

Neighborhood Advisory Council Best Practices



Recommendations for Western SoMa

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Introduction

Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force was established in 2004 by the City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The Task Force was established to draft a comprehensive community plan to address the concerns of the citizens of Western SoMa as well as provide a roadmap for growth for the neighborhood. This community plan will be reviewed and voted upon for adoption by the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force June of 2008.

Issue

Once the community plan is adopted the task force will be dissolved as the task force was intended only to elicit public participation to create a sustainable and equitable community plan. However, how can the citizens of Western SoMa maintain a clear and constant advisory role in their neighborhood? How can the citizens of Western SoMa make sure that the community plan they have adopted is followed through? More importantly, how can the citizens of Western SoMa maintain an open public forum that addresses specific issues or problems facing their neighborhood now and well into the future?

Needs

We have been tasked with researching best practices of citizen led Neighborhood Advisory Councils (NAC) in other cities within the United States. We were also tasked with analyzing the data collected from other NAC's, and forming recommendations for the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force. We were asked to produce a report containing at least five case studies of other cities along with a set of recommendation for a potential Western SoMa neighborhood plan implementation board.

Research approach

In researching the client's issue we used three distinct approaches. First we performed a literature review on community participation and the shortcomings of traditional models of public hearings. Using our findings from the literature we developed a set of criteria to be used in analyzing our case studies. Our case study criteria included: the purpose of the organization,

their scope of work and specific powers, the size of the board, the structure of the board, the methods used to appoint board members, the source of funding for the boards, their meeting schedule, their age, and the size of the neighborhood which they represent. We then applied these criteria to a matrix of five cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Portland, Vancouver and Seattle. In addition to our case studies we also developed a survey to receive input from current Western SoMa Taskforce members on their ideal structure for the potential future plan implementation board. We used all of the above tools in creating this report and our recommendations. We hope that this report gives the members of the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Taskforce a good foundation upon which to build their own future research and final restructuring decision.

Client Background

Values Statement of Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force shall promote neighborhood qualities and scale that maintain and enhance, rather than destroy, today's living, historic and sustainable neighborhood character of social, cultural and economic diversity, while integrating appropriate land use, transportation and design opportunities into equitable, evolving and complete neighborhoods. Throughout the life of this Task Force, the membership shall respect one another, be responsive to the constituencies they represent and foster a citizen based democratic decision-making process. Planning Principles (adopted August 23, 2006)

History

The Citywide Policy Planning unit of the San Francisco Planning Department began the Eastern Neighborhoods Community. The planning process started in January 2002. The primary goal at that time was to develop new zoning controls for the industrially zoned land in the neighborhoods of Mission, SoMa, Showplace Square/Potrero Hill, and Bayview/Hunters Point. A series of workshops were conducted in each area where stakeholders articulated goals for their neighborhood, considered how new zoning might promote these goals, and created several rezoning proposals, Options A, B, and C, representing variations in the amount of industrial land to retain for employment and business activity. These proposed zoning alternatives were presented to the City Planning Commission (CPC) on March 3, 2003 in the report titled, "Planning in the Eastern Neighborhoods: Rezoning Options Workbook."

In February 2004, the CPC established interim policies patterned after Option B for East SoMa, the Mission, and Showplace Square/Potrero (Resolution 16727). These policies did not apply to the entire Eastern Neighborhoods for two reasons: 1) Bayview/ Hunters Point is covered by existing special use district and significant portions of this area are under the auspices of the Redevelopment Agency; and 2) the community within the western South of Market (Western SoMa) expressed a desire for a separate planning process that resulted in the CPC removing that

area from the Eastern Neighborhoods effort in October 2003. The concerned citizens went so far as to convince their local Supervisor that as a group they could bring additional credibility and sensitivity to Planning Department rezoning efforts. It began with a relatively simple concept of “citizen planners” developing a plan for their neighborhood. The formalization by the Board of Supervisors and the evolution of a participatory democratic decision making model built around 23 appointed citizen planners working alongside three different City Department representatives has been characterized by insiders and observers as a process that could become “messy.”

Membership

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force consists of 26 members: 20 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors; three members appointed by the District 6 Supervisor; one appointed by the Planning Director; and one appointed by the Director of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority; and one appointed by the Director of the Department of Public Health.

Task force membership

- Jim Meko, Chair, Residents
- Toby Levy, Vice Chair Supervisor
Daly’s appointee
- Charles Breidinger For-profit
Developers
- MC Canlas Supervisor Daly’s
appointee
- Skot Kuiper Arts
- Jazzie Collins Supervisor Daly’s
appointee
- John Elberling Non-profit
Developers
- Chester Fung SF County
Transportation Authority
- Susan Hagen Contreras Open Space
- Paul Lord Planning Department
- Lili Farhang Department of Public
Health
- Tom Radulovich Transportation
- Marc Salomon Bicycle Advocacy
- Antoinetta Stadlman Single Room
Occupancy Hotel Residents
- April Veneracion Community-based
Organizations
- Dan Becco Labor
- Henry Karnilowicz Business
- Anthony Faber Preservation
- Lynn Valente SoMa West
- Kaye Griffin Disabled
- Luke Lightning Recent Resident

- Dennis Juarez Entertainment Industry
- Vacant Families
- Vacant Seniors
- Vacant Youth
- Vacant Homeless

Principles

At the heart of the mess is the very complex set of interrelated decisions necessary to guide the development opportunities in this neighborhood for the first few decades of the 21st Century. The appointed Task Force of citizen planners was clear and unified on a couple of points. First, they wanted to start their planning process from an explicit articulation of their collective values. Second, they deeply appreciate the extremely nuanced character of their neighborhood. For the first six months they worked to get to know one another and craft their collective values statement that they further detailed in supporting Planning Principles

- Promote environmental sensitivity in new development projects.
- Mitigate to the fullest extent possible neighborhood impacts resulting from new development.
- Stabilize the neighborhood against speculative land use proposals and developments.
- Promote safety in all areas of the public realm (e.g., streets, sidewalks, parks, etc.).
- Maintain and encourage the existing community cultural diversity.
- Proposed new land use development shall primarily serve the needs of existing residents and businesses. Citywide and regional needs are subordinate to existing local needs.
- Maintain and promote diversity (e.g., day/night, living/working, spectrum of uses, etc.) of neighborhood land uses.
- Provide clear and simple community planning policies and zoning recommendations.
- Generally maintain the existing scale and density of the neighborhood.

- Encourage nurturing characteristics and maximize opportunities for seniors, families, youth and children.
- Develop and maintain local accountability and monitoring mechanism.
- Provide periodic reassessment of the community plan.
- Maximize general environmental quality and health.

Planning Goals

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force was established to advise the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission on any planning that would affect land use, safety, and future development for Western SoMa and to carry out the following duties: (a) using existing zoning as the starting point for an analysis of land use decisions that will shape the future of the entire community; (b) map and evaluate existing Residential Enclave Districts (REDs) and consider modifications to existing RED zoning map boundaries; (c) recommend basic RED preservation policies including height, density and design guidelines; (d) map and evaluate land uses proximate to existing and proposed REDs and develop basic height, density and design guidelines in order to provide a buffer between REDs and areas where more intense development might be allowed; (e) map Western SoMa's overall existing land use conditions; (f) recommend policies for the preservation of service and light industrial jobs, residential uses, and arts and entertainment opportunities; (g) consider policies to guide increased heights and density along the major arterial streets where appropriate; (h) recommend policies that promote more community-serving retail and commercial uses and that encourage improvements to transportation, open space, street safety, bicycle circulation, and mass transit; and (i) develop recommendations to ensure that the creation of a future Folsom Boulevard be developed in such a manner as to complement all of the above referenced goals

Neighborhood Economy

The Task Force, through the guidance and assistance of numerous consultant and student studies, analyzed opportunities and formulated a vision for future non-residential activities that are both locationally appropriate and responsive to local and regional for

the 21st Century economic needs. In addition to the economic consultant studies, the Western SoMa Task Force prepared neighborhood economy recommendations that pay special attention to the Citywide Economic Strategy, and the Bio-Science, Back Streets and Arts Task Force recommendations.

Simply put, the Task Force recommendations seek to relax current office regulations throughout the neighborhood, encourage residential serving business north of Harrison Street, foster opportunities for a creative and innovation driven job base south of Harrison Street, and develop a continuous high technology business office corridor along Townsend Street, while judiciously allowing the expanded neighborhood introductions of formula and big box retail uses. The objectives and policies that follow articulate the Task Force recommendations for early 21st Century business activities in the Western SoMa SUD. More recently, high technology internet and multimedia arts businesses have all been important business activities in the Western SoMa 20th Century landscape. When last rezoned in the late 1980s, the neighborhood faced eminent office development pressures spilling over from a robust and expanding downtown area. Today, the neighborhood is viewed by many as an ideal location for fulfilling citywide housing needs. The Task Force seeks solutions that balance the competing needs of housing production with the long standing diverse neighborhood commercial vitality.

Commercial traditions in the Western SoMa SUD can largely be characterized by one word – innovation. To this day, the neighborhood has been one of the preferred San Francisco locations for new start up business that define new and emerging market opportunities. In part led by the gay and artist communities that located in the area during the last few decades of the 20th Century, the neighborhood continues to provide a cornucopia of business types. More often than not, the neighborhood businesses are small employing less than 10 people and occupying less than 5,000 square feet.

A recent increase in the residential population is now giving rise to the demand for businesses that serve the new and existing residents. Two decades ago the existing residents were clamoring for a grocery store. Today, there are four new grocery stores serving the neighborhood as well as discount grocery outlet stores nearby. The neighborhood building stock retains numerous buildings that served the early 20th Century warehousing and manufacturing activities. Some of these building have

undergone creative adaptive reuse to reconfigure them for more contemporary business needs. Yet, elements of the more historic building stock remain underutilized and face uncertain futures in the 21st Century economy.

Literature Review

Why do we even need neighborhood advisory councils? What are they used for, and why are they a better tool to use than current legally required modes of public participation? Legally required methods for public participation in the United States: (1) do not meet the most basic needs for public participation, and (2) are counterproductive causing anger and mistrust from the public towards the governing rule. (Innes et al. 2004) Furthermore disillusionment with government bureaucracy can be summed in this statement "participation through normal institutionalized channels has little impact on the substance on government policies." Scholars have observed that since the 60's-70's and well into the 21st century, public disillusionment has led to a , "society wide uprising against bureaucracy and a desire for participation." (Crosby 1986) This desire for public participation led to the 1964 Federal Equal Opportunity Act's call for "maximum feasible participation". Since then many studies have been conducted to examine the affects of current legally required means of participation. The findings are a bit discouraging.

1. Lack of representativeness of participants is a very real shortcoming especially in projects that were considered successes.
2. The most successful citizen outputs tend to be those which require the least amount of expertise.
3. Overall the impact of citizen led groups has been limited.
4. Most participatory programs have been geared for reactionary purposes leaving a void in agenda setting, and policy creation.

Failures of Public Participation

There is not much literature written on the failings of current participation laws and practices. Some argue that there is nothing wrong with the rules but that we are just not doing it the right way. Others argue a more elite stance that planning should be left to the policy makers and the planners only, and that only representative democracy not direct democracy works best today. Yet there are others who are arguing for a more deliberative democracy. They argue for more allowance of public deliberation. What they leave blank is just what should come of those deliberations and what role should

those deliberations play in decision making. Most public administrator scholars slip between one of two schools of thought: (1) arguing for indirect participation, and (2) the rest arguing that more direct participation is needed.

Perhaps due to the fiscalization of planning most cities have adopted a "business managerial" model running the government like a business. With that construct in place if the government is run like a grocery store should the citizens be employees working at the store or should they be the stock holders invested in that store? The former being that the city provides benefits and security to its employees when needed, but with the "investor method" citizens would be stockholders of a company sometimes guiding future decisions but with a hands off approach.

Regardless of what side scholars are on no one is talking about real, sustainable, and working best practices to better engage the public and utilize direct democracy for public participation in government decisions.

Most literature on public participation merely addresses the problems, paradoxes, and the ambivalence of planners and or the public regarding participation. Should the citizen look after the interest of the group over the needs of the individual? Should the planner be swayed by public opinion or should they be ruled by special interests? Citizens participate through voting by electing representatives so why do they need to participate any further? Anyone can participate but the powerful few routinely dominate the decisions made in current governance. The more open the process is, the more contentious the issue can become with the broad shallow view of the public pitted against the narrow deep view of special interest groups. Courting public participation may also lead to the wrong decisions being made with the planner or administrator out of touch with the public's needs and wants or the public is out of touch with the political and economic realities affecting their cities.

The trap we all fall into as citizens and policy makers/planners is of the government on one side making decisions and the public on the other side reacting to those decisions. After addressing the problems with current legally required participation laws this article poses new best practices and models which encourage more broad public participation. The argument here is that collaboration should not only

include citizens but also organized groups like non-profits and for-profit organizations as well as planners and administrators in a common framework. Ultimately current legally required forms of public participation can evolve into a more engaging and participatory model. Citizens' need to feel like they made a difference and planners' need to feel professionally responsible for their decisions or recommendations made. Both sides need to feel that participation is fair, transparent, inclusive, and representative. Collaborative planning can satisfy all of these qualities. (Innes et al. 2004)

For 40 years there has been a clear and steady decline in public trust of democratically elected representatives. There has also been a steady decline in the public's trust towards trained "expert's" opinions due to the severe failings of 20th century planners and engineers. Where democracy once reflected elected representatives along with trained administrators and planners making decisions, now it is thought that public problems require an active citizenry to generate solutions. Moreover public participation is now increasingly thought of as a right and not a privilege. (Briggs 2003)

A more collaborative approach to governance, which relies not just on the expertise of the government but also the real perspective of the public at large is needed. This dynamic cooperation can solve many complex problems such as budget constraints, contentious development projects, or other actions taken which might cause public dissent. (Innes et al. 2004) Real, authentic dialogue is needed as well as working networks for cross communication and city capacity to ensure such open lines of input and output is also needed. Further encouraging signs are showing a more bottom up versus a top down approach to local governance is increasing in popularity due to the public's changed perception of interaction between the local Governments. (Briggs 2003)

There are three important reasons for including stakeholder participation:

1. (Psychological) **Consultation is appreciated and rewarded.** Human beings are more apt to approve of projects or proposals, accept decisions being made, and believe them to be fair if they first have been openly consulted and asked to review the merits and make recommendations based on their perspective and experience.

2. (Political) **Democracy demands a popular mandate.** Making democracy work requires actively soliciting ideas and building support between many stakeholders.
3. (Practical) **Two heads are better than one.** There is a very practical need to address societal problems as a collective using coordination and team work. (Briggs 2003)

Below is a comparative chart explaining the differences between the status quo of current models of public participation and models employing citizens more aggressively to participate in the decision making process. (Briggs 2003)

Conventional Groups	Participatory Groups
The fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers often get the most "air time".	Everyone participates, not just the vocal few.
Differences of opinion are usually seen as conflict needing to be either stifled or "resolved".	Opposing viewpoints are allowed to coexist.
The minority perspective is commonly discouraged from speaking out.	Even in the face of opposition, everyone is encouraged to voice their opinion and to be heard and stand up for their beliefs.

Listening to and communicating with a large community advisory board may be a daunting task but has the promise of creating sustainable and equitable policy. Policy approved in an open forum benefits the wants of the city while balancing the needs of the citizenry. Moreover the diversity of viewpoints, life experiences, and impressions of citizens help pinpoint ideas and answers to problems not seen by administrators and other city staff. As well, citizens become more vested in the process if they feel that their concerns have been genuinely heard and that they have visibly affected the outcome of the process. (Chrislip 2002)

Below is a chart created to help planners and policy makers better understand the importance of broad public participation in setting agendas, advising on projects, or deliberating proposals set fourth by the city.

Strategic Questions	Decision Issues	Caveats
<p>1. <i>Why should we engage stakeholders in planning?</i> To serve a variety of purposes such as creating a wider democratic mandate to act upon, better ideas to drive action, and to foster feelings of "ownership" and investment in collaborative work.</p>	<p>Is a broad issue or agenda being defined by a group or a community to plan or act on? Do strategies need to be set in order to respond to a predefined set of issues? Does a certain project or program need to be designed given that strategies are already in place?</p>	<p>Institutions often send confusing signals about what the planning project is at that moment, why it is important, why now, what are the likely benefits and impacts, and what the limitations on participation will be.</p>
<p>2. <i>Who should be involved and in what roles?</i> Effective participation requires setting boundaries to define all participants roles and responsibilities to each other not as a means of imposing control but to foster trust and coordination in place of chaos and "process paralysis".</p>	<p>Who are the primary stakeholders who must decide on the issue, project, or design? Who else should be consulted, or educated in a broader "public"? Who should organize and sponsor planning events? Who should facilitate the meetings? Who should observe them and who should ultimately be making recommendations and who should make decisions?</p>	<p>Failure to set up clear roles can lead to the thought that more players, ideas or events is assumed to be better. Creating systematic process designs and clear roles and linear steps can help create order and establish efficient modes of participation and deliberation.</p>
<p>3. <i>What is the proper scope of the planning process?</i> Setting boundaries around the targets of participation are key. Clearly define the issues. What are the decisions being made, and who has the authority to decide?</p>	<p>Does the work require broad boundaries so that new interests or projects can be included in future discussion or deliberation? Should the neighborhood planning council be advisory to the decision makers or should they decide for themselves? How should the neighborhood relate to the agency that makes everyday (routine) decisions?</p>	<p>The planning process can be quickly undermined and lose its legitimacy and effectiveness without a clear and transparent scope of participation. Without a clear scope of participation conflicts emerge as the stakeholders might have different and unstated assumptions about what the scope should be?</p>
<p>4. <i>How to put a participatory strategy</i></p>	<p>How should stakeholders be convened, identified, and</p>	<p>Beware of getting bogged down with too much</p>

<i>to work?</i> Smart, well implemented tactics which encompass a variety of planning phases and dimensions while constantly evolving as the project evolves are vital.	organized? Are the stakeholders being tasked to build a base of common knowledge around a project or issue? Are they tasked with providing feedback and receiving a response regarding an issue or project? Are they trying to improve the deliberation process and the decision making itself?	information and too few useful ideas or recommendations or decisions.
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There are six criteria that make public participation most successful no matter what the project or issue is being deliberated or considered. (Crosby et al. 1986)

1. The participants should be selected from a wide swath of the broader public and they should be appointed in a way that is not easily manipulated.
2. The proceedings should reflect and promote effective decision making.
3. The proceedings should be fair.
4. The process should be cost effective.
5. The process should be flexible, and easily adaptable to future changes in project scope or changes to participation.
6. The likelihood that recommendations will be followed should be high.

Participant Selection:

Participants must represent the broader public and must be selected in an open, transparent way that is equitable, fair, and not susceptible to manipulation. A common practice used to ensure a fair and equitable selection is for elected officials to appoint the participants to ensure that all groups are represented.

One problem with this is who exactly needs representation, and just how much representation do they perhaps need? What if one group is twice the size of another group, does that mean they should have twice the representation? What happens if some participants belong to multiple groups?

Effective Decision Making:

Two aspects of decision-making can be evaluated for its rate of effectiveness: the way in which the decision was structured for the citizens advisory council and the way they performed within that structure.

A common criticism is that the general public does not have the expertise to come up with solutions to problems or draft policy to address specific issues. This criticism can be dissolved as long as the public hearings are designed in a way that best suits their needs.

Fair Procedures

No perfect solution exists to balancing and maintaining a fair and open procedure yet there are a few actions to be taken that can best help maintain a perceived fairness by the public at large. A combination of staff input, advocacy presentations and an open agenda are three clear ways to foster a fair and open procedure. These actions will help decision makers steer projects or programs while at the same time give the public participants a forum to that gives them a fair stake in the decision making process.

Cost Effectiveness

The immediate cost of having a small group of "insiders" making policy decisions might be lower than having a large group deliberate and decide upon an issue. Were a larger group involved in the decision making process the immediate costs would be higher due to more people being involved, the time it would take to inform the general public about the issue(s), and the staff required. However the long run cost savings would be much higher with a larger group if the right policy has been crafted that reflects the will of the agency and the needs of the public.

Flexibility

The method for citizen participation must be flexible enough to adapt to constant changes in the scope of the program or project as well as the role the citizens' play.

Recommendations should be followed

Recommendations made by public advisory committees should be headed by elected officials, yet this routinely is not the case. "There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having real power."

For Community Leaders and Citizen Advisory Committees

Community Needs and Strengths Assessment

This provides for a deeper understanding into what the neighborhood feels are the most important issues affecting them by asking the questions:

"What is important to our neighborhood?"

"How is the quality of life perceived in our neighborhood?"

"What assets do we have in our neighborhood to improve community health?"

Local Public Health Assessment

This assessment focuses on the entities and organizations which help contribute to the overall health and well being of the neighborhood and community at large. This assessment asks the questions:

"What are the components, capacities, competencies, and activities of the local public health system?"

"How are these essential services being provided to the neighborhood?"

Community Health Status Assessment

This identifies quality of life and health issues affecting the citizens of the neighborhood or community at large.

"How healthy are our residents?"

"What does the health status of the neighborhood or community look like?"

Forces of Change Assessment

This focuses in on identifying forces such as legislation, zoning ordinances, technology, or other impending changes that could affect the neighborhoods overall perceived health and well being. Ask:

- "What occurrences or development projects might affect the neighborhood's health and well being?"
- "What might be specific threats or opportunities generated by such developments?"

Guidance for Implementing a Community Plan

- Plan how assessments be should be implemented. Finding that some assessments need to be studied further might show that other assessments need to be fleshed out in more detail as well. Conversely some completed assessments might show their relative connection to other assessments.
- Establish subcommittees for each assessment. Subcommittees should determine who will be responsible for each assessment. This will ensure that assessments move through the process smoothly. Membership of these subcommittees should reflect the diversity of the neighborhood, the expertise, and the experiences of the citizens. Overlapping membership with other subcommittees has the added benefit of sharing knowledge between them.
- Promote linkages among assessments. Although each subcommittee is created to address one specific issue, wherever possible find the linkages between multiple assessments. This holistic approach to understanding assessments and their interrelatedness to each other will provide a much clearer picture to the issues facing the neighborhood and the solutions needed.
- Celebrate Successes. As each assessment is being conducted, identify and recognize achievements. The assessment may be daunting and very time consuming but recognition for the work completed can go a long way. Celebrating and recognizing achievements not only bolsters community support but also widens support from the broader community.

Case Studies

This section presents our case studies of 5 cities, in order: New York, Los Angeles, Portland, Vancouver, Seattle. Each section will begin with a short review of the case study, including the unique features of each city's program. Next will be a review of the citywide program which will cover the program's mission statement, history, legal origins, structure, and purpose. After this there will be a discussion of how individual neighborhood councils within each program organize themselves, and what specific powers they have.

New York:

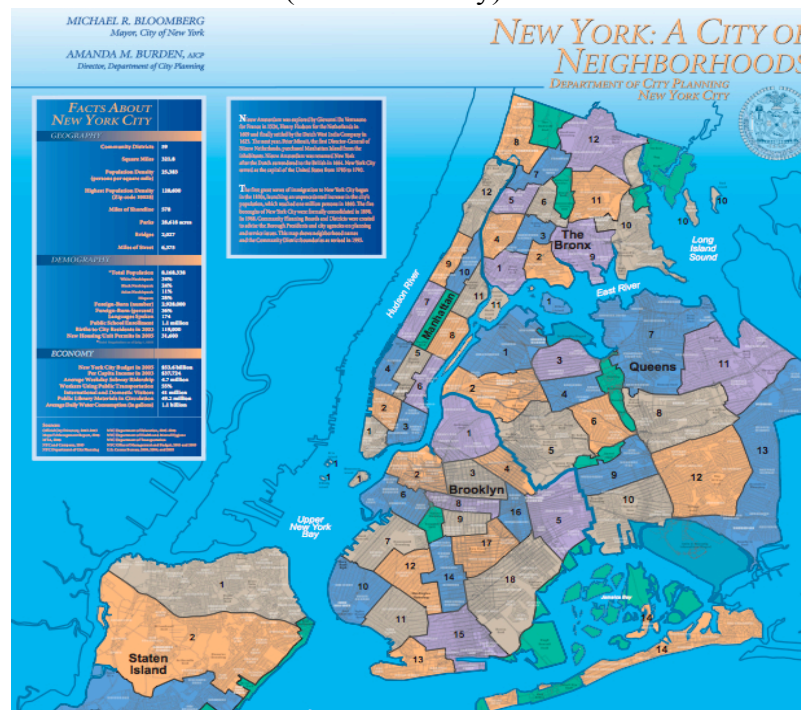
New York City's neighborhood level agencies are by far the most integrated with the central city government; being appointed by city officials, operated by city staff, and integrated into the city power structure. Of all the case studies, New York is the only city with appointed board members and a tightly limited scope of work, covering only land use and budget advice. It does not offer many lessons for citizen participation, but some of the structural elements may be useful in terms of establishing a planning review board.

Citywide System

Mission - "To consider the needs of the districts which it serves." (New York City)

History

New York City actually has two levels of subdivision – the borough, and the community district. New York City is split into 5 boroughs – Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island, all of which were formed from neighboring counties when New York City was consolidated in 1898. In each



borough there is a borough president, who is elected by the citizens of the borough. Borough presidents were once powerful in city government, but over time their power has been cut and today they are mostly advisory, acting as advocates to the mayor for issues within their borough. Authorized by chapters 69 and 70 of the New York City Charter, and organized within boroughs, the city is also split into 59 Community Districts, which are used for planning purposes. A Community Board represents each community district, acting as an advocate for local issues on the level of both the borough and the city (Queens, District 3)

Purpose

The main purpose of the community boards is to monitor conditions within their district, report on those conditions to the mayor, city council and borough president, and also act as communication channels between the city and its citizens on the local level. Although they often report on a variety of issues, Community Boards have three clear areas of focus that date back to their creation: advising on land use issues, advising on the city budget, and administering city services on the local level. The first role dates back to 1951 when Mayor Wagner formed 12 “Community Planning Councils” covering the borough of Manhattan to advise him on planning issues. The system was later expanded to the rest of the boroughs in 1963, and the councils were renamed “Community Planning Boards,” advising the mayor on both planning and budget issues. Finally, in 1975 Mayor John Lindsay expanded their role again under his “Little City Halls” program, which made each board responsible for administering city services within their district (Queens, District 3). Now for a look at how individual boards are formed and operate.

Individual Community Boards

Membership

Each community board represents the interests of all stakeholders present within the boundaries of its respective district. There is no explicit stakeholder definition for which applies to community boards; rather, the boards can be thought of as the most local branch of city government, interacting with all parties as necessary.

Board Structure

Each Community Board can have up to 50 voting members, all of which are appointed by the borough president. Boards represent anywhere from 30,000 – 200,000+ residents. Any person who lives, owns a business or can demonstrate a ‘significant interest’ in the community qualifies to serve on the board. All members serve as volunteers for two-year terms at the pleasure of the borough president with no term limits, with half of the members being appointed each year. At least half of the voting members must be nominated by city council members whose electoral districts overlap the community district; the rest may be nominated by the community board itself or by any citizen in the community. The borough president is also mandated to use their appointments to represent all geographic and social segments of the community district, though in practice appointments are not carefully monitored (Queens, District 3).

Community boards typically organize themselves using a comprehensive set of committees; some boards organize these committees by functional focus such as land use and education, while others assign committees to review specific city agencies, and still others organize based on geographic subdivisions of the district. No matter how a Board is organized, all official statements by the Board must be voted on by a simple majority quorum of members. The board must meet at least once every month except in July and August, not counting public hearings to review specific projects (Queens, District 3)

Funding

Each year the city allocates roughly \$12 million for community boards that covers everything except rent and utilities for Board offices, which are covered by special city appropriations. Aside from their offices, each community board has nearly \$200,000 in expenses each year, most of which covers salary for a professional district manager and several staff; the rest covering the generation of reports, mass mailings to citizens, community meetings and website operations, among other day-to-day costs (Berkey-Girard). All voting members of the board serve as volunteers with no compensation, except small allowances given for their personal expenses attending the board meetings and other functions. Community board members tend to feel that their operations are

under-funded, and recent citywide budget cuts have hit community boards hard, with each of them being asked to reduce their expenses by \$10,000 - \$15,000 per year (Not Quite Passing the Hat). When necessary, Boards can also raise funds in creative ways – for example Community Board 3, covering the Lower East Side, has made some money by renting its offices out for on-site filming of TV shows that require a community office setting. On a more practical level, Community Board 6 representing the Park Slope district has founded a separate non-profit entity, “Friends of the Community Board” dedicated to raising funds for the board (Community Board Reform).

Scope of work

The power of Community Boards is almost entirely advisory; though they do exercise some limited power over land use. Their primary advisory duties fall into three categories: land use review, comprehensive planning, and budget review.

Land use review

Their primary land use power comes in the form of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), which allows Boards to exercise initial review of all changes to the city’s map, zoning, special permits, selection of sites for capital projects, and granting of local franchises. Community boards can exercise their power of review over any project, public or private, that is not “as-of-right” within their community, with the exception of state and federal projects. When the Department of City Planning receives a development application subject to ULURP they must send it to the appropriate community board(s) and borough president within five days. The application is then analyzed by the community board and city planners in parallel, and if the planners identify a significant impact the project applicant must produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Community boards may then send a representative along with the city to define the scope of the EIS. After a draft EIS has been completed the Department of City Planning may “certify” the project, after which the Community Board has 60 days to notify the public of the project, conduct a public hearing, and submit written recommendations adopted at the public hearing by a quorum of members. The Board’s

report is then sent to city planners for review and appropriate changes may be made before it is finally sent to the city council for approval (Queens, District 3)

Planning

Boards are also authorized to engage in comprehensive planning through a process called a 197-a plan. 197-a plans are comprehensive area plans that drive future development in a community or borough, and can be drafted by community boards, borough presidents, city planners, and the mayor. 197-a plans enter into force after being reviewed and edited by city planners and the City Council, as well as undergoing an environmental review (paid for by the city). However in practice only 6 community boards and one borough president have proposed 197-a plans; most plans are instead drafted by city planners and the mayor, however community boards also exercise the power to review and comment on these plans (Queens, District 3)

Budget: The “Fair Share Process”

Board’s final official advisory role is commenting on the budget process, known as the Fair Share Process. Each year the mayor publishes a “Citywide Statement of Needs” which describes all plans to open, close, or otherwise change city facilities and services. Once the statement is issued, community boards have 90 days to make the statement available to the people in their district, hold a public hearing, and submit comments to the Department of City Planning. Boards may comment on any part of the plan, however in practice they tend to focus on what facilities they feel would be best located in their community and what facilities should not be located in other communities, and then justify their reasoning. Boards give their comments to the borough president for further comments, and together the comments are submitted to the Department of City Planning, which then distributes the input to relevant city agencies for final decision-making. This process is considered to be one of the Board’s most important jobs because it allows the mayor, city planners, and city agencies to gather very fine-grained information about community needs and demands which would be otherwise difficult to collect (Queens, District 3)

Accomplishments

The success of community boards is quite varied. In one study of budget requests author John Mudd estimated that between 30 – 50% of district budget requests are approved (Forman). When it comes to planning there has been scattered success: several community boards have adopted very successful 197-a plans, including new housing development in the Bronx and a waterfront park on Manhattan's east side. Community Board 4 also boasts one highly successful negotiation with a developer in which the board was able to negotiate 162 units of low and moderate income housing when the Zeckendorf Corporation purchased the former Madison square Gardens site. Other successes include the protection of family housing in district 10 and a cleanup of a toxic waste site in the Wakefield district, both in the Bronx (Forman).

Shortcomings

There is concern that many developers do not take the authority of the Community Boards seriously. One way this disregard manifests itself is by developers partnering with agencies empowered by the state, which are immune to local planning law, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Empire State Development Corporation, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and Bi-State Port Authority to evade ULURP and 197-a plan requirements (Angotti). Another problem is that although boards have the power to make influential statements, they do not always have the technical power to back up their analysis. Unlike neighborhood councils in other cities we have analyzed, the New York Community Boards lack strong support from the central city – volunteers are expected to train themselves on issues of city politics and planning code, and are expected to hire their own professional staff to assist them using whatever their budget allows for, which is often not enough. According to Thomas Angotti, chair of the Pratt Institute's Planning Department the main reason why so few districts have prepared community plans is that most volunteer members have little background in planning. Furthermore, a study by David Rogers found that the success of community boards tends to be directly associated with the median household income of the community (Forman). However in the case of Manhattan the Borough president has made

some attempt to provide Boards with some of the necessary planning tools. He has hired three urban planners to assist all the boards under his jurisdiction, and also set up an internship program for graduate planning students that assigns 12 interns to each community board in the borough (Berkey-Girard).

Los Angeles:

With the greatest variety of council organizational styles, Los Angeles is a virtual laboratory of civic participation. On the one hand the program is highly organized, with the central city department having very defined goals and responsibilities. On the other hand, the individual neighborhood councils have been given very broad freedoms to determine their own structure, level of participation, and approach to problems. We will now look at how this system came into being and how it has developed.

Citywide System

Mission

Promoting public participation in government and making government more responsive to local needs by creating, nurturing and supporting a citywide system of grassroots, independent and participatory neighborhood councils (DONE – About)

History

This reform came at a time of deep discontent with the central city government. Throughout its history various communities within Los Angeles have attempted to secede from the city and form their own local governments. The San Fernando Valley in particular has attempted to separate on multiple occasions, and in the mid 1990's they joined with Hollywood to start a renewed campaign to break away from Los Angeles and create two separate cities. This campaign culminated in a 2002 citywide ballot initiative that, while enjoying success within the secessionism communities, failed elsewhere in the city. However even though the campaign was unsuccessful, it underscored deep problems in the Los Angeles and sparked renewed interest in making the central government more responsive to local communities (Sonenshein). The result was the creation of the Department of Neighborhood empowerment, authorized by the addition of Article IX to the city charter and put into law by the passage of Resolution# 172728 by the city council. This created a central department responsible for drafting a plan for a

system of neighborhood councils. After 3 years of planning and community input, including more than 50 public hearings, DONE drafted a “Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils” which was put into effect by Resolution# 176704, passed by the city council in May 2001 (DONE – Laws).

Structure

DONE is under the control of a general manager appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. DONE also consists of a seven-member council called the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) who are also appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council (DONE).

Purpose

DONE’s primary responsibilities include:

- Certifying, supervising, regulating and, if necessary, de-certifying neighborhood councils.
- Assisting stakeholders with the certification process, including conducting outreach to communities with traditionally low levels of civic participation and educating them on the process of forming a neighborhood council.
- Acting as a general resource center and information clearinghouse for councils, including distributing funds, assisting stakeholders with the technical details of forming a governing body, training council staff, helping coordinate meetings and meeting space, and mitigating barriers to participation such as the need for translation and childcare services.
- Maintaining the “Early Notification System,” an electronic system for the city and councils to communicate with each other.
- Holding a biannual meeting of councils called the Congress of Neighborhood Councils.

- Provide the city with annual review and evaluation of the neighborhood council system, and provide quarterly reports on recommendations for outreach to areas with traditionally low rates of civic participation (DONE).

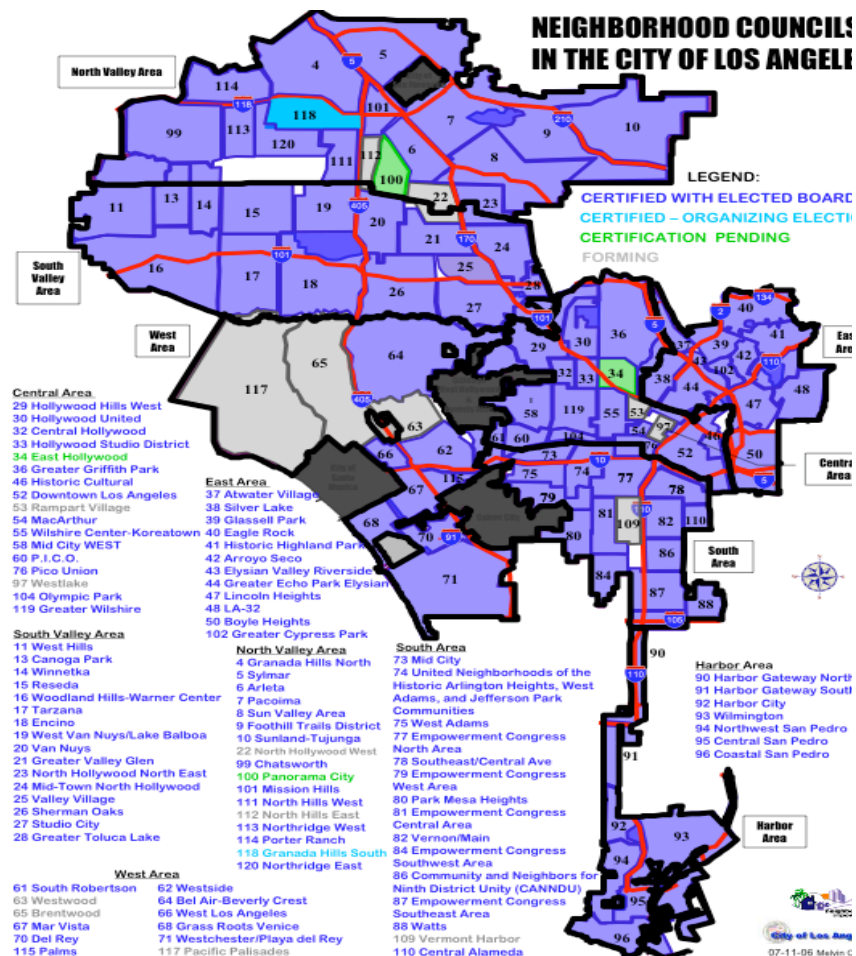
Funding

To fund DONE the Los Angeles city council also created a special purpose fund, the Neighborhood Empowerment Fund, which in the 2007-2008 was allocated \$7,861,997. This includes department staff and general support expenses as well as a flat \$50,000 distributed to all 88 registered neighborhood councils in blocks of \$12,500 per quarter (City of Los Angeles – Budget)

Individual Neighborhood Councils

Unique features

To date 85 neighborhood councils have been certified, and more are forming all the time. Los Angeles has allowed each neighborhood council considerable freedom to determine their own boundaries, internal structure, and organizational priorities. This has led to the development of a virtual laboratory of community participation with every type of council imaginable representing different communities. The size of neighborhoods ranges from 7,000 to 100,000+; the size of governing boards ranges from 9 – 51 members. Some neighborhood councils explicitly represent stakeholder groups in a style similar to Western SoMa and



select board members by popular election, while others are appointed by neighborhood organizations including non-profits, schools, business groups, and homeowners associations, and still others use a mix of these and other organizational strategies. Some councils act in a strictly advisory capacity, while other councils take an active role in coordinating local projects. This diversity has made Los Angeles neighborhood councils difficult to analyze with the matrix developed for this report, but it provides a wealth of information that can be used to inform future creation of a Western SoMa neighborhood implementation board. For this reason each matrix category has been analyzed separately to allow for closer examination of the diverse organizational approaches (DONE).

Membership

According to DONE, a stakeholder is any individual who lives, works, or owns property in the neighborhood and any individual who declares a stake in the neighborhood and affirms the factual basis for it. This is usually interpreted to include all residents, including the homeless, business owners and employees, and property owners of all types (DONE). Many neighborhoods have expanded this definition to further include any individual who participates in local organizations, such as schools, churches, and volunteer groups among others. Some require formal proof of participation, such as school enrollment documents or correspondence with an organization, while others allow anyone to approach the neighborhood council and make a case for membership even based upon informal participation in local organizations. Some councils have also expanded this definition to include institutional membership, allowing local organizations, public and private, to have representation and voting powers on the governing council (DONE - Roster)

Governing Board Size

The size of neighborhood councils varies from 9 – 51 members, with an average size of 17 members. There does not seem to be a direct relationship between the size of councils and number of neighborhood stakeholders – there are small neighborhoods of less than 10,000 residents that have more than 20 board members, and by contrast there are also neighborhoods of 60,000 – 100,000 residents that have less than 20 board

members. The most important factor determining board size is how representative the neighborhood council members are of diverse populations. Many neighborhoods have chosen to further sub-divide themselves into smaller neighborhood areas, with representatives from each sub-area. Furthermore, many councils have chosen to have representatives from distinct stakeholder groups in a style similar to Western SoMa. Both of these strategies significantly increase the size of governing boards (DONE - Roster).

Board selection process

There are several methods used to select governing board members: popular election, geographic election, special interest group election, institutional appointment, and inherited legacy positions. Nearly all neighborhood councils observed included some number of popularly elected at-large positions, even if the bulk of the membership was selected through some other method. Geographic representation is a very popular method of electing board members – neighborhoods split themselves into smaller neighborhood areas, and only stakeholders within these sub-areas can vote on local representatives (DONE - Roster).

Another popular way to elect board members is to assign specific slots to specific community interests, ranging from renters, homeowners, business, non-profits, labor, environment, etc... in a style similar to Western SoMa. In some cases the representative for each group is elected by their constituents – in other words, only business owners may vote for business representatives, and only renters may vote for renters. However, much more commonly all registered stakeholders in the neighborhood elect the interest groups at-large. There is no apparent reason for the difference between communities methods, however it may reflect the relative difficulty in administering elections with multiple categories of voters that can only vote for certain positions when compared to simple at-large elections. Another way in which special interest groups are represented is to have local institution appoint members, instead of relying on stakeholders to elect representatives. Commonly represented institutions include homeowners associations, labor unions, schools, cultural organizations, faith based organizations, community

organizations, non-profits, business associations, etc... Typically the representative for these institutions is the president or an appointed special representative. The final method of selecting members is through inheritance – a number of neighborhood councils observed included the “immediate past president” or “immediate past executive council” as part of the board, as a means of maintaining continuity across ever-changing councils (DONE - Roster).

In addition to voting members, many councils also included non-voting advisory representatives. Advisors represent many types of organizations, but typically they are from city departments and agencies. Some examples of advisory organizations include: the planning department, the transportation department, the building and safety department, the police department, recreation and parks department, and local elected officials including LA city council members and congressional representatives (DONE - Roster)

Terms

In general, council members tend to serve 2-4 year terms, with elections typically being staggered so that roughly half the council is up for election at any one time. Also, most councils observed only allowed members to serve as board members for a total of 8 years. Some also included further restriction, such as setting different term limits for elected and appointed officials, with elected members typically serving longer terms than appointed members, or in the case of at-large popular elections the most popular candidates serving longer terms than the less popular candidates. (DONE - Roster)

Meetings

Most neighborhood councils observed held regular board meetings on a monthly or quarterly basis. Some councils included formal means of citizen participation, including non-binding votes from members of the public attending the meetings, and other councils went further and organized special stakeholder meetings, similar to Western SoMa’s town-hall meetings (DONE - Roster)

Scope of work

The primary duty of all neighborhood councils in Los Angeles, as defined in the city charter, is to stay up-to-date on local issues, monitor local city services, review the city's annual budget, and to issue advisory statements to any city department which has power over these issues of concern (Charter IX) (Sonenshein). Thus the central focus of all neighborhood councils is to draft and issue policy and planning statements. However many councils go beyond this power and also take a proactive role in shaping their communities by advocating for and supporting local improvement projects, providing input to local developers and non-profit organizations, and coordinating programs and resources with other neighborhood councils and city agencies such as the police department (DONE - Roster).

Accomplishments

Changing city priorities

Collectively, neighborhood councils have accomplished a lot. An early victory in 2004 saw a reduction in the water rates proposed by the Department of Water and Power after more than 30 neighborhood councils rallied against the proposal (LA Daily News). In 2004 mayor James Hahn started a process, continued today by mayor Antonio Villaragosa, called "priority based budgeting" which asks neighborhood council members and all other city citizens to submit surveys that rank the city's budget priorities, ensuring that the most important priorities are guaranteed funding while the lowest priority issues receive the last cut of funds. This has been turned into an annual process, and evidence shows that neighborhood councils have had a powerful effect on the city's priorities (Sonenshein).

Early notification system

One of the more effective civic tools created along with DONE is the Early Notification System (ENS). The ENS is an electronic, email-based service which allows stakeholders at all levels, from individual residents and businesses to neighborhood council officials and central city department heads to communicate about city issues. The website allows users to subscribe to email notices which inform them of any meeting

agenda, project proposal, or other action taken by the City Council, city departments, or other city agency. It also allows representatives from neighborhood councils to post official advisory notices to proposed city actions. This system allows fast, detailed dialogue between city agencies and neighborhood councils, and it also allows interested individuals to monitor these dialogues (City of Los Angeles).

Interacting with developers

An outstanding example of neighborhood councils interacting with private developers can be found in the Sherman Oaks neighborhood. The Sherman Oaks neighborhood council has established a Land Use and Planning Committee capable of working with current and potential developers in the area. The committee is composed of a broad, representative sample of the neighborhood's different interest groups and also includes professionals that are familiar with land use issues. This committee is now able to monitor and give recommendations on all new development proposed within the neighborhood (DONE – Best Practices).

Problems

Elections

Popular election of board members, despite being a centerpiece of most neighborhood councils in Los Angeles, have been a source of never ending problems for individual councils and DONE. When the council system was first started, it was the responsibility of each individual council to manage their own selection of board members, which was backed up by the advice, but not the organizational strength, or DONE. The lack of experience of local neighborhood organizers and the typical low turnout of local elections (less than 1000 votes cast in almost all neighborhoods) (status report) allowed relatively small groups to exert overwhelming influence in certain elections. Furthermore there has been considerable confusion over elections standards with inconsistent standards for voter status between different councils, different election dates that doesn't match traditional election dates, and many other logistic problems. A 2007 review of DONE written by the Neighborhood Council Review Commission,

ordered by the Los Angeles City Council recommended that the City Clerk should take control of all neighborhood council elections (NCRC). This recommendation was followed, and in December 2007 the City Clerk began the process of integrating neighborhood council elections into the larger city election process. This includes drafting standards for election procedures, providing resources for administering elections, and including information on neighborhood elections in the voter pamphlets mailed to residents (City of Los Angeles)

Bureaucracy

Another problem faced by many neighborhood councils has been complying with the multitude of bureaucratic local and state requirements, including The Brown Act, the California Public Records Act, and financial accountability for handling city funds. Average citizens not educated in civics and law find it difficult to interpret these regulations, even after going through training sessions with staff from DONE (NCRC).

Portland:

Together Portland and Vancouver represent a very different model from both New York and Los Angeles. Whereas the previous cities analyzed have chose to incorporate their neighborhood boards as branches of government, Portland and Vancouver have purposefully allowed their structured their system so that neighborhood councils have maximum independence – rather than being founded by the city the boards are recognized by the city, as long as they comply with certain legal minimum standards (Portland ONI). Now we will take a look at how this system has developed in Portland.

Citywide System

Mission

Portland’s Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) mission is to provide the people of Portland with a framework to “effectively participate in civic affairs and work to improve the livability and character of their neighborhoods and city (League of Women Voters).”

History

The ONI was founded in the 1970’s as a way to channel the newly heightened interest in local civic involvement brought about by political campaigns surrounding redevelopment. It was also seen as a way to satisfy emerging state and federal requirements for public participation in planning. In 1972 the Portland city council ordered a task force to design a citywide structure for neighborhood citizen participation. The task force recommendations were adopted in full and the plan was realized with the passage of Ordinance# 137816, which amended Portland’s City Code Title 3.96 to create an Office of Neighborhood Associations (League of Women Voters)

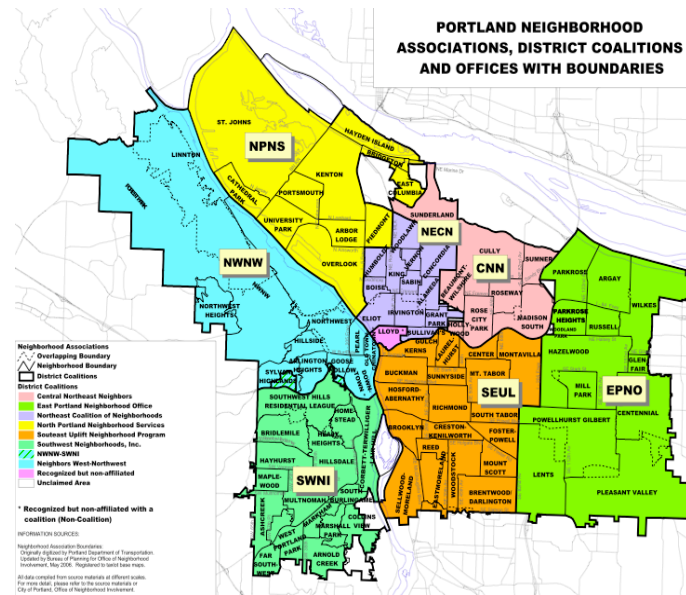
Structure

Today the system of neighborhood associations is a two-tiered structure. At the base are the local, grassroots neighborhood associations, which directly engage the public in civic issues. Their goal is to give advice to city agencies on any issue affecting livability within the city, though in practice they tend to focus on land use, transportation, and crime prevention. The organizations were founded as strong, proactive groups, but over time dwindling city resources and cultural changes have made them into more reactive organizations. Above neighborhood organizations are District Coalitions – district coalitions have the same civic goals as neighborhood associations, but a single District Coalition represents many neighborhood associations. The primary goal of District Coalitions is to serve as a source of funding and provide technical and organizational assistance to their constituent Neighborhood Associations. Today there are 95 Neighborhood Associations and 7 District Coalitions. Among the Neighborhood Associations, 90 are affiliated with District Coalitions, while 5 remain independent. Among the District Coalitions only two are city agencies, the other five have become non-profit organizations, which enter into annual contracts with the central ONI to fund their member association's outreach and planning (League of Women Voters)

Duties of ONI

The duties of the ONI central office include the following

- Assist Neighborhood Associations, District Coalitions and others in planning and developing programs for public involvement, crime prevention, dispute resolution and budget review
- Act as an information clearinghouse and resource to Neighborhood and Business



Associations, other groups and the public

- Enter into, monitor, and administer contracts, and memorandums of understanding for Neighborhood Associations through District Coalitions.
- Promote and facilitate communication amongst City agencies about public involvement best practices and policy
- Support and promote public involvement within the Neighborhood Association framework.
- Adopt and revise standards for recognizing neighborhood Associations and District Coalitions.
- Pursuant to the adopted Standards, formally recognize a Neighborhood Association and/or acknowledge a Business District Associations (City of Portland - Auditor)

Funding

In the 2006-2007 budget the total direct funding for the 7 District Coalitions was \$1.4 Million. The non-profit status of most District Coalitions allows them to engage in independent fundraising including donations, special events, and grant funding to supplement their contracts with the city (City of Portland - ONI)

Individual Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood organizations have two primary roles: to act as liaisons between citizens and the city, and to issue official statements on any subject to any city agency regarding issues that, in the view of their members, affect the livability of their neighborhood. The bylaws observed for this analysis are available both on the city of Portland website **and on the Resource CD.**

Membership

It is a requirement of the ONI that recognized neighborhood associations work to attract a diverse membership, not only members from all areas and social groups within the neighborhood, but also resident, business, and community interests. Typically associations recognize any person who lives, works, owns property or runs a business in

the neighborhood. Though some associations have also made allowances for outsiders to become members if they can make a compelling case to the board that they have an interest in the neighborhood, at which time the board can take a vote to accept or reject them as a member (City of Portland - ONI)

Board Structure

Neighborhood Associations are free to structure themselves in any manner, but most recognized associations have chosen to organize themselves under an executive board model, with at least four core officers: Chairman, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. These officers are then usually accompanied by committee chairs of both standing and ad-hoc committees. Almost all associations elect their executive board members by popular vote, though some associations have space for representatives appointed by outside agencies, such as a representative from their district association. Elected officials typically serve 1 year terms, and are put up for election at an annual general membership meeting. Typically any stakeholder defined by a neighborhood association is eligible to become a board member, though some associations have further requirements: for example candidates may have to have been stakeholders for a certain length of time, say six month, or candidates may have to have a history of ‘actively’ participating in association meetings (City of Portland - ONI)

Funding

Neighborhood Associations are completely independent agencies, and as such they can organize fundraising to support their activities. Most collect voluntary dues from members, but they are forbidden from collecting mandatory dues if they are officially recognized by the city of Portland. Each association’s most important resource, by far, is their district coalition. District coalitions pay for many of the daily expenses of their associations including; mass mailings, meeting space, outreach events, training both association leaders and the public in political issues, among other expenses. They also offer their associations expertise, as they are able to hire experienced community organizers and planning consultants to assist community leaders, and they are able to help coordinate multiple agencies when issues of mutual interest arise (City of Portland - ONI)

Meetings

Many, but not all, of the neighborhood associations observed in Portland have a unique feature, which is that the executive board does not have the final vote on issues; rather it is the individual members of an association that have the final vote, the job of the executive board is to act as a steering committee and offer issues for the general membership to vote on. For this reason there are two types of meetings in most neighborhood associations: board meetings and general membership meetings. Board meetings occur more often than membership meetings, typically monthly, or in the case of very active associations, weekly. The purpose of board meetings is for the board to develop an agenda to place before the membership at the next general meeting as well as to organize the daily operations of the associations, including member outreach, fundraising, and special events. Membership meetings are usually held quarterly or annually, though some very active associations hold monthly member meetings. The purpose of member meetings is for the members in attendance to vote on issues presented by the board in order to craft official statements on city plans and policies. Associations that operate in this fashion usually set a quorum of voting members based on historical attendance of member meetings, requiring half to two-thirds of an average sized audience to cast votes on issues. It is a requirement of the ONI that recognized neighborhood associations must give public notice and keep records of their meetings in accordance with state law.

Vancouver

In most aspects, Vancouver's system of Neighborhood Associations is very similar to Portland's. They have similar history, philosophy, goals and methods. However, Vancouver lack's Portland's two-tiered structure, meaning that rather than using independent district coalitions to support and coordinate neighborhood associations, the central Department of Neighborhoods is left to manage the system citywide. This case study will examine how this difference affects the quality and effectiveness of the organizations. The primary resource is the City of Vancouver's

website – the bylaws of all Neighborhood Associations observed are available both on this website and **on the Resource CD in the back of this report.**

Citywide System

Mission

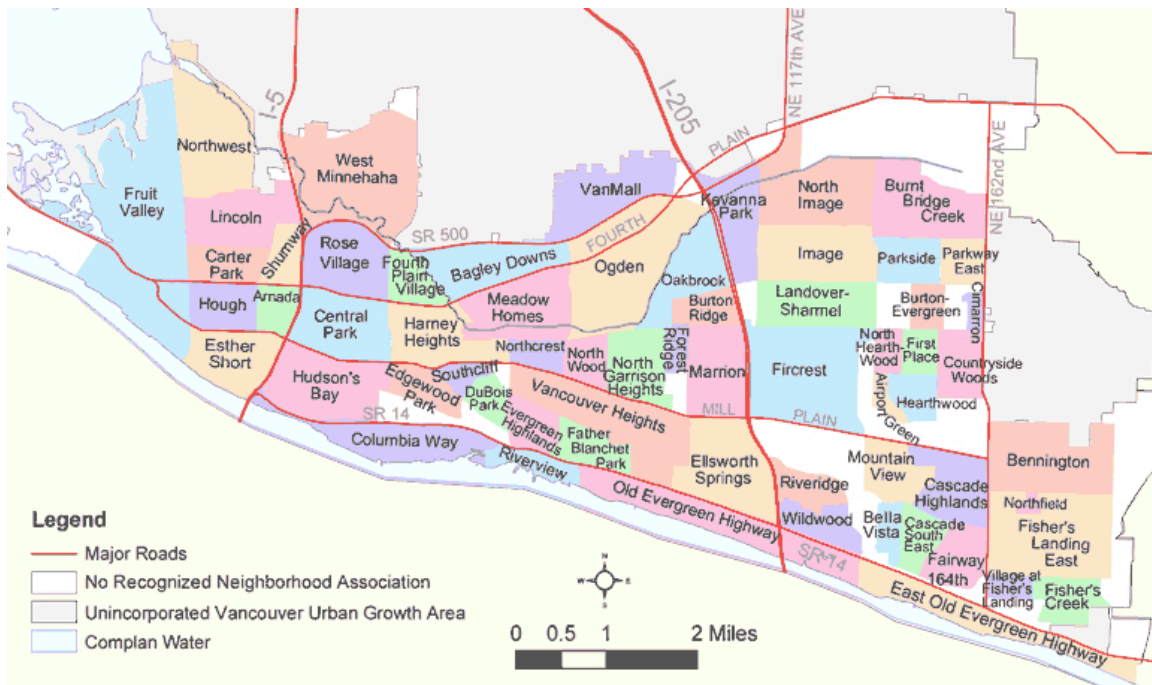
The Office of Neighborhoods provides City residents, City Council and staff with responsive, coordinated services that promote and support collaboration and communication among residents and City government through recognized neighborhood associations (City of Vancouver).

History

Formed only one year after neighboring Portland's system, Vancouver's system of Neighborhood Associations has many similarities to Portland's and has similar roots in the heightened civic participation movements of the 1970's. Neighborhood Associations were first recognized and brought into the system of city planning and policy with the passage of Vancouver Municipal Code 2.75 in 1975. This code created the Office of Neighborhoods, responsible for nominating Neighborhood Associations to the Vancouver city council for official recognition (City of Vancouver)

Purpose

There are 62 recognized Neighborhood Associations in Vancouver today. Recognized Neighborhood Associations are considered to be: self-sustaining, independent civic organizations which recruit diverse representatives from neighborhoods with a defined geographic area; provide community input on the efficiency and effectiveness of the city's delivery of services; Establishing and following clear processes for reporting the association's position on matters affecting their respective neighborhoods; Undertake and manage projects to benefit the neighborhood association as may be agreed upon by the neighborhood association membership or contracted with...public agencies (City of Vancouver).



The purpose of the Office of Neighborhoods is to provide technical assistance to recognized Neighborhood Association, including: neighborhood action planning, outreach and communication with members, grant opportunities, leadership training, and communication with public agencies. Associations are completely independent organizations, which are responsible for their own day-to-day operations and funding with little support from the city. The city of Vancouver may occasionally give grants or make contracts with the Associations; most Association activities are funded through voluntary dues and donations (the city does not recognize Associations that charge mandatory dues), event fundraising and grant funding (City of Vancouver). Now let's look at how individual associations are formed.

Individual Neighborhood Associations

Membership

According to the DON, recognized neighborhood associations must include all residents, property owners, business licensees, and representatives of non-profit organizations within the neighborhood boundaries as members. However some associations have decided that members who do not reside within the boundaries of the

association, while still allowed to participate in association debates, should not have a binding vote on officers or issues brought before the membership (City of Vancouver)

Board structure and selection

Most associations observed followed an executive board model, with at least 4 officers: chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary accompanied by several at-large members or committee chairs. In Vancouver, all recognized association board members must be elected. There are two popular methods of electing these officials. First, members may vote officers into defined positions as executive board members, at large members or committee chairs. Second, members may vote on the entire board as at-large members and allow the board members to hold an internal election to select the executive officers. Board members typically serve 1-year terms, and most observed associations set term limits between 2 and 4 consecutive terms (City of Vancouver).

Funding

Unlike Portland, Vancouver's neighborhood associations are not allocated regular city funds. The city may at times make grants to associations for special projects, but the daily finances of the association are generated through voluntary donations, fundraising and grants. However the city will help associations locate proper funding sources to complete specific projects. One of the few restrictions Vancouver does place on associations, however, is that member dues cannot be mandatory, in that non-payment of dues cannot bar members from regular participation in association events or deny them voting rights (City of Vancouver)

Scope of work

Like Portland, the purpose of Neighborhood Associations in Vancouver is to act as liaisons between citizens and city agencies, and to issue advisory statements on any subject to any agency with regards to issues that affect the livability of their neighborhood (City of Vancouver).

Planning

Neighborhood Associations participate in the city's planning process in two ways. First, they exercise review of changes made by the planning department; any changes made to the city's comprehensive plan require that affected neighborhoods be notified and their input sought. Second, they can develop a "neighborhood action plan," a document that, while not equal to the city's comprehensive plan, establishes the priorities for the city and planning department to focus on in each neighborhood. Neighborhood action plans are the product of specially formed neighborhood planning committees organized in each neighborhood association. Forty-one neighborhoods of the total sixty-two have completed neighborhood action plans (City of Vancouver)

Meetings and decisions making

Most associations observed hold meetings in a similar fashion to Portland's neighborhood associations, with monthly or quarterly board meetings and quarterly biannual or annual general member meetings. Most associations also voted on issues in a similar manner to Portland's neighborhood associations, with board members acting as a steering committee to set meeting agendas and members voting on issues. However some associations included another layer in the decision making process by allowing both board officers and general members to make binding votes, with the board members making the first vote which must be confirmed by the members before an issue is agreed upon. (City of Vancouver)

Seattle:

Seattle's system of neighborhood involvement is unlike any of the others previously reviewed. The heart of the difference is that instead of imposing a city-designed system on the citizens, they allowed existing citizens groups to create it themselves from the bottom-up. In this way it is somewhat similar to Los Angeles, which allows local communities to draw their own borders, name their own issues and form councils on their own terms, except that Seattle started its system based on a system of neighborhood organizations which existed decades before the creation of the program (Diers, 28). Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods is also different because it is a much less formal and much more patchwork organization than the programs observed in other cities. For our analysis it is crucial to realize that in Seattle the neighborhood and district boards do not dominate the department, but rather they are only part of the process under the larger umbrella of the Department of Neighborhoods. For this reason the case study of Seattle will be a bit different – the district boards organized by the city will be briefly discussed, but much more attention must be paid to the citywide system and process as a whole. Seattle does not offer lessons in how to organize neighborhood boards, but it does offer insight into community outreach methods that have been essential to its success.

Citywide System

Mission

The Department of Neighborhoods works to bring government closer to the residents of Seattle by engaging them in civic participation; helping them become empowered to make positive contributions to their communities; and by involving more of Seattle's underrepresented residents, including communities of color and immigrants, in civic discourse, processes, and opportunities. (City of Seattle)

History

The Department of Neighborhoods has its roots in the community activism of the 1970's and 1980's when Seattle was full of active neighborhood organizations. The problem was that most of these groups limited themselves to reactionary politics and developed an adversarial relationship with the city and with each other. The resident

groups were mostly organized to oppose increased growth and density measures, measures that were supported by business organizations and the city government (Diers, 28). To try and calm the community organizations and use the massive amount of public energy more productively, the city allocated \$40,000 to research and design a neighborhood-planning program. The consultants hired for this process issued a report titled “Recommendations on Neighborhood Planning and Assistance” (Diers, 30). The city began to adopt the recommendations the following year by Seattle city council Resolution# 27709, and modified by subsequent Resolutions# 28115 in 1989; Resolution# 28948 and 29015 in 1994 (City of Seattle). Between its creation in 1987 and the late 1990’s, the Department of neighborhoods gradually absorbed other existing neighborhood related city programs, including: the Citizen’s Service Bureau, the Office of Urban Conservation, the P-Patch Program (a community gardening program), and the Neighborhood Planning Office. The mix-and-match nature of the department has contributed to its vitality, allowing it to offer a wide variety of services and programs that ultimately complement each other (Diers, 31).

Neighborhood Organizations

Like Portland and Vancouver, Seattle has a two-tiered system, with individual neighborhood councils forming the foundation, followed by district councils on a higher level. However the philosophy of neighborhood council formation is very different in Seattle than in other cities examined. The Department of Neighborhoods does not actively form or formally recognize individual neighborhood organizations, and thus sets no limits or requirements on their composition, structure or purpose. Instead the DON works to connect with existing neighborhood organizations that have developed organically over time, and provides training and consultation to individuals who wish to start their own organizations in neighborhoods that are traditionally not organized (Diers, 30). Because of this there are hundreds of individual neighborhood councils, ranging from general resident organization and business organizations to ethnic immigrant organizations and faith-based groups, all of which interact with the department of neighborhoods. It is therefore pointless to discuss the structure and composition of these

groups because they have a very different function from general neighborhood organizations.

Districts

District on the other hand are not an organic outgrowth of citizen action but a creation of the Department of Neighborhoods. There are a total of 12 districts, each formed around one of the city's 12 Neighborhood Service Centers. Initially the creation of the districts and district councils to represent them was a highly controversial issue among neighborhood organizations. The city desired a simpler way to interface with the many neighborhood organizations, but the neighborhood organizations feared that the districts might eventually overshadow them as the center of political attention, and maybe even compete with them for scarce public resources. To dispel these fears the Department of Neighborhoods made the District Councils very weak entities and gave the neighborhood organizations tremendous freedom to shape the councils as they saw fit. The DON primarily envisioned the councils as a place to gather all community groups in a district under one roof, allowing them to share ideas with each other and present a unified voice to the city. The city's only requirement was that councils include a mix of different interest groups, with at least some representatives from both resident and business organizations (Diers, 44).



The key difference between Seattle's District Councils and the neighborhood councils observed in many other cities is that the constituent members of each council are

not individuals, but rather organizations – in effect they are councils of councils. District councils have no set number of board members, but rather consist of one representative from each resident group, business group, and community group within the districts boundaries. Some districts have gone further and include such organizations as school boards, parent-teacher associations, and large social organizations. There are no term limits and no official selection process. Representatives are typically either the president of the member organization or a special delegate of the organization who volunteers to sit on the district council. Each district manages its own funding, as many of the member organizations are non-profits or are otherwise experienced in fundraising, though they do receive certain resources through the Neighborhood Service Center assigned to them, including meeting space, outreach assistance and consulting services. Districts cannot apply for the city's Neighborhood Matching Funds, though the member organizations may use the district as a platform to coordinate their applications for matching funds to launch joint projects (Diers, 44).

Neighborhood Service Centers

Neighborhood services centers are one of the most important aspects of Seattle's outreach approach. There are 12 centers around the city, one in each district, and they act as a one-stop-shop for access to nearly all city services, a sort of physical 311 program. At services centers citizens can find information about all neighborhood organizations in the city, request city services, and lodge complaints. Citizens may also pay public utility bills, apply for passports, licenses, buy transportation passes, and even have minor court cases, including parking and traffic tickets, heard by a magistrate. This wide variety of services attracts people from all parts of the community – rich and poor, politically involved and politically apathetic, people of all races, immigrants and citizens. Staff then use this opportunity to acquaint people with the city's neighborhood programs and direct encourage them to get involved by directing them to appropriate organizations (Diers, 44).

Neighborhood Matching Fund

The Neighborhood Matching Fund is an integral part of the neighborhoods system. The fund is sets aside special money from the city for grants to neighborhood

associations, which associations may use for specific neighborhood improvement projects. By giving neighborhoods these resources, the Department of Neighborhoods enables associations to take a proactive role in realizing their neighborhood plans. But associations don't just receive the money automatically; first members must do fundraising on their own and build up a reserve of cash or obtain commitment of goods and services to be donated by members, only then can they apply for a grant from the fund, which will match whatever resources members were able to gather on their own. The fund currently has 4.5 million dollars in it, and is a central tool used in implementing neighborhood plans (Diers, 55).

The Neighborhood Planning Process

With regard to neighborhood planning, this process culminated in 1995 with the creation of the Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO), later absorbed by the Department of Neighborhoods. The NPO was a limited entity that set out to create a comprehensive 20-year plan for Seattle. It empowered neighborhoods by creating a 4.5 million dollar fund, which neighborhoods could use to hire professional planners and create their own neighborhood plan. According to Jim Diers, founding director of the Department of Neighborhoods, the Seattle neighborhood planning process differed from other cities community planning efforts in several important ways

- Neighborhoods voluntarily initiated the planning process, thus avoiding the usual suspicions over city planner's motives and ensuring that only the most dedicated communities drafted plans.
- Neighborhoods defined their own planning area – instead of being confined by census tracts or other artificial divisions, neighborhoods drew the borders of their plans according to their own sensibilities.
- Neighborhoods set the scope of the plan, including only issues of central importance to their community.
- Neighborhoods selected and hired their own city planners, allowing them to work with individual that shared their personal vision and goals (Diers, 128).

It is important to note that the outcome of these plans was beneficial both to neighborhoods and to the city government. All 37 neighborhoods offered the opportunity to create a plan participated; 30,000 people in all participated in the planning process; their plans passed review by the city with minimal argument; and despite the fact that many of the constituent resident organizations were originally formed in opposition to growth and density, none of the neighborhoods made an attempt to reduce city growth targets, and in fact some neighborhoods voluntarily accepted more growth than originally planned. However, in practice these stewards have very little control over plan implementation, which is carried out either by the city, the Department of Neighborhoods, or neighborhood organizations through the matching funds program (Diers, 128).

Implementation of Neighborhood Plans

A new mayor, Paul Schell, took power just as the neighborhood planning process was coming to an end, and he made the implementation of the plans a key part of his administration. Citywide implementation of neighborhood plans has been a three-step process:

1. Decentralize city departments – The mayor was very committed to the success of the plans, and was willing to restructure all major city agencies to accommodate the plans. He split each agency into six separate, geographically defined service areas, each of which worked to incorporate aspects of the neighborhood plans within their service area into their work
2. Use ballot initiatives – When the mayor took office there were a total of 4,277 plan recommendations identified by neighborhoods, and only 1.85 million dollars (~\$50,000 per plan) to implement them. To overcome this the Department of Neighborhoods identified common themes across neighborhood plans and worked with the mayor and city council to make these issues into ballot initiatives to raise funds through bonds. An example of this was the expansion and renovation of branch libraries across the city, or the creation of nine community centers. In all

this process has raised over \$470 million in bonds, the vast majority of which directly funded neighborhood-planning goals.

3. Increase the Neighborhood Matching Fund – Seattle’s neighborhood organizations are highly involved in implementing plan goals through the initiation of local projects, and by increasing the Neighborhood Matching Fund from \$1.5 million to \$4.5 million hundreds of plan recommendations have been implemented (Diers, 128)

Local responsibility for neighborhood plans is not a simple matter. It is not only districts or neighborhood councils that have responsibility for implementing plans on the local level. Each of the 38 neighborhood plans has an identified “neighborhood steward,” an individual responsible for overseeing the implementation of each plan. In some cases stewards are representatives from district councils, but in other cases they can be from community groups, chambers of commerce, homeowners associations, or even land use sub-committees of neighborhood or district councils (City of Seattle).

Taskforce Survey

Purpose

While not part of the original scope of work, we decided that in order to make recommendations to the task force we first required an idea of their expectations. The task force members have a more intimate knowledge of Western SoMa than any other group, and thus their input is essential. The survey was designed to give taskforce members the chance to choose their ideal structure for the future implementation board.

Methods

It was administered while at a “town hall meeting” held on April 23rd from 7-9pm, which was hosted by the taskforce for community members to review the draft community plan. Interviewers approached as many members of the taskforce as possible at the meeting, and with the exception of two members who left the meeting early, all task force members in attendance were surveyed. Out of the 22 member task force in place at the time of the survey, we received a total of 13 responses. A copy of the survey instrument and the raw data collected can be referenced in Appendix D and E of this report.

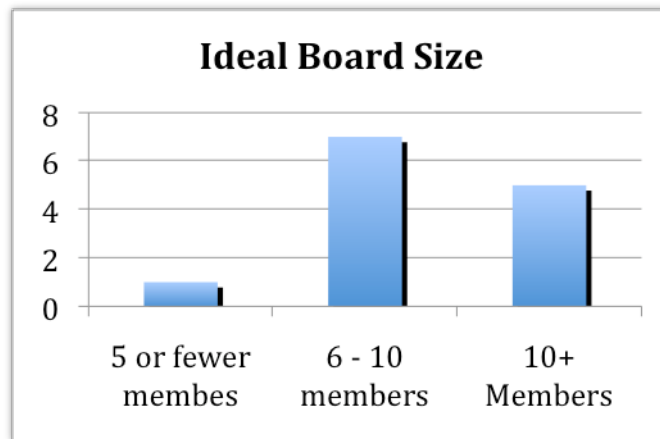
Survey design

The survey consisted of eight questions in total: The first question established a member’s length of residency within Western SoMa, if applicable; two more questions asked members to rank their satisfaction with the current taskforce on a scale of 1 (Satisfied) to 5 (Unsatisfied); three closed ended questions sought feedback on specific structural elements of members ideal implementation boards, these included board size , the selection process for board members, and the potential for introducing term limits on board members; the final two questions were open ended and allowed members to list their personal suggestions for what could be done to improve upon current conditions of the taskforce, and what the ideal relationship for the implementation board and the city would be, following the adoption of the community plan.

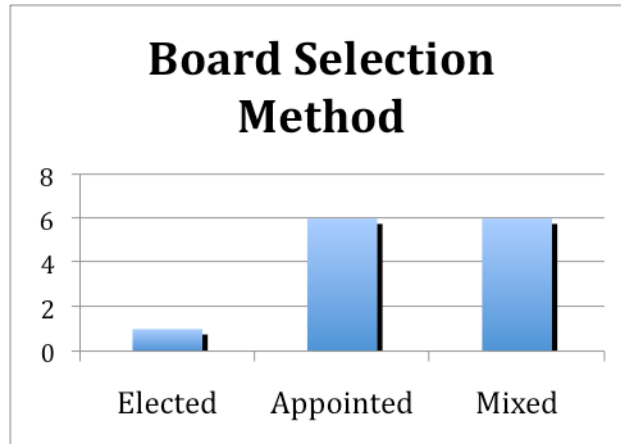
Analysis

Of the members surveyed, four members did not live within the western SoMa area; six members had lived within the area for 4-10 years; and four members had lived within the area for more than ten years. The responses for the rating of the current taskforce have been excluded from this report because some of the responses were suspected of being mismarked – in the course of conducting interviews it seems some members misinterpreted the 1-5 scale and may have marked that they were satisfied instead of unsatisfied, or unsatisfied instead of satisfied. For this reason we did not feel it was responsible to report the results of this report.

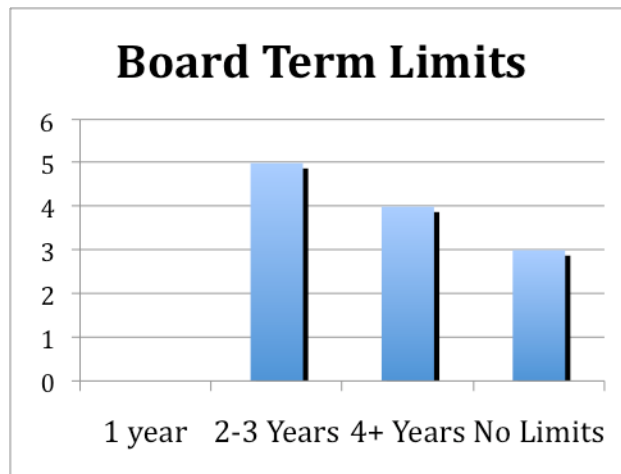
Structural Questions



Members were split on how large a future neighborhood plan implementation board should be. Five of thirteen members stated that the board should consist of at least ten members – some of these respondents also stated that they were satisfied with the taskforce’s current structure, and did not want to see it changed substantially going forward. The majority of members, seven of thirteen, favored a slightly smaller, but still large and diverse 6-10 member board. Only one member favored a much smaller board of five or fewer members.



Respondents were very split about how board members should be selected. Nearly half the respondents, six of thirteen, want to see the process stay the same as the current taskforce, with all the membership being appointed by city officials. However an equal number of members also favor introducing some elected positions. Only one respondent favored popular election of the entire board.



The term limits for individual board members was the final structural question we addressed in the survey. Of those surveyed, no respondents favored 1 year terms, five favored 2-3 year terms, four favored term of 4 years or more, and three favored no term limits. One member also commented that while not desiring any specific term limits, they would like to see board members make a minimum commitment of at least 2 years. Other members stated that continuity of board members was very important to them, and expressed concern that term limits would be an unnecessary and artificial restriction.

Open-ended questions

The final questions addressed a broad spectrum of issues, the full list can be referenced in Appendix E of this report. In general the suggestions fell into several categories: first, even though the Board of Supervisors has been very politically supportive of the taskforce, members would like to see a greater budget commitment for their work. Second, although a representative of the planning department already sits on the taskforce, members would like to see more substantive support from the rest of the planning department. Third, members would like meetings to be better organized, including encouraging members to attend more meetings and arrive on time, more thorough background preparation for meetings, and tighter control of time limits on agenda items. Finally, some members stated that there needed to be more of a focus on working class families, especially affordable housing as well as youth and senior issues.

When asked what they envisioned as the implementation board's relationship with the city, some members stated a desire for a purely advisory role, while others stated an interest in active policy implementation. Other suggestions included staff support from the planning department to work on neighborhood issues, increasing accountability of board members, and engaging in active review and advising on specific development projects and proposals from the city and developers.

Recommendations

Building on our findings from our case studies, we have put together a set of recommendations for the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force. These recommendations are purely advisory and are intended only as a guide for members of the taskforce to consider as they plan how to move forward.

Scope of work

While not a direct question on the survey, we received multiple comments from task force members warning that a future implementation board's scope of work and power should be purely advisory. Based on our case studies we agree with this assessment. None of the cities profiled give their neighborhood councils more than advisory powers. A neighborhood advisory council's real power should not be derived from power given to it by the city, but rather from its own legitimacy. What Western SoMa offers the city of San Francisco is a chance for more efficient and more effective public hearings on local issues, which by itself is enough power.

The first role we envision for a future Western SoMa plan implementation board has two parts. First, they should be involved with a case-by-case review of projects from both the private and public sector. This means that they should issue official advisory statements on any change in policy or land use in the neighborhood that the people of the neighborhood feel affects their standard of living. Of course it is not practical to expect the council to review every single project in a neighborhood as dynamic and ever changing as Western SoMa; rather the neighborhood council should establish a framework that prioritizes certain projects over others. We suggest that two the first criteria should be the impact of the project; projects which have an obvious impact on important community issues such as health and safety of the neighborhood should be reviewed before projects where the impact is small. The second criteria should be size of the project. It would not be practical appropriate for the implementation board to involve itself with every small change which individual landowners may choose to make to their property; we feel that large projects, such as new apartment complexes or major transportation projects should take priority over much smaller proposals. Ultimately,

however, it will be up to the current task force and future implementation board to determine exactly how to prioritize issues.

The community plan already drafted by the taskforce is a powerful reflection of the values of the people of Western SoMa, however as the neighborhood grows and changes a future implementation board should have the flexibility to grow outside of the confines of the plan. For this reason the second role we envision for a future implementation board is as a community forum where the concerns of local people may be collected, reported on, and if necessary acted upon proactively.

Board Size

We envision the future plan implementation board being much smaller than the current taskforce. In our survey most members agreed, with eight out of the thirteen respondents desiring a board of 10 members or less. We recommend that the permanent board should in fact be somewhat smaller than that. We propose a permanent board of 5 executive officers, identified as the chair, vice chair, treasurer, secretary, and communications liaison. To clarify, the communications liaison would interact with both the public and city officials, acting as the ‘voice’ of the board. This 5-member board could efficiently carry out the day-to-day business of the body. To supplement the executive officials the board could, as necessary, create ad-hoc committees to address specific issues, with a committee chairperson that would have a temporary position on the council. Committee members and committee chairpersons could be selected to represent a variety of community stakeholders. We feel that the large and very broad membership of the current task force, while essential to creating a community plan, could be a problem for a future implementation board that might be expected to issue advice in a more timely manner. Under our proposal the task force would retain the ability to represent a broad section of the neighborhood by appointing stakeholder representatives as necessary, but also benefit from the efficiency of a much smaller board.

Board selection

We envision all executive board members as being appointed by the Board of Supervisors. In our survey taskforce members overwhelmingly supported appointment as a means of selecting board members. We briefly considered popular election of members, however after our case study analysis we decided this would pose many problems within the Western SoMa context. Although most of the cities observed feature popular election of their councils, we felt that this would not be a practical option for a single neighborhood council without the support of a citywide system to assist the council in maintaining election integrity. Los Angeles allowed their neighborhood councils to run their own elections, and although some neighborhoods were able to run them successfully, many neighborhoods became divided by election issues and plagued by corruption and uneven voter turnout. We feel there is a serious danger of an election system for a Western SoMa council being abused unless the city was willing to devote much greater resources to establishing a reliable method of polling. We think the executive officials should serve for two-year terms before they are up for re-appointment.

We envision the committees and committee chairs to be appointed by the permanent executive officials. These committee members could be appointed on an as-needed basis for limited terms, perhaps one year, before their appointment is put up for review by the executive officers. The task force would also need to establish a system of accountability for both types of board member. This was not reviewed in our case studies, however we recommend that board members should at minimum be subject to removal for continued on-attendance, as under current task-force bylaws. We also feel that board members should be able to initiate a vote of no confidence in the case of a fellow member who is not adequately representing the interests of the neighborhood. This vote of no confidence could then be conveyed to the board of supervisors for their consideration.

Meetings and Decision Making

We feel that the primary responsibility of the executive board members should be to act as a steering committee, prioritizing the issues to be focused on at meetings. We feel that some aspects of the decision making structure from Portland and Vancouver

should be incorporated into this body. The board could hold monthly meetings where it would select the most important projects to review and the most important community issues to address. During these board meetings board members could take a vote and establish their own position on the selected agenda items. The board members would then present the issue at regularly scheduled or specially convened community meetings – at the end of the meeting a vote of community members in attendance could be taken. Both the board vote and community vote could be incorporated as part of the board's official advisory statements to city officials and developers. Specially arranged community charrettes organized around particular projects – as many community charrettes as are necessary to establish a community consensus - could also supplement regularly scheduled meetings. These charrettes would act as a replacement for the public hearings typically organized by the planning department.

Funding sources

It is unclear what the source of funding for this board should be, as the source and level of funding available from the city depends on the political will of the supervisors. Most cities reviewed allocate money directly from the general fund. Many councils also raise money independently, however this ability is limited by their legal affiliation with the city. In Los Angeles neighborhood councils have run into problems fundraising due to their status as city agencies, which means that all donations or other financial assistance must be directed through and accepted by the city council; they are still working on a legal solution to this issue. It is unclear if the same problem would be faced in San Francisco, and the issue requires further research. However, even if legal limitations exist councils in both Los Angeles and New York have been able to work around this problem by partnering with outside non-profits in order to establish an independent channel for fundraising.

Other

Another useful tool to copy from other cities would be the establishment of an early notification system, similar to that of Los Angeles or New York's ULURP. The implementation board could work with the planning department to develop a method of

automatically identifying projects, which fall within their jurisdiction and are eligible for review.

This also speaks to a larger issue, which is the essential nature of city support. All of the cities reviewed have large city support structure, which give them financial backing as well as technical and organizational assistance. We realize this may not be possible within Western SoMa since the organization is an isolated group rather than part of a citywide system, however we recommend that they current taskforce may use its good relationship with the Board of Supervisors and planning department to leverage additional resources as it makes the shift from a planning body to implementation board. In exchange for these resources the future board can offer the city a much more efficient and legitimate venue for public hearings on proposed projects and developments, as well as a clear communication channel to the people of Western SoMa.

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Appendix A



COMMUNITY PLANNING – AN ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

BACKGROUND

In 2004, the SFSU seniors did some South of Market land use inventory, database creation and mapping work for Urban Solutions with Peter Cohen acting as project manager. The senior class in 2006 continued and expanded this inventory and planning analysis work. By 2007, the senior class worked in two teams to prepare reports and recommendations to the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force on refinements to housing opportunity sites analysis methodologies and transportation recommendations. As the Task Force begins to complete the community plan recommendations, during the first half of 2008, their needs now move needed considerations of ongoing implementation and monitoring of their Plan.

The Western SoMa Citizen's Planning Task Force is now in need of best practice surveys of other American cities where Neighborhood Boards, Neighborhood Councils, Citizen Advisory Committees, etc. have been authorized to work on implantation effort of a community vision or Plan. This Task Force appointed by the Board of Supervisors is unique in that it provides one of the first formalized local efforts where citizens lead a participatory democratic planning and rezoning program.

Western SoMa Citizen's Planning Task Force – Values Statement

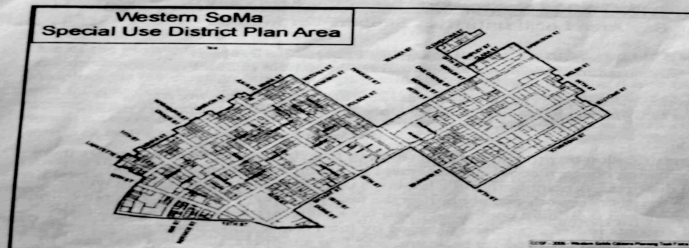
The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force shall promote neighborhood qualities and scale that maintain and enhance, rather than destroy, today's living, historic and sustainable neighborhood character of social, cultural and economic diversity, while integrating appropriate land use, transportation and design opportunities into equitable, evolving and complete neighborhoods. Throughout the life of this Task Force, the membership shall respect one another, be responsive to the constituencies they represent and foster a citizen-based democratic decision-making process.

This student project work would fit perfectly into a work program where citizen's initiated neighborhood plan implementation involvement and recommendations are needed for the Task Force. My name is Paul Lord and I worked as project manager with the two SFSU student groups in both 2006 and 2007. My staff and I will be available to help guide the student consultant efforts. Peter Cohen, now with Asian Neighborhood Design, continues his work in the South of Market under a contract with the Planning Department to provide technical planning services to the Task Force and will also provide advisory guidance on the student consultant project.

PROPOSED STUDENT CONSULTANT TEAM PROJECT

The Western SoMa Citizen's Planning Task Force (<http://www.sfgov.org/westernsoma>) will be the client for this project. The members of the Task Force after working for three years to develop a set of recommendations for their Community Plan want to maintain an ongoing role in the land use development decisions that occur in their neighborhood. Other cities, like LA's Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, have formalized processes for citizens to be involved in the ongoing development decisions that are made in and for their neighborhoods. The Task Force needs to better understand from the spectrum of USA experiences the state of this formalized citizen's involvement in the plan implementation. How are these neighborhood advisory groups selected, how long do they serve, what is the level of their authority, are they budgeted by cities, counties or states are just a few questions that the Task Force needs answered. More questions will be raised and the student consultant team can help provide useful guidance and recommendations on this important question of local citizen's empowerment in planning and land use decisions.

The student consultant team will work with staff and the Task Force members to provide detailed best practices information from other planning jurisdictions and an analysis of what might work in the Western SoMa neighborhood. The results of this work will provide background for the development of an on-going implementation component of the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force Neighborhood Plan proposal to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.



DELIVERABLES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS

1. Evaluate and summarize key characteristics of neighborhood (citizen based) implementation groups across the USA.
2. Prepare best practices analysis of the five most relevant models for citizen groups being formal active participants in local land use recommendations and decision making.
3. Make a set of written recommendations on which model for citizen involvement will work in Western SoMa specifically and San Francisco generally.

CONTACT

Paul Lord (UC Berkeley, MCP 1980) - Senior Planner working in the Director's Office and 20+ year veteran of the SF Planning Department who taught Alternative Urban Futures at SFSU (1990-1991). I serve as the San Francisco Planning Department's designated appointee to the Western SoMa Citizen's Planning Task Force (558-6311, paul.lord@sfgov.org).

Appendix B – Scope of work agreement

Team:

Nick Tagas
Derek Perry
Seth Newsome

Scope of Work

Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force
Best Practices Analysis and Recommendations

Client:

Paul Lord, Senior Planner, SF Planning Department
Western SoMa Citizen's Task Force

Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task-Force - Values Statement

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task-force shall promote neighborhood qualities and scale that maintain and enhance, rather than destroy, today's living, historic and sustainable neighborhood character of social, cultural and economic diversity, while integrating appropriate land use, transportation and design opportunities into equitable, evolving and complete neighborhoods. Throughout the live of this Task-Force, the membership shall respect one another, be responsive to the constituencies they represent and foster a citizen-based democratic decision-making process.

Project Background

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task-force has been given a unique opportunity to lead one of the first local efforts at democratic, community-based planning in San Francisco. In 2004 Urban Studies students in the senior seminar class worked as consultants on the creation of database and maps as part of an inventory of existing land use within the neighborhood; in 2006 student consultants continued to update this inventory, as well as offering specific land use and design recommendations.

The Task-Force is now nearing the completion of a Community Plan and is ready to move into a new phase of implementation rather than planning. The Task-Force is now in need of specific recommendations for how to politically structure themselves to better accomplish this new mission. They have proposed this as a project for the Senior Seminar students of 2008, and our team has taken on the job of consulting the Task-Force by providing a best-practices survey of other American cities Neighborhood Boards, Neighborhood Councils and other participatory, democratic planning bodies.

Scope of Work

Phase I Start-up - 02/18/08 - 03/06/08

- Meet client and become familiar with the project background
- Create and agree to contractual scope-of-work for the project

Phase II Research Best Management Practices - 02/21/08 - 03/21/08

- Look for examples of other metropolitan cities and how they facilitate BMP's for citizen plan implementation boards and councils.

Phase III - Analyze data collected, draft recommendations - 03/17/08 - 04/18/08

- Compare and contrast other cities BMP's and find what works best for the city of San Francisco.
- Create five case studies of programs in other cities applicable to SoMa
- Prepare a Best Management Practices program or template. which can be adopted by the Western SoMa Citizen's Task Force and to other neighborhoods within San Francisco.

Phase IV - Present Findings - 04/16/08 - 05/21/08

- Deliver a powerpoint presentation of our findings to a jury of Urban Studies Faculty, invited professionals and classmates.
- Possibly present our findings with Paul Lord to the Western SoMa Citizen's Task Force at the end of May.
- Submit a written report with specific recommendations for restructuring the task-force as an advisory neighborhood council/board.

Deliverables

- Written report, consisting of best practices analysis of neighborhood planning programs and specific recommendations or a model program for use in Western SoMa and the city at large.

Approved on March 6th, 2008 by:

Paul Lord,
Senior Planner - WSCPTF

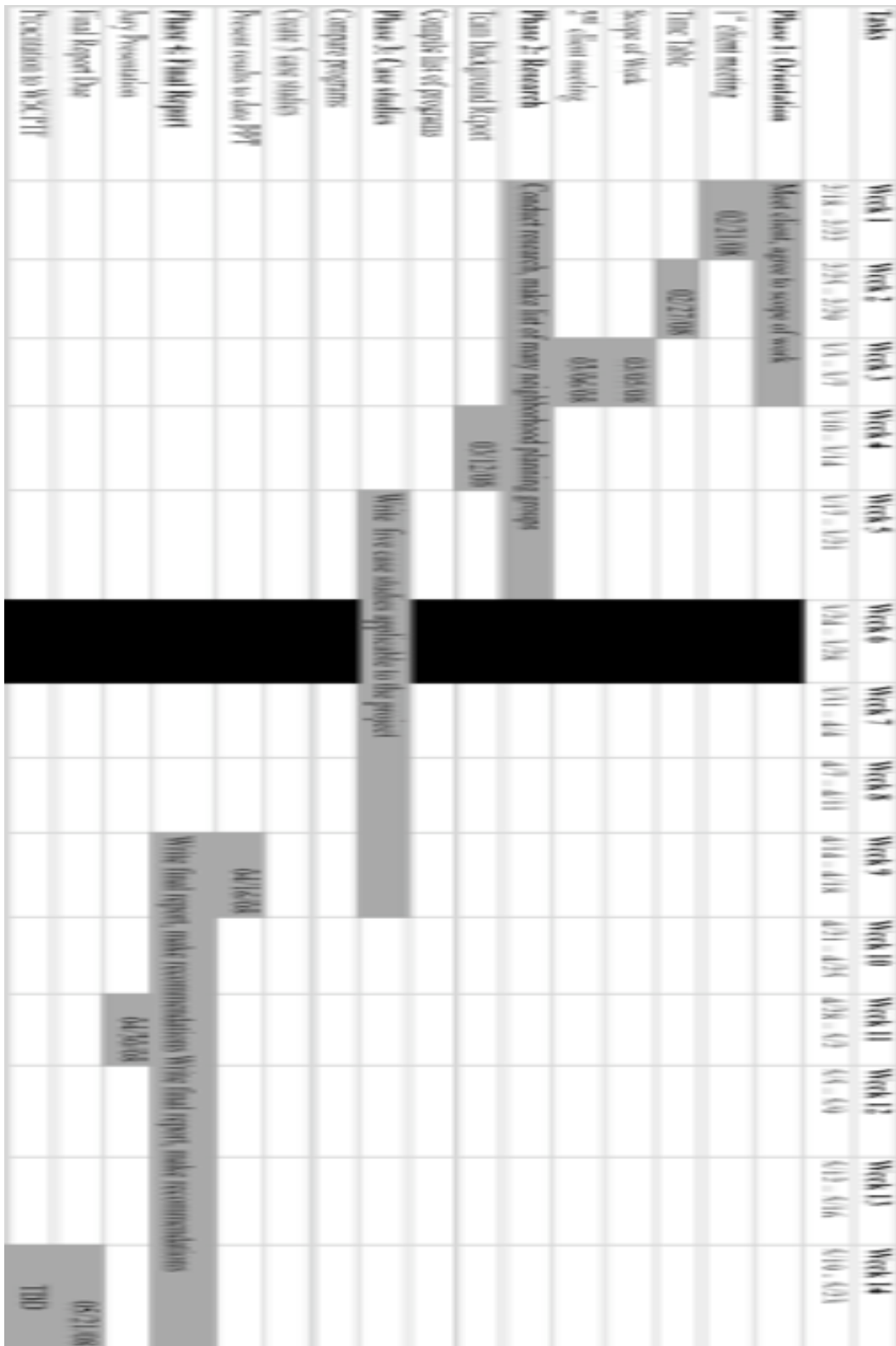


Nick Tagas _____

Derek Perry _____

Seth Newsome _____

Appendix C – Gantt Chart



Appendix D – Taskforce Survey



To: Members of Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force

From: Nick Tagas, Seth Newsome, Derek Perry
Students of San Francisco State University-Urban Studies Senior Seminar

Re: Survey of desired best practices for a permanent neighborhood planning council

WE NEED YOUR HELP SO THAT WE CAN HELP YOU

Acting as a consultant team from San Francisco State University, we are researching the models and best practices for neighborhood councils. The potential size, structure and scope of work of this future Western SoMa plan implementation board is being evaluated and considered in our research. We now need your help and input to help shape this potential Western SoMa Community Plan Implementation Advisory Board.

We have a brief survey that we would like you to fill out after the general meeting on April 23rd. This survey should take no more than five (5) minutes and will be administered by the three of us simultaneously to better expedite the survey process. With your help we intend to make best practice recommendations to establish a permanent neighborhood planning council for Western SoMa.

9:00-9:04pm	Kaye Griffin Luke Lightning Dennis Juarez	9:20-9:24pm	Susan Hagen Contreras Chester Fung John Elberling
9:05-9:09pm	Henry Karnilowicz Anthony Faber Lynn Valentine	9:25-9:29pm	Jazzie Collins Skot Kulper MC Canlas
9:10-9:14pm	Dan Becco April Veneracion Antoinetta Stadiman	9:30-9:34pm	Charles Breidinger Toby Levy Jim Meko
9:15-9:19pm	Marc Salomon Tom Radulovich Lily Farhang		

Appendix D – Taskforce Survey



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1. How long have you lived in the neighborhood? _____
2. How satisfied are you with the current draft of the community plan for Western SoMa? _____

(circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Satisfied				Unsatisfied

3. In terms of efficiency, how would you rate the current Task Force?

(circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
Satisfied				Unsatisfied

4. How many members should serve on the proposed implementation board? (check one)

_____ Less than 5 voting members
 _____ 6 - 10 voting members
 _____ 10+ voting members

5. How should members of the proposed implementation board be selected? (check one)

_____ Appointed by the Board of Supervisors, the same as the existing Task Force?
 _____ Popularly elected by the people of SoMa?
 _____ A mixture of these methods?

6. How long should member of proposed implementation board serve? (check one)

_____ 1 year
 _____ 2 - 3 years
 _____ 4 years
 _____ Other

EXPLAIN

7. Please list up to three things that you feel could be done to improve the current structure or operation of the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

8. After the Western SoMa Community Plan has been approved, what do you envision as the proposed implementation board's relationship with the City Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors?

Appendix E – Programs in other cities

City	Population	# of NCs	Pop/# of NCs	Name	Legal Status	Powers
New York, NY	8,009,000	59	135,746	Community Boards	Autonomous city agencies	Advise elected officials; have input into city budget process and land use decisions
Los Angeles, CA	3,820,000	81	47,140	Neighborhood Councils	Considered to be city agencies	Designed to receive early warning of all city decisions, and have input into city budget, land use, utility rate-setting, and other issues
Houston, TX	1,954,000	88	22,205	Super Neighborhood Councils	Independent organizations (can organize as 501(c)3)	Devise neighborhood plans and may impact citywide policy through a citywide alliance
Columbus, OH	711,500	13	54,731	Area Commissions	City agencies subject to the same restrictions as other city agencies. Commissions cannot become nonprofit corporations	Identify problems, aid communications, review government operations, recommend nominees for city boards and commissions.
Portland, OR	529,200	95	5,571	Neighborhood Associations	Independent; some are incorporated as non profits	Make recommendations to any City agency on any topic affecting the livability of the neighborhood.
Minneapolis, MN	382,700	81	4,725	Neighborhood Revitalization Program	Independent neighborhood organizations	Develop (and help implement) Neighborhood Action Plans. Considerable authority over \$20 million per year from the city.
St. Paul, MN	287,200	19	15,116	District Councils	Independent, 501(c)3 organizations	Advise City Council
Raleigh, NC	276,100	18	15,339	Citizen Advisory Councils	Independent community organizations	Advise City Council
Anchorage, AK	260,300	38	6,850	Community Councils	Nonprofit, voluntary, self-governing associations	Give input on city decisions; create citizen participation plans for major projects.
Tacoma, WA	193,600	8	24,200	Neighborhood Councils	Independent, non-profit citizen organizations	Advise City Council
Dayton, OH	166,200	7	23,743	Priority Boards	Independent organizations	Set neighborhood priorities; advise city government; analyze city budget.
Vancouver, WA	143,600	60	2,393	Neighborhood Associations	Private organizations	Provide input to public agencies
Eugene, OR	137,900	21	6,567	Neighborhood Associations	Organization charters approved by City Council; legal status undetermined	Inform and advocate within city system.
Simi Valley, CA	111,400	4	27,850	Neighborhood Councils	City agencies subject to the Brown Act and supported by city staff	Advise city council
Missoula, MT	57,060	20	2,853	Neighborhood Councils	Semi-autonomous city agencies under auspices of City Clerk	Advise city council
Great Falls, MT	56,690	9	6,299	Neighborhood Councils	City agencies subject to same restrictions as other city agencies	Advise city government

<http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com/documents/finalReport.pdf>