed evidence to present to decision makers.

**FACILITATOR, NOTE-TAKER/GRAHIC RECORDER**

Hire non-partisan facilitators and note-takers or graphic recorders. Why? Because various audiences will want to know if there was any “political agenda” that underlines the work of the Task Force, which could create suspicion around the motives for making engagement a priority and feed the lack of trust people feel around the political process. Note-takers or graphic recorders serve in the role of capturing the discussion at meetings and workshops so that the Task Force members can focus on one role only—advising, rather than on multiple tasks for which they may not have the time or brain-space.

**JUST DO IT**

Finally, getting 22 or more deeply engaged people into one room all at the same time is a small miracle, so make use of who is able to be present, when they can be present, because not everyone has to be there for magic to happen! Good luck!
I wanted to share this photo of an impromptu sing-along that happened a couple weeks ago at a Keys to the Street piano. I didn’t know any of the people pictured, and there is no way we would have exchanged more than a passing glance had there been no piano there. Music really transforms public space and brings people together. Thank you so much for this program – I hope it will not be the last year you do it!”

— Vancouverite, Jonathan Lehrer, commenting on CityStudio’s ‘Keys to the Street’ piano at Olympic Village, Vancouver