

Youth Hands! Youth Voices!

Youth Policy Engagement Through Local Action Projects

A toolkit for youth organizers

Draft One

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Written by: Linda Geggie, Groundworks

For Youth Action Effecting Change

Table of Contents

Forward

Introduction

Section One: Youth Voices in Communities

How are youth voices heard in our communities and why it is important? Of the avenues that youth participate in, we focus on how youth in British Columbia are engaging in policy making through their role in leading community projects. We have found that this avenue, although not normally recognized, is the most common and effective way that youth voices are shaping policy at the local level. This local level involvement in turn can effect broader policy frameworks at the regional, national and international levels.

Section Two: Stories

What are some stories about what youth and youth groups have done to effect policy through their local action projects? Each story will include strategies and tools they used to link their action projects to effecting policy and planning locally and beyond.

Section Three: Your Government

Decisions and planning about your community happen at different levels, What types of decisions get made at what levels? What is Municipal Government, its role, structure, and function? How do decisions get made? What is the role of citizens and how do citizens influence decisions and planning at the Municipal Level?

Section Four: Tools

What are the tools that we can use to help us impact policies and planning that will support our ideas and projects?

- The mini guide to Finding, Talking to, and working with Local Government Officials
- Community Mapping

Section Five: Resources

Do you want more information? Here are some web links to expand on the information provided and also a list of the groups and their contacts that have been highlighted in the manual.

Forward

Healthy communities are built by the active engagement of its members. The broader the involvement of members in envisioning, and working towards livable and sustainable communities, the more responsive those communities are to the needs and interests of all its citizens. If young people are to feel a part of a community, and some responsibility towards it, they must have a voice and venues for participating in its creation.

In the past local governments have tried many different ways to engage youth in decision making in their communities. Some of these ways are through Youth Councils, Youth Task Forces, and youth sitting on Boards and Committees. The reviews of this approach are mixed from both local government and youth. Often the formal forums for engagement are foreign and unappealing to most young people. In addition through these channels it is difficult for them to see any actual impact on decision making.

This manual explores how young people are making a difference in their communities by initiating and participating in projects that work towards their vision of a healthier community. In the process of doing the hands-on project work it is often necessary to connect with and to work alongside local decision makers. This can result in changing or creating policies and influencing planning not only at the local level but also regionally, nationally and internationally. The youth are making a difference today through their projects, and they are also working with decision makers to change and create policies that support their ideas for the future.

Many of these young people are connected through the Youth Action Effecting Change initiative (YAEC). The YAEC network currently involves over 30 youth organizations from across British Columbia and the Yukon. These youth organizations are working on local issues such as food security and sustainable agriculture, greener cities and economies, climate change and transportation, health and well-being, alternative technologies, habitat restoration and natural areas conservation.

This manual is dedicated to these groups, just as it is designed primarily for them. It provides information, tools and resources that help link our community based work to engagement in policy and planning at the local level and how this can further influence policy at regional national, and international levels.

Our hope is that the stories about the groups accomplishments are inspiring, and the information provided will build our collective capacity to better link our community work to policy change.

We would like to thank the youth groups, councilors, and municipalities for providing their stories, and the many people who provided mentorship and guidance in the creation of this manual. Many thanks to the Environmental Youth Alliance for planting the seed and nurturing the Youth Action Effecting Change initiative, to the Groundworks Learning Centre for their support and to our Funders and Partners at Environment

Canada, the Voluntary Sector Initiative, and the Office of Learning Technologies of HRDC, Community Learning Network Program.

Who is this manual for?

The manual is designed for youth ages 16-29, youth organizations, and organizations that work with youth. It should also be useful to citizens of all ages who want to learn more about how local government works and how they can work with their local government to effect local decision making. The manual will also be of value to municipal decision makers in looking at possible opportunities to engage youth in decision making in a way that is congruent with their formal processes and parameters, but also in a way that resonates with youth.

Introduction

This manual is meant to assist you in your work to make a positive difference in your community. It is focused on providing youth and youth organizations with information and tools that will assist them in working with their local governments to be able to plan and implement their ideas for community projects.

Are you interested in making a community garden or park, cleaning up a stream, creating bike paths or lanes in your neighborhood or around your school? Is there something that you think your local government could be doing better?

Since the majority of community projects involve issues that are dealt with at the local level, it is important to get a better understanding of how local government and decision making works. Many of us do not have the foggiest idea of who we need to talk to, or how things work at City Hall, but in order to move our projects forward we need to get up to speed. We hope this manual is going to help you!

Our Objectives:

- To explain how local action projects link to policy making and why this is a valuable avenue for youth to participate in local decision making
- To highlight stories of youth led community initiatives in British Columbia that led to young people engaging in policy creation at the local level
- To help you understand what your local governments do and how they function
- To provide you with tools and resources that help you find a point of access for your issue or concern and how to move forward working with decision makers

How to use the manual.

This manual is divided into sections related to our objectives. The first section is a brief overview of how youth engage in policy and why it is important. Of the avenues that youth are involved in, we focus on how youth in British Columbia are engaging in policy making through their role in leading community projects. We have found that this avenue, although not normally recognized, is the most common and effective way that youth voices are shaping policy at the local level and also influences policy at other levels.

The second section is about stories. They are stories about how youth have worked successfully with local governments to have their voices heard and how many of the groups have effected local policy making. In some cases the youth have worked with institutions. The end result is that they were able to have a say in making policy that affected them, their families and their communities.

The third section talks about local government and how it works, and the fourth gives you strategies and tools to help you work with local governments to effect policy that is related to, and as you work on, your local projects. The final section is a resource list that will help expand on the information that has been provided and give you the contact

information of the youth organizations that are highlighted in the manual. Throughout you will find definitions of words that may be new to you.

Section One: Youth Voices in our Communities

In Canada, as a democracy, we believe that all citizens should have a voice in making decisions about the way we live and organize ourselves. We make sure that this happens by holding elections to select representatives to govern. We also do this by creating ways for citizens to be actively involved in the decisions that affect them. Some of the ways that we do this is through public consultation processes and advisory bodies to represent our wishes around specific issues.

Young people make up a large part of communities. They are valuable members, and there is a strong and growing interest in making their voices heard. In fact there are many global commitments made by governments to ensure that youth and children are involved in decisions that affect them and their communities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1989. In its fifty-four articles it establishes children's basic rights to be actors in their own development, and to a healthy and safe environment. At the Earth Summit, world leaders also signed Agenda 21 (Section 25) which outlines the importance of, and right to, participation in planning and decisions for sustainable development. At Habitat II, The City Summit, it was further emphasized the need for governments to involve young people in participatory processes that shape their cities, towns, and neighborhoods.

BOX-Why is your Voice important?

It helps you:

- Understand your local community and environment in new ways
- Learn about democracy, diversity, and tolerance
- Develop a network of friends, mentors and resource people
- Help create positive change in the local environment and other aspects of community
- Develop a sense of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility
- Develop confidence in your abilities to accomplish goals you set

It Benefits other members of the community:

- Interaction with young people in positive constructive ways
- Breaks down misunderstanding and mistrust between generations
- Brings young people's views of their community forward
- Identifies ways in which the quality of life for local young people can be improved
- Builds a stronger sense of community and builds bridges between the needs of all ages and interests
- Appreciation is built for the creativity, ideas and contributions of young people
- Investment of time and energy into the future of the community

It benefits planners and policy makers:

- More fully understand the needs and issues of the communities they serve.
- Make better, more informed planning and developing decisions.

- Educate community members on the inherent complexities and trade offs involved in policy and development decision-making.
- Implement at the local level the directives and spirit of the UN convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements
- Create urban environments that are meet the needs of interests of children and youth.ⁱ

Youth and children can't vote, so how do they get a say? How are their ideas and concerns about themselves, their families and their communities heard? In general the ways that adults participate are either not possible or not appropriate for children or youth. There has been a lot of interest in making normally adult forums more "youth friendly". However, these efforts are still making limited headway with a very thin edge of the youth population participating through these formal processes.

Did you know?

Less than 20 percent of 18 to 29 year olds say they follow politics and government "most of the time" compared with over 50 percent of those 50 or older.ⁱⁱ However a BC wide study into "youth well-being" found that youth expressed a strong desire to have input into the operation and decision-making processes of different levels of government, especially where policies regarding youth are concerned.ⁱⁱⁱ

“While there are notable exceptions to the exclusion of children and youth from real decision making, youth engagement in decision making in their communities is sporadic and not integrated ...in spite of the expertise of children and youth”^{iv}

If we truly believe that everyone should have a say to have healthy communities then we need to make sure that there are avenues to do so. Through participating in decision making about their communities youth can become more integrated into the fabric of community and can help to shape their communities in ways that reflect their needs and ideas.

So what are the ways that youth express their ideas about policy?

There are four general ways that youth voices are inserted into decision making and policy development:

- Involvement in formal processes
- Artistic expression
- Protest
- Local action projects

(insert diagram here of ways youth influence governments)

Through each of these forums for expression there are varying levels of ability for young people to actually participate in decision making. The voice is expressed but how is it heard? How is it incorporated into the decisions made by those with power? Often this requires support from adults who have the power to implement change and are genuinely

committed to engaging young people in the process of change. The figure below provides a visual way to think about young people's participation in community planning and development. It is based on the ability for the participation to have the power to affect change, and secondly, the young people's ability to interact and collaborate with other people in the community^v.

Insert Dimensions of Young Peoples' Participation Diagram

The diagram reveals two realms of participation, non-participation and participation. In non-participatory forums you find that youth have little or no opportunity to express opinions in a meaningful way or real decision making power.

Manipulation and deception-this occurs when youth are used to achieve another's agenda, they are neither told about what they are doing or why, or where there are claims that youth were consulted when there was little or no consultation undertaken.

Decoration- this occurs when children and youth are used to promote a cause even though they are not really involved in it.

Tokenism-this occurs when youth appear to be participating but they have little or no choice about the subject or process of their participation, nor does their input have impact on decisions made. They may be labeled as a "representing youth" however they have not been selected by other youth and have no real legitimacy to represent them.

Forms of participation are:

Consultation-this can be a form of participation if decision makers inform young people about what they are being consulted about, ask them for their ideas, and then give the opinions expressed serious consideration when they are making decisions.

Social Mobilization-this occurs when young people who know why they are involved and what they are doing are directly involved in carrying out a programme or action that is initiated by adults.

Children in Charge-this occurs

Shared Decision-making

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation^{vi}, is another way to think about youth participation in decision making. The bottom three rungs describe youth involvement that is not true participation whereas the top five rungs describe true participation.

Insert Diagram Hart's Ladder

Current Forms of Youth Participation

Current forms of youth participation span the realms of non participation to participation. When most people think of youth involved in decision making they think about youth involvement in formal processes. When government looks at “engaging youth in decision making” most often they are referring to formal arrangements. The following section focuses on formal ways that youth engage and then spotlights three other ways that youth engage in policy and decision making. The remainder of the book focuses on looking at what Driskell refers to as “Social mobilization”. This is where we have seen results and opportunities in finding a higher level of participation, we have called it youth participation through local action projects.

Involvement in formal processes: in cities across Canada there are many forms of consultative processes and bodies created such as Youth Councils, Youth Task Forces, Roundtables, Boards, Committees, as well as special Forums, and Conferences.

In To Engage or Not to Engage...What is our Policy? Joah Lui looks at the experiences of Canadian youth in policy engagement through formal channels. The report states:

Within Canada youth “en masse” have not been integrated, in a consistent way in governmental policy development, there have been consultative experiments with a small number of youth on environmental, health, educational, and youth policies. The range of youth consultative formats vary according to governmental priority on getting youth input , the level of understanding and expertise in working with youth, the funding and resources allocated, and possibly, undeterminable factors associated with the current political climate.

Normally, consultations fall into the following categories:

- The one-off consultation. Youth are gathered for a one-time meeting to contribute “youth voice” to an issue. There is usually no follow-up with the youth to let them know what has resulted from the consultation.
- On-going consultations with usually 1-2 youth representatives within a roundtable of other stakeholders.
- On-going, youth-only consultative body. A “youth voice” has been targeted for consultation, there are follow-up meetings and a continuing opportunity to explore new as well as previous issues.
- Special event consultation. This may be a youth-only advisory council or 1-2 youth representatives who attend amongst other stakeholders. These are usually a series of consultations that are held to prepare for a special event or on a special issue.

The report concludes that for consultation to be better that when youth are consulted they must be informed about how their input will be used and also the outcomes of the decisions that are made. The report also recognizes a number of important indicators that help identify effective youth engagement in policy and address specific barriers that have been observed by youth representatives at different levels of government and sectoral policy work.

Although there is quite a bit of criticism by youth that Youth Councils, or Advisory Bodies have very little actual impact on decisions that are made by local governments and that youth are tokenized, there are exceptions. The Toronto Youth Cabinet is an example of a body that was created to increase youth's participation in decisions made by the City of Toronto. Kahinde Bah is a former Chairperson of the Cabinet and says that it is "a shining example of what can happen when youth are given the resources and power to make decisions".

We have gotten hard results. We have linkage to power because we are built right into the governmental structure. We have access to the budget for our core funding and we get to use the government's resources, administration, work rooms, publications department, web technicians, etc.

Budget, funding and resources, continuity of youth involvement, linkage to power, structure, sustainability of process, and training were seen as key elements for successful youth engagement in policy through a formal youth body. Linkage to power was identified as the most important to youth leaders.

BOX

The Toronto Youth Cabinet

It's mission statement is to: "serve the population of Toronto by empowering youth to make a difference in the lives of others. In working together with City Councillors, and through fostering partnerships among youth organizations, the cabinet is dedicated to providing youth with a forum to contribute to the development of solutions for a better tomorrow."^{vii}

The youth cabinet stands out as an example of youth participative bodies because it:

- **Has an open membership to youth ages 13-24**
- **The structure is designed by the youth membership**
- **Shares decision making roles among the youth members**
- **Has funding from the City and staff persons**
- **Builds internal capacity of youth members**
- **Has direct linkages to decision makers**
- **Has been a priority of the City of Toronto"^{viii}**

Artistic expression: many youth express their views through zines, graffiti, leaflets, art, music, theatre and poetry. This is done both on the individual level as well as collectively.

As a level of participation, artistic expression is often relegated to arena of social commentary. It is not directly linked to the ability to be directly involved in making decisions. It acts more as a catalyst for thought and discussion that then get transformed into the decisions that are made. It should not be underplayed the power that this type of

expression can have in shaping policy, and has been a very important way that youth have expressed their opinions in a forum that is consistent with youth culture.

Artistic expression is in some formats a great way to draw out ideas, and opinions that youth hold on a topic or about the development of their communities and it can be linked to decision making process. Community Mapping, Murals, music and theatre have all had success as tools for engaging youth and children in larger policy and decision making processes. It is important if this is used as a method that the youth are informed about the process and how the information will be gathered and used.

Protest: many youth find a voice through protesting things they don't want to see happen. This can take many forms such as demonstrations, protest marches, sit-ins, blockades, or occupations. Some of these activities are legal and others are forms of civil disobedience.

It is interesting to think that protest and the participation of young people in the "movements" that gained momentum in the sixties played a part in the eventual recognition that (along with other marginalized groups) young peoples voice and participation was important.

Youth were key participants in the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the feminist and gay movements, the environment movement and the emerging anti-globalization movement. They have fought for social change alongside adults.

It is well-known that the protest movements of the sixties profoundly altered laws and attitudes. Less well-known is how those movements changed youth services.

Youth have been also involved in struggles more closely connected to their own issues as young people, such as those for school change and student rights, the creation of alternative youth programs, the right to vote, access to birth control, expanded legal rights for minors.

The connections among broader social issues and "youth-for-youth" causes were complex and inseparable

Schools and colleges underwent similar transformations. To make schools more responsive to student needs, school districts set up alternative schools, gave students more choice of courses, and incorporated social services, such as peer counseling, into the regular school. Colleges dropped requirements, expanded the curriculum to include previously marginalized groups, and strove to provide amenities that entitlement-minded students demanded.

The new view of youth as people and citizens in their own right (not merely adults-in-training), percolated up to the Supreme Court in two landmark 1960s rulings, in re Gault, and Tinker v. Des Moines. In Gault (1967) the court ruled that the informal, paternalistic nature of juvenile court proceedings denied youth due process of law. Two years later, in Tinker, the Court ruled that students could not be prohibited from wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam war. In strikingly strong pro-youth language, the court wrote, "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech at the schoolhouse door."

Local action projects: many youth organize or take part in community projects that channel their opinions and ideas. This could be anything from turning a degraded piece of land into a skateboard park to holding a forum to map out alternative transportation and bike routes.

In youth participation through local action projects we see that in many cases the projects are youth initiated and directed, and in some cases there is shared decision making with adults. This places them high on the ladder and closer to forms of true participation.

Why are we focusing on Local Action Projects in this manual?

Over the last 10 years working with youth in many levels of policy making processes from the local to international level we have found some very interesting observations. Through local action projects, more youth are getting involved in local policy and planning and having a greater say and making greater impacts in their communities than has been seen in any other forum of participation, this includes the formal process that are specifically involved to gain youth participation.

The Youth Action Effecting Change initiative is a capacity building network of youth groups from across BC and the Yukon, the majority of these groups are doing community action projects. These groups and many others are doing projects to improve the sustainability of their towns and cities.

What is a community action project?

A community action project is an initiative that is generated by groups or individuals in a community with the purpose of doing something to either solve a problem or build something valuable and beneficial to that community. Some principles common to community action projects:

- locally based
- broad and inclusive participation
- knowledge is generated from and owned by the community
- assets driven
- collaboration between people and organizations is key
- socially just
- environmentally sound
- economically responsible

Examples of some community action projects led by youth in BC are: in Prince George they are working on alternative transportation; in Nelson they are working on home green-ups and banning pesticides; in Victoria they are working on developing community

gardens and Greenways; and in Vancouver they are working on greener workplaces, and transportation and air care.

These groups are working with many partners to make their projects happen, and in many cases they are working closely with their local governments. By working with their local governments not only are they being successful at creating positive change in their communities on the ground, they are also engaging in broader planning processes and working on policies.

Policy? What is a Policy?

A policy is a set out plan or course of action intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, and planning. For example, a policy made by a government could be written rule about something like a regulation or a bylaw, or it could be an overall plan such as an Environmental Policy that outlines all of the things the city will do to protect the environment in its decision making and planning. Most local governments have policies on everything from where you can walk your dog, to pollution prevention, to snow removal!

So how do local Action Projects link to Policy Change?

In working towards healthier, more sustainable communities we are looking at changes to the way we do things or the way we use the land. When we speak of changes in the status quo (the way things are usually done or have always been done) often this means that we not only need to work on the changes we believe are necessary but also need to work on the policies that support these changes.

For example LifeCycles, a youth organization in Victoria believes that community gardens are an excellent way to build community, create more biodiversity in cities, create areas for rest and relaxation, and are a way for families to feed themselves. The group decided to support a neighborhood group to turn an underutilized park or a degraded city lot into a community garden.

It sounds like a logical project to promote a healthier more livable city. However, when the group went to ask the city about putting a garden in the park or revitalizing the empty lot, they were told that community gardening is not a recognized activity allowable in parks and that the City Manager has made it a policy that all unused city lots are currently up for sale.

Is this a dead end? How could we get permission to turn the land into vibrant gardens? In this case LifeCycles and the neighborhood group needed to go to their local council and get support for changing the city policies in order to be able to secure the land for the gardens (this is one of the stories in the next section).

It is also important for people working on community projects to use the momentum of their projects to change policy when possible. This is an important avenue for your voice to influence the planning and development of our communities. For example, LifeCycles

and the neighborhood group were successful in changing Parks policy to recognize community gardens as a legitimate activity in Parks. This opened the door in neighborhoods across Victoria to establish gardens in underutilized parks, and two have been created since the policy was changed!

We hope that this manual will help groups doing action projects to consider how they can link their projects and the people who support it to creating or changing policies that will support more sustainable practices and livable cities. This guide is designed to assist you in better understanding who you need to talk to about your ideas, and what you need to do to move your project ahead. We also hope it inspires you to link your work more closely to local policy making.

Youth Voices get heard through local action projects

Through implementation of the projects youth are putting their hands to work in their communities, and they are also having a voice in its development. Through working with a wide cross section of people on their projects they are further engaging in their community. Often they are presenting their ideas and their projects to local decision makers and influencing policy decisions.

Although the primary audience for this manual is youth doing action projects, it is also meant to help municipal governments think about working with youth and looking at these types of projects as ways to engage youth in their decision making and in shaping their communities. In fact, local action projects could be seen as one of the better ways to engage youth in policy making. These projects involve a broad range of youth communities and a diversity of ages. The forum of involvement is much more interesting and comfortable for youth and in the end the level of actual input tends to be greater and with visible results. We move youth participation from the realm of an exercise to a reality!

Section Two: Stories

The following stories are mainly about youth organizations and groups that set out to do a community project and through doing their project needed to, or decided to work with their local government or authority to change or create local policies. These are but a few of the many stories about youth involvement in policy through hands on action projects. They are chosen for their diversity of approach, issues and locations. The commonality between them is that the leadership in the projects came from youth. One story is different in this respect, it is actually led by the Municipality, however it is a good example of how the Municipality was able to build partnerships with youth and where the youth had real roles of responsibility and decision making.

Things to Look For:

We have included icons (symbols) across at the top of each story to identify which tools were used by the groups to build support for their project and to influence policy. You will find these tools in the Section Four about Tools. Each of the groups are listed in the back with their contact information in Section Five on Resources.

Feature Stories:

I. Campus Development Plan, the University of Victoria Sustainability Project, Victoria

II. Community Gardens Policy, LifeCycles Project, Victoria

III. Pesticides Use, Earth Matters, Nelson

IV. Growing Greenways Strategy, GroundWorks, Victoria

V. SkateBoard Park Development, Victoria

VI. Park Re-Development, Environmental Youth Alliance, Vancouver

VII. Transit Policy, Prince George Public Interest Research Group

VIII. Protection of a Neighborhood lot, LifeCycles

IX. Seeds for Survival Story – Building a moment within a movement, one seed at a time

Campus Development Plan, the University of Victoria Sustainability Project.

This story highlights how students who were focused on Sustainability Planning were able to effect a Campus Development Plan and protect natural areas at their University.

Campus Development Plan, The University of Victoria Sustainability Project

Getting Students Involved in Campus Planning for Sustainability

- Worked with local authority
- Proposal
- Presentations
- Public forums
- Community Mapping/Mapping

The University of Victoria has over 60 acres of natural areas that provide wildlife habitat and important green space. These spaces are threatened by invasive species that is plants like English Ivy, Scotch Broom and Himalayan Blackberry. What's more is that over the next 15 years the University is expected to grow by 40% more students and needs to expand its facilities. The natural areas are in danger of being developed.

The University of Victoria Sustainability Project, a group of students concerned with sustainable campuses decided to do something about it!

The students came up with a project to get volunteer groups of students to remove the invader species to restore the natural areas health. But what good will this do, if the areas get paved over for parking lots or built on? They decided to take action to influence the Campus planning process to protect these areas. This meant learning how to work with the decision making body, the administration, and Campus Development Committee at the University.

The students focused their efforts on getting the communities input into the UVIC Campus Plan and ensuring this input went into planning decisions. They hosted a student forum on sustainability, a youth roundtable on campus decision-making structures, a community mapping event focused on realizing our common values as a campus community and a series of specialized workshops on developing a campus ecology working group and management/restoration plan.

The students also were key players and youth voice in the consultation that the campus administration organized around the development of the draft campus plan. This consultation involved a series workshops, open houses and one on one meetings with campus vice presidents. They also sit on the UVic senate as well as the Campus Development Committee (the primary campus planning body)

UVSP used community mapping, roundtables, open forums, participatory workshops, and one on one meetings as tools

to assist them in achieving their goals. UVSP has also used their website, coalition building on campus, brochures and pamphlets as a means to get their message out.

Next steps for the UVSP are to lobby for a campus-wide sustainability policy for many areas including energy, water, materials, food and campus ecology. We see policy as a starting place for a long-term commitment to real and strategic steps towards sustainability.

After showing such success at engaging students and the campus community in such a positive way, the University of Victoria granted the society two full time staff and ongoing funding to continue their work on campus.

The UVSP work at Uvic is part of a much broader Sustainable Campus initiative of the Sierra Youth Coalition. It is a national campaign to influence Campus communities to become more sustainable by establishing policies and in the activities that occur on campus.

II. Community Gardens Policy, LifeCycles Project.

This story is about a how youth group working closely with a neighborhood group to establish a community garden changed Municipal Parks Policy to recognize community gardens as a legitimate activity in Parks.

II. Parks Policy, LifeCycles Project, Victoria

Youth trying to establish a garden, establish a city parks policy

- **Worked with local government**
- **Proposal**
- **Briefing Paper**
- **Presentation**
- **Public Forum**
- **Letters of Support**
- **Community Mapping/ Mapping**

In 1996, LifeCycles, a youth organization in Victoria, was working with a neighborhood group to assist them in finding a place for, and creating a community garden. The area of Victoria, Fairfield, is a fairly densely populated area, with little undeveloped land so it was a challenge to find a site. The search was narrowed to a few city-owned pieces of land. The City owned land was up for sale. It was too costly to purchase and there was no interest by the City, in allowing activities on land up for sale. A better solution was to look at an underutilized park called Chapman Park. When approached, the parks department said that community gardens were not allowed as a “recognized activity” in a park.

So what did they do?

Instead of giving up, LifeCycles and the neighborhood group worked with City Council and the Parks Department to change this policy and now Community Gardening is recognized as a legitimate park activity. Now a community garden can be developed in a City park.

The main actors in the process were

- the neighborhood group of gardeners
- the Fairfield Community Association
- the City of Victoria
- the City of Victoria Parks Department
- LifeCycles Project

What was the process?

First Lifecycles and the neighbors made a presentation to the Fairfield Community Association and got their backing in the proposal. From speaking with Parks Staff Lifecycles learned that the next step was to go to the Parks Advisory Committee and explain to them why community gardening should be recognized as a legitimate activity in parks. A presentation was made highlighting other cities in Canada who had community gardening programs in parks. However, the committee did not support the idea.

The team continued to work in the community, they surveyed the neighbors to get their support, they asked for letters of support from neighbors, individuals and organizations, as well as writing up a backgrounder that explained about why community gardens were important and what other cities supported them. They also made up a one page summary of possible concerns about having community gardens in parks and addressed these concerns. Next they met with Councilors and began to get their support for the idea. They also met with the Parks Department to go over possible ideas, concerns and looked at some designs. A map was made of the park with potential changes including the garden. A Public Forum was suggested as a way to get community input on the garden development if the policy was changed and the project was going to go ahead.

The next step was to go to Council, where a presentation was made. The Council decided that a further presentation should be made to a Committee of the Whole meeting (which included advisory members and city staff). Lifecycles representatives as well as neighbors made a presentation to the Committee of the Whole, and Parks Department Staff spoke to the issue. The Committee of the Whole sent a recommendation to the Parks Advisory Committee to support the change in policy. The Parks Advisory Committee decided to support the recommendation, and sent their recommendation back to Council where it was finally passed by the City Council.

LifeCycles said that some of the things that were done that were important were:

- We didn't give up!
- We looked to other cities as examples. The Portland parks and recreation sent letter of support with history of their success of gardens in park
- We suggested this park as a pilot project –so there was a way out if the neighborhood was unhappy with results
- We did a survey of Residents to find out their concerns and gain their support
- We got Councilors on side: We found out what councilors were on side, met with them, asked them for support, and to put our request to have community gardens allowed in parks on the agenda, we gave them briefing notes ahead of time that covered any items that might arise and additional info, we sent letters thanking councilors for support on motions and an update on where the process is at, we

encourage them to follow the matter as it comes back to council, and finally we asked for any suggestions about what else we could be doing.

- We created an info sheet: To be able to address the possible negative aspects that people might have concerns about in terms of the idea we created a one page information sheet called “ Community Gardens in Parks- Questions and Answers” It covered the possible points for opposition and provided examples and statistics from other cities to back up the claims we made. We also provided a contact number for people to call if they had other concerns.
- We made presentations. We worked with the neighbors to make presentations to City Council and the Parks Advisory Body. We tried to make our presentations concise, we tried to address their concerns and the concerns of the community and we tried to remain enthusiastic and polite even when we didn’t seem to be getting anywhere!

The end result was that the City of Victoria Parks Policy recognizes community gardens are a legitimate use of park space and activity in parks. There have been two community gardens created in Victoria Parks since this change in policy.

LifeCycles was awarded top prize for Youth and Sustainability Projects in Canada in 1996, and was awarded a Best Practice Awards at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II. This opportunity led to LifeCycles sharing their experiences and models for youth engagement in sustainable community development to policy makers not only at the regional and national, but also international levels. After this experience a delegate from LifeCycles was accepted as a member of the National Youth Roundtable on the Environment that provides input on policy and advises the Government of Canada and in particular the Department of Environment Canada.

III. Pesticides Use, Earth Matters, Nelson

This story is about a youth group in Nelson who are working with homeowners to “get their gardens and lawns off drugs”. A strategy of their project is to build support for passing a municipal ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides.

Getting Youth and Community involved in Bylaw Creation

- **Working with Local Council**
- **Proposal**
- **Briefing Paper**
- **Presentation**
- **Public Forum**
- **Community Mapping/Mapping**

Earth Matters is a youth organization in Nelson that is trying to get citizens to reduce their use of pesticides. They are starting a project called *Grounds for Health*. This project will have public education about the risks of pesticides, and the promotion of alternatives to pesticides for residential lawns, gardens, and fruit trees.

Earth Matters will also be working with their local government to develop a municipal by-law restricting the cosmetic use of pesticides on public and private property. They will be using community mapping as a tool to gather information on where people are committing to pesticide free gardening and using this to educate the city and citizens. They may also use tools like briefing papers on pesticides and risks to health and the environment, and letters and petitions supporting a pesticide bylaw. An important part of their strategy is to utilize the work of other groups and cities in Canada that have been successful in crating similar bylaw restrictions.

As the majority of the toxins that enter our groundwater are from pesticide, fungicide and herbicide application, local initiatives to look for alternatives and to create policy that controls their use are important. As more citizens are educated and more cities get on side we get closer to meeting our national commitments made at the Earth Summit, under Agenda 21 in 1992.

IV. Growing Greenways Strategy, GroundWorks, Victoria

This story is about community engagement in the development of both Municipal and neighborhood Greenways. Groundworks is implementing a strategy with youth facilitators to lead youth involvement in the development of the Neighborhood Greenways by participating in community mapping and visioning and in the creation of their visions.

Youth and Children give input into policy and planning for Greenways

- **Working with local government**
- **Public Forum**
- **Presentation**
- **Proposal**
- **Community Mapping**

LifeCycles and Common Ground are working on a common project through our GroundWorks centre, this project is called “Growing Greenways”. It is an example of how we can link community interests and voices in official community and land use planning at the Municipal level. A main aspect of the project is that it finds new ways to engage citizens of all ages and walks of life in the design of a city that encourages people to walk more, drive less, and creates greener neighborhoods.

Greenways can mean many things to many people. To some they are a paved bike route, and to others they are a very natural walking path with native plants and chip trails. Others see community gardens, fruit trees, benches and community art as part of their idea of a Greenway. What Groundworks is doing is twofold. They are working with people in neighborhoods to find out what is their vision for greenways in their neighborhood, and they are also working with the City and City planners to establish Greenways based on the communities vision.

We will be using Community Mapping to gather visions from people of all ages and walks of life. Community Mapping is an excellent tool to translate community interests and ideas into language and information that can be formally used by planning officials and for into Official Community Plans.

In March of 2002, the City of Victoria Planning Department officially launched the City Greenways Planning Phase 1. Groundworks worked with the City to inventory existing policies, assets, routes and the views of local neighborhoods and residents. Much of this work was done through a series of community mapping events and surveys, which resulted in 770 submissions from across neighborhoods in Victoria. This information was put into a database that is accessible for the City, its planning department and neighborhood groups to use in the development of the Greenways system.

In phase II of the project that started in January 2003, Groundworks will

- Develop the Victoria Greenways Network and Steering Committee
- Organize Growing Greenways public educational presentations and outreach focused on neighborhood and land-use planning on greenways concepts and design special school presentations to reach a youth audience.
- Train Victoria citizens in Greenways building, design and Technical Mapping Training for the City and neighborhoods
- Develop Greenways Design Charette to facilitate the neighborhood greenways planning and building process
- Create the City of Victoria Greenways Map and Neighborhood Greenways Maps

Through this combination of training sessions, community mapping sessions and the creation of maps, community input will be given that will effect the official greenways planning drawn up by the city planners and then created by the city and by neighborhood groups and volunteers.

In an effort to ensure that the vision of children and youth is incorporated into the neighborhood Greenway design, we will be working in schools and with youth groups to do community mapping. This will mean that the kids and youth will provide input on what they think are important features in their neighborhood that should be part of the Greenways system, where they walk and ride their bikes, what natural areas are important, and what things they would also like to see as part of the Greenways in their neighborhood.

The youth, led by youth facilitators and community members, will draw these ideas on maps of their neighborhood. The data will be collected and compiled and made into comprehensive maps. The maps and the data, will be reviewed by other youth, landscape architects, planners and community groups. The ideas will be presented to the Greenways committee and to Council. This information will be incorporated into the Greenways planning documents and eventually into the Official Community Plans. The City, the youth that were originally involved, as well as professionals and community groups, will then be involved in implementation of the ideas in their neighborhoods.

Youth engagement in policies and planning around the design of cities is in everybody's interest. Not only does it provide a perspective of a large part of the population, but it also builds a deeper commitment and interest of the youth in the development and management of their cities and neighborhoods. More youth engagement, as well as better forms of engaging youth is an area that is being examined and supported by the Union of Canadian Municipalities, as well as locally the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). The Youth Action Effecting Change initiative will be presenting at the UBCM annual conference on youth engagement in 2003 and working with municipalities from across BC to look at ways to get youth involved, such as through community mapping.

V. SkateBoard Park Development, City of Victoria

This is a very inspiring example of how the Community Development Division and Parks Department worked with youth to envision and build a Skate Board Park that is one of the hottest youth facilities in the area.

A City Led, partnership focused initiative that had real youth participation in policy making

- Working with Local Government
- Proposal
- Presentation
- Mapping
- Public Forum

In Victoria a proposal was put forward from a Youth Recreation Coordinator to develop a Skate Board Park in an underutilized park. In line with the cities interest to provide access to more activities for youth in parks, the city agreed that it would be a good idea.

The City wanted to develop a multi functional skate board park that would also meet the need of BMX bikers and roller bladers. The Community Development Division worked closely with the Parks Department to implement the project. There was a strong belief and commitment that youth would play an equal if not lead role in the development of the park.

To do this they decided to have youth play roles and and have partnership in

- Developing the design
- choosing the contractor who would build of the park
- fundraising
- planning the opening of the park
- its operations.

Gail Price-Douglas of the Community Development Division says that although the City has a Youth Council, a Youth Task Force and a Youth Consultation Day that this process was much different .“ It was good in terms of the direct involvement of youth in decision making in a community facility, it worked really really well”.

Youth involved in planning

To get youth involvement they went to Skate Shops to find youth to form a group who would give input into the design and get other youth involved. This group would contribute to the design and also in choosing the company that would build the park. They formed a group to help develop the preliminary drawings of elements they wanted such as a bowl, street, rails, snake run, fun box, and benches. A designer who could make Engineered drawings from their idea incorporated the design elements that the

youth had wanted and it was tendered. It turned out the design was too expensive, so the group met again and decided on the key things they wanted to maintain.

They put the revised plan out for contractors to bid on. The youth involved had equal partnership in choosing who would be selected. They rated the different contractors from things like their understanding of skating and skate board parks to the bid price total.

The youth also helped organize two other opportunities for more youth to give feedback. They took drawings to Esquimalt High School where they invited students to come at a lunch hour to give feedback on the drawings. Then they also organized a public meeting where over 50 kids attended. The designs that were brought to the forum were computer generated visual maps that showed beginner, intermediate and advanced elements of the skate board park. The kids could write and draw right on the design maps to say what they liked and what they didn't. They outreached to kids who skateboarded, did BMX and roller bladed of all levels through ads in the paper, through high schools close to the park and through skate board shops.

They came up with a finalized plan, a plan that had most of what the youth wanted, was able to meet the needs of all levels of skate boarders, was also accessible to roller bladers and BMX bikers and was within the budget and safety requirements needed by the City. So it was built.

Youth involved in fundraising

To increase the understanding that this was to be a regional facility and to raise money the Youth and city workers made an appeal to other parks departments to provide support for the park. After the drawings had been finalized they took them to the Esquimalt Parks Board and gave a presentation on the Park, where they were able to raise \$25,000. They also made a presentation to City Council. Having the visual maps for these presentations was really a bonus in helping the people understand better what was being presented. Having someone from the City, some youth involved and a member of the City Parks department was also helpful because each person could explain different aspects about the park.

Youth involved in opening the park

When it came to the big opening day, the youth helped to plan how the park would be opened. The youth committee chose the MC, the music and the event activities. The city knew that it was important if it was to be a success it had to be "their event". It was a success and the park is one of the busiest youth facilities in the region.

Youth involved in operations

There is an operations committee for the park where one of the main youth who was involved in the development of the park sits on the committee. He was also hired to run summer programs at the park, including such things as helmet safety. When the Park had to establish hours due to noise complaints from late night use, some of the youth helped

to distribute flyers with the police to make sure that the youth understood and respected the new bi-law.

The skate board park took two years to plan and build. Today it is one of the busiest youth facilities in the region. The project is a good example of how a local government can get real involvement form the youth in building the facility that is meant for them. The fact that the city committed to giving youth a real say in the decisions around the plan and the park operations is key it its success.

VI. Park Re-Development, Environmental Youth Alliance, Vancouver

The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) strives to link social and environmental issues through youth-centred grassroots action, thereby directly impacting the lives of children and youth. In keeping with this mandate, our vision for this project was to assess the accessibility of Vancouver's parks through a study of urban park use, with an emphasis on children and youth. Our research was aimed at gathering the community's ideas on their parks: how they use them, barriers to park use and possible areas for improvement.

We selected North China Creek Park, in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighborhood. This park was selected because EYA already has a presence in North China Creek Park with the Means of Production project which is a land art project. This is a project that will demonstrate urban eco-forestry through the sustainable growing and harvesting of plants used for art supplies.

The North China Creek Park was selected as the site for MOP because it is a large green space where the existing scope of activities is somewhat limited. Both the Environmental Youth Alliance and the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation are committed to changing this unused piece of land into something productive and aesthetically pleasing.

DATA COLLECTION

When our focus shifted to data collection, we needed to gather information from the community on how they were using (or not using) North China Creek Park. We selected two methods of gathering data: surveying and community mapping. We chose these methods in combination because although the survey allowed us to elicit information from the adult population, community mapping was better suited to our younger participants. We composed a survey to find out what the community was using the park for, and what aspects they liked and disliked.

We started by approaching park users with our survey, walk up method. We spent two days in the park approaching people and recording their responses to our survey questions. Later set up a table in the park and allowed them to approach us, flyer method. We also spent some time at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre, to collect information from individuals in the area who may not be using the park, community centre method. We attempted a fourth and final method, the poster board method, when the weather became such that it was uncomfortable to be outside in the park.

SURVEYING

We chose to survey people as well to access people in the neighbourhood that were not using North China Creek Park or were using it at times we could not be there. We also designed a flyer that briefly explained our goals and invited residents to come to the park during designated times to share their views on North China Creek Park. We posted flyers on every telephone pole, lamp post and mailbox within a few blocks of the park.

Community Mapping

We used Community mapping as a learning, development and planning tool for gathering the youth community's ideas on the park. The final product provides a visual representation of the participants' knowledge and experience. However, the process of mapping is as important to the exercise as the final product. Our goal was to produce a map showing the abundance of valued social, cultural and ecological aspects of the park (community mapping of a neighbourhood can also record valued and cherished places, activities and resources that contribute to the good health of the community). We chose to use community mapping as a means to facilitate these goals,

We designed a mapping workshop based on a model from Youth Mappers, an arm of EYA. The 2-hour workshop includes a trip to North China Creek Park, where the youth are asked to make observations that would later be drawn onto a map.

The creation of the map is done by the youth. First, they are asked to draw the park infrastructure on the map. Then they are asked to identify the aspects of the park that were child friendly, youth friendly, hazardous and opportunities for improvement. The final step is a prioritization exercise in which each participant places a sticker on the part of the map they felt represents the greatest opportunity for improvement. A different sticker is used to identify their favourite aspect of the park. The end result is a colourful, informative illustration of the significance of the park components from the viewpoint of youth.

MAPPING RESULTS

The youth identified aspects of the park in the different categories. For example they identified the track, playing field, baseball diamonds, jogging path, exercise circuit and children's play structure as child and youth friendly areas.

The youth had a number of interesting suggestions for improvement of North China Creek Park. Ideas were things like Improved lighting within the park and along the perimeter, stairs were suggested as an alternative to the steep hill, and new equipment for the children's play area was recommended, as the current equipment is old and splintered. Many of the suggestions had great merit, including the recommendation to build a fence along Great Northern Way to provide a barrier between the park and busy road. One respondent further elaborated on this topic to suggest the installation of a "green fence", a barrier built of shrubs and trees.

The surveys and the maps showed that North China Creek Park is rarely being used for child and youth related activities (other than organized sports). From our observations we noted that there is a significant lack of children and youth oriented activities happening at the park, nor are there any park staff or infrastructure to facilitate such activities. The Surveys and maps pointed to many suggestions on how to change this!

EYA's vision

The Environmental Youth Alliance is committed to expanding the scope of

activities that currently take place in Vancouver's public green space. EYA advocates the following concepts with regards to urban park design. Such concepts include: green space as wildlife habitat, flower gardens, distribution of native plants, public green space for food production. Diverse park infrastructure includes abstract spaces, diverse play structures and water for play and aesthetic.

Based on this vision and taking the input from the youth on the park we believe that there is an opportunity to implement changes for more diverse park use.

Some of the more imaginative ideas suggested by the youth at the mapping workshops are water oriented. Such as the installation of a spray park or a wading pool and a pond for ice-skating in the winter. Water is an addition to the park that benefits all stakeholders and on many levels. Water can be enjoyed by adults, children and youth as well as enhance the overall park aesthetic and attract wildlife such as birds.

How does this work effect policy?

The Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation is committed to making changes to this piece of land into something productive and aesthetically pleasing. The next steps were to take the information gathered and present it to the Vancouver Parks and Recreation Board. It could then be used to provide input into the planning of changes to the park.

This and other YAEC projects will be presented at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities conference in Vancouver in the fall of 2003. This project has also been represented at the Georgia Basin Eco-system initiative conference, at which it won a silver award.

This project demonstrates that youth, through their actions, can bring their voices to policy makers and also be respected and heard by policy makers. These projects have impact not only at the local level (for example in land use policy) but as well as through different policy forums regionally and nationally.

VII. Transit Policy, Prince George Public Interest Research Group

The Students and City worked together to establish a transportation policy for Prince George. The student initiated the dialogue and the idea of a specific transportation policy based on sustainability principles.

Students work to establish sustainable transportation policies for Prince George
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The Prince George Public Interest research group (PG PIRG) is a group of students, staff, faculty and community groups who organize around issues of public interest, such as the environment and social justice at the University of Northern British Columbia. In November of 2002 PGPIRG undertook a project to involve youth in transportation planning issues in Prince George. We held a municipal all candidates forum on transportation issues for the 2002 Municipal Elections.

There were 5 Elements to the Forum:

1. A presentation on transportation issues in Prince George done by environmental studies students
2. Presentation of 5 questions related to transportation issues from the PGPIRG Transportation Working Group questions
3. Creation of Working Groups to do a half hour problem solving session
4. Municipal Candidates report back to main group on behalf of the working group

The forum was a great success overall and achieved the above goals. It was well attended by both candidates the general public, and students. They had 17 out of 22 election candidates in attendance and approximately 50 community participants (including students).

Student members of PG PIRG said:

“Our biggest accomplishment was engaging members of the community and ourselves in the election process and having people share and listen to each other’s opinions regarding transportation issues in Prince George”.

”We experienced for the first time how much planning and organizing is involved in an event such as an election forum. We were given a taste of what it is like to coordinate volunteers (approximately 15 volunteers aided in the project), get information out to the community and the election candidates as well as plan the logistics of the forum by working as a team. We got to know the election candidates since we were able to interact with them personally. Consequently, we felt informed enough to vote and we believe this event encouraged others to vote in this years municipal election too”.

”The candidates were all very enthusiastic at the closing of our forum and even suggested

that we make workshops at UNBC a regular event for the new city council. They encouraged us to come to a city council meeting once it reconvened with the new council with our report from the forum. Student participants approached us the week following the forum expressing their positive opinions of the events outcome. Through observation at the forum we saw politics at work.”

The Prince George Citizen wrote an article on the event and the radio on campus, 88.7 FM CFUR, recorded the event and aired it live. The UNBC student newspaper, Over The Edge, also wrote an article on the events proceedings.

A compilation of a report was presented to the city council in the winter 2003. The students felt this was a very important step to follow through with, for one because the Council requested it and secondly, to prove they were committed to the issues discussed. The students feel they have an important role as university students and can be leaders in the Prince George community.

Future election event organizers at UNBC will be able to use the model of the event forum and improve upon it. Samples of the work, evaluations, notes and posters were kept on file in PGPIRG.

With the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and the release of the Climate Change Plan for Canada, the Government of Canada identified climate change as a major long-term environmental priority. It is now the responsibility of all levels of government, and citizens from across Canada, to take steps both individually and collectively to meet our national promises.

By signing the protocol Canada agreed to decrease our Green House Gas emissions by 6% over the next five years. Among the personal commitments that the Government of Canada is challenging its citizens to make are the commitment to leave your car at home, to carpool and to take public transit.

As citizens we can do this through having a better understanding of what effects Climate Change, and by making direct changes in our daily behaviors. As communities and governments we can make institutional and policy changes and undertake planning initiatives that reduce impacts on Climate Change.

Initiatives such as the one taken on by students in Prince George allow citizens to take proactive steps in the formulation of local policies that support broader Federally supported Environmental goals.

VIII. Protection of a Neighborhood lot, LifeCycles, Victoria

When the city put up a lot for sale that had been stewarded as a neighborhood common for years, a youth group worked with neighbors to create a community map atlas that demonstrated the value of the lot to neighbors and took it off the “for sale” list. Beyond this the action led to a review of the criteria of the policy for Municipal lands up for sale.

LifeCycles was looking for a site for the community garden, The Olive Street Common, which is a city owned property, came up for discussion. The site, City lot number 27, is a small property nestled between houses on a quiet residential street in Fairfield. Because of very large trees on the site, it was determined that it would not be suitable for a community garden. However when LifeCycles were talking to the neighbors they found the site had a most interesting history. What’s more, the neighbors were very concerned that the site was up for sale and wanted to keep it as a neighborhood common, or little park.

The city owned property is a lot located over a culvert. Commercial development of the site is difficult both because of its size (very tiny) and the presence of the culvert. The lot has a rich history of community involvement. Starting in the 1940’s Mr. Tyhurst, an adjacent neighbor, cleaned up the lot and spent a great deal of time and care creating a natural garden and planting fruit trees. He looked after it for many years and called it Tyhurst park. To this day the neighbors continue to feel a sense of stewardship toward the property. The neighbors thought that if they could show the ecological and heritage values of the lot then it might have a chance of being turned over to them instead of being sold for development, especially in light of the difficulty in developing it.

After a neighborhood meeting it was decided that LifeCycles DIGS youth project would do a study of the current use and do an inventory and series of maps looking at the ecological make-up of the site. A group of youth from LifeCycles’ DIGS project started working with the neighbors to create a **map atlas** that consisted of a series of maps showing different values of the site. The map atlas was intended to reveal the importance of preserving the piece of property and of gaining control of the site by the community. The map atlas was created with for the neighboring community, the Fairfield Community Association, and the City of Victoria Manager, City Planners and Heritage Society.

Originally two base maps were created, one of the property parcel (the site map) and another of the surrounding area (the community map).

There was

- introduction of the history of the site
- maps that showed an inventory of the flora and fauna that inhabited the lot
- maps that showed the relation of the lot in comparison to other green spaces and flight patterns of birds demonstrating the site was a hopping off spot for birds
- maps that displayed the cultural and social uses both historical and present of the site to the surrounding community.

The neighbors took this information and the map atlas to City Council and presented it to Councilors. Having the comprehensive map atlas that demonstrated the ecological, social, cultural, and historical significance of the lot, and the information about commercial development challenges was key in their decision to set the lot aside from sale. In light of the importance of the lot to the community and the fact that the lot would be difficult to develop, the council decided to remove the lot from its list of properties for sale. On top of this, they also decided to establish review criteria for lots that they would be putting up for sale.

Olive Street Common was then stewarded by the neighbors who placed a bench for resting on and some signs telling about the special aspects of the park. Today in 2003, the common remains in the hands of the community and they continue to work on the native plant gardens, and enjoy it as a peaceful community space.

IX. Seeds for Survival Story – Building a moment within a movement, one seed at a time

Seeds for Survival is an organization that supports Indigenous Youth looking at building sustainable environments and community. Seeds For Survival is about First Nations youth engaging towards securing viable, culturally appropriate food systems based on a cultural relevant, traditionally bioregional perspective. They have developed a local project to look at their local indigenous food sources and collect and inventory seeds.

This group has both engaged youth through local projects but also been very active in youth engagement in policy through international forums. Representatives from Seeds attended the Fourth Workshop on Indigenous Children and Youth of the United Nations in Geneva in 2003. They are also working on the Secretariat for the International Indigenous Youth Conference 2004 (IYIC Secretariat). This conference is to be held in the traditional territory of the St'at'imc Secretariat and the St'at'imc Nation located in BC. The IYIC Secretariat is made up of Native Youth Movement, Redwire Native Youth Media Society, and the Ugnayan ng Kabataang Pilipino sa Canada.

The IYIC is “strengthening solidarity among indigenous youth in asserting indigenous peoples rights amidst globalization”. This is founded on the belief that “Indigenous youth inherit the responsibility to protect and preserve their traditional lands, resource and sacred sites upon which their cultural heritage and identity is based”.

In April 2002, 83 Indigenous Youth from 19 countries in Asia, Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America gathered in the Philippines to share experiences and forge a common voice in responding to the challenges of globalization at a time when globalization has deeply impacted the lives of indigenous peoples. The gathering was also working towards the establishment of an Indigenous Youth Network that is part of the International Indigenous Peoples Movement. The conference participants committed to working towards the declarations and resolutions that were agreed upon for indigenous peoples rights to self-determination against the adverse effects of globalization and to advance rights to ancestral domains.

The IYIC 2004 will bring together indigenous youth from the regions represented at the first IYIC and will expand the network to create partnerships in South America. They will be doing outreach for the conference to Native youth across BC, Canada, the United States and Africa. They believe in the importance of gathering strength and working together to have their voices heard in their communities, in governance structure and the international arena.

“As Indigenous youth and organizers we have been working over the past year since IYIC 2002 to create communication and awareness of indigenous youth issues at an international level. This has included dissemination of IYIC 2002 declarations and resolutions, building and strengthening the different regional networks, a web site, international indigenous youth journal and pre-planning for the 2004 conference.”

At the United Nations, Seeds representatives organized a youth gathering to talk about their issues, local situations, and the upcoming IYCY 2004. They also were attending meetings to move forward the Indigenous Peoples Kyoto Water Declaration (presented at the Third World Water Forum, Kyoto, Japan in March of 2003). This declaration is in response to this being the year of “Fresh Water” looking at Indigenous Water issues. The Declaration covers the Indigenous Peoples Relationship to Water, Conditions of our Waters, Right to Water and Self Determination, Traditional Knowledge, Consultation, and a Plan of Action.

Contact Groups

University of Victoria Sustainability Project

The University of Victoria Sustainability Project (UVSP) works on 2 main issues that are interconnected at many levels: campus ecology and a systematic approach to sustainability through policy. We aim to preserve the ecosystems of UVic by using an ecosystem management and restoration approach. This approach is effective through our aim to integrate policy development for sustainability with broad terms of reference and multi-stakeholder input.

uvsp@uvic.ca

General Office phone number: 721-7355

<http://uvsp.uvic.ca/main.php>

Prince George Public Interest Research Group

PIRGs were initiated by American consumer activist Ralph Nader. They began organizing on American Campuses in the 1970's, then later, on campuses in Canada. Currently, there are PIRGs in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, British Columbia as well as in the United States and Australia.

We are student-funded, which means that all students are automatically members, ensuring that we are not tied to the government, university or corporate funding. Students do have the option of requesting a fee refund and withdrawing their membership.

33333 University Way

Prince George, BC

V2N 4Z9

e-mail: pgpirg@unbc.ca

phone: (250) 960-7474

Lifecycles

LifeCycles Project is based in Victoria, B.C. and works with all ages to create urban organic food gardens in people's backyards, balconies and rooftops, they help to create community gardens as well as gardens for special needs. Lifecycles has both school and community based education programs to teach about food security, sustainable agriculture and urban agriculture. International partnerships, such as with farmers in Havana Cuba bring a global perspective to their education work.

527 Michigan St.

Victoria, BC

V8V 1S1

phone: (250) 383-5800

fax: (250) 386-3449

general: info@lifecyclesproject.ca

Environmental Youth Alliance

The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) is an environmental and social development organization which focuses on the stewardship of our physical and social environment. The concept of stewardship refers to long-term responsibility and care for our

communities, the earth we live with, and ultimately ourselves. The EYA is a youth driven, non-profit agency based in Vancouver and has young people involved in every level of the organization.

305-119 West Pender,
Vancouver, BC V6B 1S5
Ph: (604) 689-4463
Fax: (604)689-4242
email: info@eya.ca
www.eya.ca

Earth Matters

Earth Matters is a community-based organization that works on a range of community development initiatives focusing on social justice, economic sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Through innovative experiential education programs, Earth Matters strives to build the capacity of people and their communities to meet their needs in creative, proactive ways.

Tel: (250) 352-2140

Fax: (250) 352-2146

E-mail: info@earthmatters.ca

PO Box 746

Nelson, B.C., Canada

V1L 5R4

Seeds for Survival

"An Indigenous Youth Look at; Building Sustainable Environments and Community;....Seeds For Survival is about First Nations Youth engaging towards securing viable, culturally appropriate food systems based on a cultural relevant, traditionally bioregional perspective.

Sierra Youth Coalition

The Sierra Youth Coalition is a youth-driven national non profit organization working in Canada toward sustained ecological and social well-being. Through grassroots initiative SYC engages diverse communities in action against corporate globalization, excessive consumption and climate change. Holistic solutions are sought through lifestyle simplicity, promoting sustainable communities and education for sustainability.

syc@sierraclubbc.org

Sierra Club of BC

576 Johnson St., Victoria, BC V8W 1M3

phone: 250.386.5255 fax: 250.386.4453

national office:

sierrayc@web.ca or call us at **1-888-790-7393**

Section Three

In Canada we have a political system that has different levels of government. These different governments can create regulation for different issues. These spheres in which they can regulate is called their jurisdiction. That is, they look after certain geographic areas and specific services in these areas. If you are working on a project or have an idea or concern about something in your community you will need to know what level of government looks after that area. You don't want to go barking up the wrong tree! However, you will often find that more than one level of government is responsible for different aspects of the projects you are working on. That is why working collaboratively is important. This next section is meant to be a mini guide to levels of government, what they look after and how they work. We hope it will help you figure out where you would go to with questions, concerns, or for help on your project.

Levels of Government

In Canada our government is made up of different tiers that have different responsibilities and cover different geographical areas. The largest form of government is our Federal Government that spans the whole of Canada . Canada is divided into ten Provinces and three Territories. Each Province and Territory has its own Provincial or Territorial Government. The Provinces and Territories are divided into areas of regional governments, and local municipal governments. Canada is also in the process of negotiating with First Nations people about First Nations' respective forms of government.

This manual focuses on local government. If you are looking for information on how Provincial Government or Federal Government operates and what it looks after see the following web sites:

Federal Government of Canada: www.gc.ca

Province of British Columbia: www.gov.bc.ca

The following diagram helps to sort out the levels of government for you!

Local Government

Municipalities (cities, districts, towns and villages) provide local government services. Regional Districts deliver services to larger areas where it may coordinate services, such as the regional landfill, for several municipalities or provide services to rural areas outside of municipalities. There are 154 municipalities, 27 regional districts and an Islands Trust in BC¹. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (the UBCM) was formed to provide a common voice for local government. It provides an opportunity for local governments of all sizes and from all areas of the province to come together, share their experiences and take united positions.

For a map of the Regional Districts and Municipalities in BC see the UBCM web page www.civicnet.bc.ca/members/map.shtml

1. Municipal Government

There are four types of municipal Governments in BC. You may live in a Village, a Town, a City, or a District Municipality; it depends on the size of your community. In general, the area governed by a municipal government is called a municipality.

Municipalities were first formed in the late 1800's when residents of larger centers saw the need for the communities to have locally provided and controlled services. In Canada a written law, called the Local Government Act, determines the powers of municipal government. This act covers both Municipal and Regional Districts. This Act guides the creation of local government and covers all of its operations. A new Community Charter is being developed for BC. This Charter may change some of the ways a municipality operates and the services it offers.

Did you know? Originally Municipal Governments were seen as Dangerous!

During the British colonization of Canada they forbade cities to have their own governments. They felt that a local government would put too much power in the hands of city dwellers or "citizens". Instead, the British created Police Towns that were ruled by the British Crown. Working with your Municipal Government could be seen as an act of rebellion!

Municipal government in B.C. consists of an elected mayor and council that serve three-year terms. The mayor and council are responsible for establishing policies for the community and adopting bylaws and regulations based on these policies.

Municipalities provide the day-to-day services important to its residents. It also guides planning and development for its area. Most municipalities provide these services:

- Policing
- Fire protection
- Parks and recreation

¹ The Islands Trust is unique to the Gulf Islands region and covers all of the little islands in that area.

- Garbage collection
- Water, sanitation and sewers
- Local roads and sidewalks
- Streetlights
- Libraries
- Cemeteries

Most municipalities are also in charge of regulating:

- Business licensing
- Building permits and inspection
- Land use planning
- Subdivision approval
- Commercial vehicle licensing
- Dog licensing

Councils (and Regional Boards) have the power to implement planning and development processes and to create Official Community Plans. They are required to hold public hearings and consultation during the development or changes to Official Community Plans.

What is an Official Community Plan?

An Official Community Plan (OCP) is a powerful document that guides all development, land use, and transportation activities in a Municipality. An OCP sets out the policies that aim to achieve the municipal vision for how development will occur in a community. The Municipal Act authorizes local governments to adopt an Official Community Plan. Once an Official Community Plan is adopted, all bylaws and public works must be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies outlined in the plan. Using the OCP, the Planning Department and an Advisory Planning Committee or Commission usually made up of residents of the area, advise Council in respect to land use, and community planning or proposed bylaws and permits. If there is something you want to see in your community, a good way to achieve this is to get support for it to be part of your Official Community Plan. Often when you have a proposal to take to council you can find support for it if there is something written in the OCP that supports your idea. So look at your OCP! (It is available at the Planning Department and often online.)

Neighborhood Plans, and Local Area Plans

Many Neighborhoods also have their own plans and planning process. These plans normally must be in line with the OCP, and are more detailed to the locality.

How does your Municipal Government work?

Although it varies from Municipality, most Municipal governments function in a similar way. While the Mayor and Council are responsible for policy making, municipal staff are responsible for translating policy into action and delivering various municipal services. Council usually establishes several advisory bodies to provide advise and for community input to the decision-making process.

The Policy Makers: Your Mayor and Council

Council: The primary decision making body for the city and is made up of elected councilors. Council relies on reports from its staff and the recommendations of its committees to make decisions. The role of council is to develop policies, adopt bylaws or resolutions based on these policies and then ensures that they are carried out by the administration.

Mayor: The Mayor is the head of the council. The Mayor's role is to provide leadership and act as a spokesperson to the public, work with other levels of government, and make sure that Council addresses the strategic issues facing council

Advisory Committees: Advisory Committees are bodies created by the Mayor and Council to help them make decisions. These bodies provide input and recommendations to Council on issues relating to planning, environment, infrastructure, transportation, budgets, recreation, etc. Citizens are appointed or elected to advisory committees.

Committee of the Whole: The Committee of the Whole meetings are usually made up of Council and administrative staff, and in some cases members of advisory committees. These meetings usually are longer and less formal and allow for more discussion and reports to be presented. Any recommendations made are put forward to Council meetings. Almost all of these meetings are open to the public

Council Meetings

Decisions and bylaws are passed at council meetings. While the public may be present, they are only allowed to provide input if a public hearing is being held on a specific issue such as a rezoning or OCP amendment.

Municipal Staff: The Implementers

City Manager

Your City Manager provides leadership and coordination to all departments. They ensure that all departments utilize effective and efficient management principles and challenging each department to strive for better performance. The City Manager provides advice and recommendations to City Council and advises Council on the financial condition and future needs of the City. It is the City Manager's responsibility to ensure that Council directives and policies are carried out by the City Departments. Usually the city manager has an administrative staff that helps them to carry out their duties and support the work of council.

Clerk: The clerk is a good place to start with questions as they can provide information on all procedures. They take care of distributing meeting agendas, keeping records of all decisions, minutes, resolutions, and bylaws.

Planner: Planners work is focused on the planning and regulation of the development of the city. They are responsible for such things as land use (such as zoning and density) as well as building codes. They work with consultants and citizens to develop plans and put forward recommendations to council, including drafts of development bylaws.

Engineer: Engineers are responsible for infrastructure (roads. Water and sewer. Storm water); traffic (signs, noise, streets, street parking, sidewalks, on and off-street bike facilities (benches shelters). Engineers implement the general policy directions, they pour the concrete and put up the signs.^{ix}

Your Municipal Departments

Each Municipality organizes itself into departments in different ways. Typical Departments of Cities and Towns are: Finance and Corporate Services, Fire, Police, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development, and Engineering and Public Works. Most Municipalities have a description of their departments and how they are organized on their websites. Each Department has a Department Head or Manager and appropriate staff people who carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Department.

Who makes decisions about what?

The Mayor and Council are elected to make decisions on behalf of the citizens. They have a staff that they depend upon for information and expertise to inform their decisions, as well as to carry them out. The staff themselves, do not set policy, they interpret and implement policy in their area.

It is important to go and talk to the people who work in the departments to find out information about what you are doing or want to do. Don't be afraid to ask questions about what they do and how they operate. Always try to build good relationships with everyone you encounter.

For example if you want to create a community garden in a park, go to the Parks Department and find out who you should talk to. What is their policy about community gardens in parks? You will get a feel for whether your idea is well received or whether it falls outside of their normal operations. Another example might be if you are trying to get the Parks Department to stop using pesticides in parks. Go and find out first hand what the Departments policies for pesticide applications are, and what they are routinely applying. Has your idea been suggested before? What would be the obstacles? You may, or may not, find support for your ideas. It is good to do a bit of asking around because you will usually find somebody who is supportive and can help you with next steps. They may direct you to go and talk to a council member if what you are requesting requires a change in policy.

Making Decisions

If what you are working on requires a change in policy then you may need to go to your Mayor and Council. Find out if there is an advisory body that deals with the area you might be inquiring about. It might be best to approach the advisory body first.

The Mayor and Council meet on an ongoing basis at regularly scheduled Council meetings to make decisions. All meetings are open to the public (except under special circumstances where there are “in camera” meetings).

Meetings Process: There is an agenda made ahead of time that lists the topics in order of discussion. During the meeting minutes are taken to record the discussion and decisions that are made. These minutes are then later open to the public for review.

To get a topic put on the agenda you must ask the mayor or a councilor to do it for you. You are usually able to make a presentation about the item when it comes up on the agenda, but you must make a request ahead of time (there are hints on making a presentation in Section Four).

After discussion about the item, a Councilor must put forward a motion to be voted on by the Council. The Councilor may make a motion to send the idea to an advisory body or committee for further review and recommendation, or will ask for an approval or rejection of the idea.

Decisions: The decision must be made in the form of a resolution or a bylaw. A resolution is a formal expression of opinion or a decision by council on a specific matter. A bylaw is a specific regulation made by Council.

If there is a quorum (enough council members present) a simple majority can pass a resolution or by law. A tie vote means the motion fails. Bylaws require three readings, or votes, before they become law. A resolution may be passed with one vote.

Minutes of the proceedings of all meetings of Council and Committees must be legibly recorded and then adopted at a subsequent meeting. These minutes are open for viewing by the public.

2. Regional District

The provincial government established regional districts in 1966. This was done to ensure that all residents in BC have access to commonly needed services, no matter where they live. Some services were needed that crossed municipal boundaries, or where there were no municipalities. For example water and sewer lines cross municipal boundaries, and other services such as solid waste disposal are more economically provided on a region-wide basis.

Regional Districts are very different from place to place, for example the Greater Vancouver Regional District has 1.8 million people while the Central Coast Regional District has 3,900 residents².

² BC Municipal Redbook, 1998/99 p.13

What do Regional Governments look after?

Generally regional governments might provide the following services:

- Recreational facilities
- Libraries
- Fire protection and regulation
- Street lighting
- Solid waste disposal
- Water supply and distribution
- Sewage collection and disposal
- Recycling services
- Land use planning in unincorporated areas

If you live in a rural area you may not have a municipal government that looks after the services that are listed under Municipal Governments above, your Regional District may look after these things.

Every Regional District has different things it looks after and it would be good to either look on the web page or telephone to ask what services it covers and what departments it has to look after these services. A good place to start with questions is to find out what department deals with what you are working on. Is it the Regional Parks? Is it Waste Management? Then go and talk to the staff people about what you are doing. They may be very willing to help you, and the very least they will tell you if what you want to do requires making a presentation to a committee of the Regional District or to the Board itself.

The Board of a Regional District is usually made up of elected representatives of the member municipalities and representatives of rural/non municipal areas.

How does it work?

A regional District is governed by its Board. Board members are either elected from unincorporated areas, or are appointed by municipal councils. Administrative staff and departmental employees carry out the Board's decisions.

If you need to go to the Board

Basically business comes before the Board of the Regional District at a regularly scheduled meeting. Specific meeting times and procedures are followed. Meetings are open to the public except for a few specific topics. Boards function much like Municipal Governments. An agenda is made ahead of time, which lists the items to be discussed and decided on. Items of business are brought to the Board through committees, by staff, through a Board member or presentations made by residents. Sometimes a staff report is prepared before hand and given to the Board for review that gives an outline of the item.

Getting an item on the Board agenda: present the item to one of the board members from your area. They will then put it on the board agenda or send it to one of the committees first. It may be good to go to a committee first because it might skip a step by going to the Board meeting only to be referred back to the committee for review first.

Making a presentation to a committee: If you are planning on directing your concerns through a committee or commission it is important to find out what committee looks after what you are asking about. You can usually find out what committees exist by calling the office of the Regional District, looking at their web page or talking to your area representative. As for the opportunity to present your item to one of the committees of the board. You could also ask someone on the committee to present for you. The Committee then will make a recommendation to the Board for its consideration. Section Four has some hints on making presentations.

Speak Directly to the Board Directors

If you would like to make a presentation directly to the Board of Directors you need to make a formal request. Some Regional Districts have a downloadable form from their web page and others require you to phone and talk to the administrative staff to make a request.

The Board makes decisions through consideration, voting on, and adoption of bylaws and resolutions, the same way that a Municipal Government does.

3. First Nations and Local Governance

Treaty negotiations continue across BC between First Nations and the Province of British Columbia. This process will result in agreements over land ownership, management, rights and responsibilities. Currently First Nations govern Reserve Lands as outlined by the Indian Act.

Reserve Lands can be inside or cross Municipal boundaries. Depending on the Reserve, Elders and Band Councils manage Reserve Lands and communities. Most Reserves have a Band Administrator that looks after the departments that a Reserve may have. If you are from outside the community it is a good idea to ask people from the community about the Protocols (ways of interacting and communicating) that are important to the community before working with them.

Outside of reserve lands First Nations have claims to extensive traditional territories on which they can practice traditional activities. All of your projects take place within the traditional territory of a First Nation. It builds respect and relationships to ask permission to undertake any projects in traditional territories.

4. Other Local Authorities:

There are other local authorities in BC, this includes school districts, improvement district, regional hospital districts, library boards and various other commissions and boards.

School Districts: There are 59 School Districts in the Province. School Trustees are elected at the same time as municipal councilors. School Trustees must govern the activities of schools in accordance with the School Act. If your idea or project concerns schools you might want to talk to teachers, the School Principal, to Parental Advisory Committees, to the Maintenance Unions. Some matters may be referred to the School District Board.

Improvement Districts: Usually found in areas outside municipalities, Improvement Districts provide services such as water works, fire protection, or garbage collection.

Health Authorities: There are six Health Authorities in BC, one that is concerned with the Province as a whole and five geographic (regional) health authorities. These authorities are appointed and responsible to the Ministry of Health Services. These authorities plan and coordinate the delivery of health care programs in B.C.

Regional Hospital Districts: These authorities operate under the Hospital District Act and their main function is to look at fund for Capital Projects and Equipment purchases of Hospitals.

Commissions

Commissions are bodies that are appointed by council to carry out a specific task. These bodies administer assigned tasks such as operate a service, manage a property or enforce local government regulations. Examples of Commissions may be a Parks and Recreation Commission or an Economic Development commission.

Committees

Committees are established to assist council with decision making. They usually assist in providing community input into the process. They can be called special, standing, or advisory committees. Examples of committees a council may have would be Environment, Transportation, Finance and Administration, or Emergency Preparedness.

Section Four: Your Helpful Toolkit

Rules and regulations have been established in our communities that allow us to live together in a fairly ordered and organized way. We live in a country that allows citizens access to processes to change and amend the rules, although it is not always easy to do so. The better we understand what the rules are and are know what ways we have open to us to make change the more able we are to do so. The last section was designed to provide you with information about who looks after what and how decisions get made.

This next section is a bunch of hints and tools that should help you to work with your local government and community to get your projects off the ground and also in trying to effect policies to support your work.

If we look at our council members as a friend not a foe, if we look at our local government as a tool not an obstacle we will be further ahead. It is almost guaranteed you will be frustrated by how slow things move and the unexpected bumps along the way, but you can make a difference!

This Section includes:

1. Where do I start?

2. Tips for Working With Local Government

-Courtesy

-Getting your Council on side

- Writing a Briefing Paper
- Making a Presentation to Council
- Tools for Making Your Case
- Other Opportunities for Input

3. Building and Showing Support for Your Initiative

- Media
- Letters
- Petitions
- Coalition Building

4. Building Engagement in your Initiative

- Community Mapping
- Design Charettes

1. Where do I start³?

First Step- Do your Homework!

Find out who supports your idea and the best way to explain it. It is really important to be able to explain what you are thinking of and what the benefits will be to the community (and probably in your case youth) from the project. Think of it in terms of the environmental, health, recreational, and any economic benefits. Think about who will benefit, who will be involved, who will help maintain it? Find out if anyone else is already working on the idea. If they are, go and meet with them. Find out how much will it cost. Where can you get resources from? Who would be good partners to help you?

Second Step-Write Down your ideas, get clear, and communicate to others

Write down what it is you want to do, the answers about the above questions. Make sure to list who you think supports the idea-later this will become part of your briefing notes that you will use should you need to do presentations to committees or Council, it will also help you get your information together in case you want to work with the media.

Step Three-Get support for your ideas

Find out who in your community supports what you want to do. The more people and organizations who support you the more of a priority your project will be both for the community and for your elected officials. How can others be a part of it, and work together with you? What are their ideas? Do they know others who may be interested? The broader and more diverse the involvement is the better. (see below for more information on how to do build and show support for your idea.)

Step Four-Determine who makes the decisions about your issue

Go and visit the City or Regional staff people to find out if what you want to do needs special permission. Ask what the proper channels to go through would be. If your project involves a piece of land, then it might involve City owned land, Parks, School Districts, BC Hydro, BC Buildings Corporation etc.

Some larger cities have community development planners, they are often a good place to start in talking about your ideas for your community project. Another important place to go if you are planning a project in a specific neighborhood, is the neighborhood association, having them informed, interested and on side is a good place to start. Often they may also know if anyone else is working on the same idea.

³ Notes Taken From: Interview with Zeb King Cental Saanich Councillor March 26, 2003, Notes by Deborah Curran on Accessing Local Governments, Interview Gail Price Douglas City Community Development Planner and personal notes.

The main thing to remember is even if you are meeting with opposition to your ideas to try to stay positively focused and make good relationships as you go along.

City Staff do not usually make the rules, their job is to tell you what the rules are and determine if what you want to do falls within the rules. They may be able to help you implement your project. If what you want to do is outside the current rules or needs special permission you will need to go to those who make the rules and who can change the rules and they are your decision makers at council or at the District Board or Band Council

It is always useful to approach potentially sympathetic municipal councilors for advice and direction. This is especially true if they have sat on council for a while because they can give you a historical perspective on the issue and explain if and how it has been dealt with in the past. You can also clarify where they stand on the issue. If they are willing to champion the issue, you can work with them to bring it through the right channels. Most Councilors will meet you at the Municipal hall or a coffee shop if you call them.

Step Five Move Forward

You can do it! Take the information you have been given and convert it into action. If you need to go to council to get them to make or change a policy so your project will go forward or your idea will be implemented, don't be afraid. It is your right as a citizen to put your voice forward. Make yourself a game plan, do the back ground work, and you will be surprised at the results!

A Game Plan for Making or Changing Policy by Going to Council

1. Know what you want to do and why, and what the current policy is if there is one (be specific, don't muddle the issues)
2. Know who supports you in the community and confirm their support
3. Get as many councilors on side as possible through personal contact
4. Make a kick-butt briefing paper to support your ideas
5. Get on the Council Meeting Agenda and give your briefing paper to Councilors
6. Make your presentation
7. Watch carefully and note questions and concerns
8. Follow up to thank Councilors for their support or to clarify their concerns
9. Don't give up you may need to keep trying, if it goes to committee, repeat the steps above with the committee members!

They say those who show up to play, win the game!

2. Tips for Working with Local Government

In the next section when we refer to Councilors or Board members the comments generally apply to all forms of local government officials. Sometimes we call them "officials" or "politicians" as well.

Courtesy

Although a Councilors or Regional District Board members are elected and have responsibilities to represent you, they usually have other jobs, families, and lives. They are very busy people with a lot of demands on their time. If you call them at home, ask if it is a good time to talk, and if not, when would be better? Don't call at dinner time or too early or late in the day. Check to see if they have office hours and then try to call, or go and see them, during those hours.

It is important that you try to make the best use of their time (and yours!) Do your homework ahead of time to gather all the information that you can, provide them with a concise briefing paper or notes (that is a short summary of the relevant issues-see briefing notes below). Councilors have reams of paper to read through, so the shorter the better. Make sure that it is clear to them what you want to do and what you are asking them to do.

Going to the Top

Most Mayors are more difficult to get to. They have a very busy schedule with a lot of demands on their time. If you know an issue is near and dear to the Mayor's heart though, by all means go to the top!

Getting your Council on side

In order to get your idea passed as a policy you will need at least one or two of the politicians to support the idea and move it forward. When it comes to a vote, you will need the majority of them to vote in favor of the idea. For a Councilor to be on side they need to clearly see that it is a priority for their constituents, that means showing that the community support the idea. Some ways to demonstrate community support are through letters, petitions, public meetings, calls to the politicians office and positive media coverage (There is more in the Section on Building Public Support for your project below).

How do you find out where a councilor stands on an issue?

- If it is election time, go to forums and pose questions or see how they respond to questions
- "groupies" look for community members who go to all the Council of Board meetings, they have a pretty good handle on the views of the councilors
- go to council meetings and sit in
- read the minutes
- by talking to other council members "who else might support this idea?"
- call them or go to visit them in office hours if they have them

How do you get their support?

Getting their support often requires building a relationship with them to get their support. What are good ways to do this? Find out what the interests are of your Councilors. Shape how you explain your issue so it is relevant to them. If you know someone that

knows them such as family, friends, or supporters, it may pay off to talk to them about your ideas. If your issue is linked to another issue of priority that concerns them this is another avenue to peak their interest. Also, many officials do not have very much time and are short staffed. If you are able to keep them up to date on an issue or help them by holding meetings to get input from people about it, or suggest progressive ideas for policies, then this will help both your councilor and your cause.

Ask about their concerns. Remember if someone opposes your ideas, they are a great source of information. Focus on figuring out what their concerns are and how you might address them. It may mean changing your project a bit. Remember if they have the concerns, others probably will too, and you will need to consider these opinions. Making up a question and answer sheet with possible concerns and solutions can be a good idea.

There are many ways to meet with your representatives. You can call to get a meeting at their office. If you are part of a group you can invite them to your space or to an event. In requesting a meeting it is good to let them know your name, what your group does, if you are working with a group, what the cause or idea is, and why it would benefit them to talk to you.

Before a meeting make sure you know:

- who you are and who you represent
- how to concisely describe your idea or issue
- where your politician stands on the issue
- are they able to do something about it
- what you would like them to do about it
- how this benefit them or solve a community concern

Tips for meetings^x

1. know and state your issue clearly
2. always be friendly, well mannered and thank them for the meeting
3. be on time
4. be brief-stick to the issue
5. Show support (who do you represent, who is affected by or supports your cause)
6. Know the responsibilities that the person has that you are meeting with and what you want them to do

7. provide a briefing paper that summarizes your ideas, actions and what you want them to do
8. make sure your facts are correct and you are honest
9. when you can compliment them if they have done any good work in this area in the past
10. you can bring another person with you, but generally it is best to have one spokesperson, make sure to let them know who will be at the meeting
11. follow up the meeting with a thank you note

Writing Briefing Notes

Briefing notes are a back ground paper that describes your issue or idea clearly and concisely. Politicians are responsible for such a wide array of issues that they may not be familiar with the area that you are talking about. The notes are meant to get them up to speed and let them know what you want them to do about it. It is best to send them ahead of time to prepare for meetings, or for presentations. You can also use them for working with the media as part of your media kit.

Making Good Briefing Notes

The notes should answer the following questions

What is the idea or concern?

What do you want to accomplish?

Why is it important to the community?

Who supports the idea in the community?

What are the benefits of your suggestions to the community?

What is the history of the idea or issue to date?

Is there any good examples of successes elsewhere?

What do you want your politician to do about it?

Is there are a lot of concerns that could be raised? Sometimes it is good to have a one page question and answer sheet that addresses possible concerns.

Make sure to include your contact information and name so that they can direct further questions or concerns to you.

Making Your Presentation

“Be clear about what you want them to know and about what you want to ask”

Do I go to a committee first or straight to council?

Testing the waters is very important, sometimes bringing your idea to a committee or advisory body if one exists in the area of your interest is a good first step. They will usually ask for a presentation. Committees are usually less formal, and you can usually

make a longer presentation. If they like and support your idea they may agree to put forward a resolution to council. If on the other hand the committee is not supportive it may be necessary to go directly to council, although you should still work on building committee member support and understanding of your idea. Council usually takes direction from the committees and advisory and will often refer matters for discussion there, especially if they are technical in nature.

Another approach is to present to council and ask for them to send it to the committee for review, then the committee must review it and you can present a more in depth presentation to them, and council already is introduced to the idea. This is a good idea if you have some enthusiasm for the idea from council members. Sometimes they will agree to support the idea in principle and send it to committee to work out the details.

Making the presentation

After you have done your groundwork with committee members, Councilors, or Board Members it is time to make your presentation.

1. Getting on the Agenda:

Call to be asked to be put on the agenda of the meeting, make sure that you call well in advance, at least one week before the meeting dates. If you call City Hall they will let you know when the next meeting is. They will usually give you at least 5 minutes but make sure to ask how long you will have to make your presentation, ask if you can bring any visual tools with you. If you want to make a longer presentation you may have to have a member of the committee or a Councilor help put you on the agenda.

1. Send Briefing notes:

Ask if you can put your briefing notes to attach to the minutes. If the secretary who supports the committee or City Clerk will not do it, send your briefing notes to the committee members or Councilors ahead of time.

2. Talk to councilors ahead of time:

Talk to Councilors who will support your presentation, find out if they will make a motion for a resolution to support your initiative, or to refer it to the appropriate committee if this is what will help move things along.

3. Dress the part?:

Strategy! Strategy! Here is where it is important to remember that what you are doing is being strategic, and this includes in the way that you make the presentation and who makes it. Think-what is the message that you want council to hear? How can they best hear it?

Having a young person speak on behalf of their issue is critical, sometimes it is also good to have a person from the neighborhood association or some other person who can lend additional credibility to your request and show broader community support. You don't

have to wear a suit and tie, it is ok to be who you are but take note if your appearance could be a bit weird to council (tattoos and body piercing, hair style etc.)

Don't let the messenger speak louder than the message!

If the council can not get past the way you look or present yourself, they will not be able to hear your message-so think about what your point is and how they will best be able to hear it. Now may not be the time to “open their minds” about tolerance and acceptance by presenting with seven colored Mohawk and a Kill Corporations Tattoo. You are indeed a citizen with a right to be heard, but you are representing a wide range of youth and community concerns when you move your project and request forward. Yes, “Normal” should only be a setting on your dryer, but do try to have a sense of humor and have fun with playing the role! .

4. Make the Presentation

- Prepare your speech ahead of time, practice it and time it carefully (stay within the time you have allocated)
- Focus on a few points making it absolutely clear what your idea or issue is, who supports it and what you are asking for
- If you have time try to address concerns that you know they have or make sure to provide this information in the accompanying briefing paper
- Be polite and brief
- Thank the audience for the opportunity of making the presentation and let them know that you are available to answer their questions or talk with them more about the issue

5. Be available, and don't be shy:

Stay until the meeting is over as it shows that you are interested in the decisions the officials are making and are dedicated to the cause, it also allows you to ask or answer questions afterward

6. Follow the decision making process:

If the motion does not go forward, note the concerns that came up and then go back to the drawing board, trying to address the concerns and build more support.

Tools for Making your case

In some cases there are already policies and agreements that your local government has made that support what you want to do. Be a detective and find out what they have already committed to. By doing this you will be helping them do their job by showing them how by supporting you they will be doing what they already agreed they would do! You can do this by using planning tools that are already in place.

Examples of Planning Tools for you to use:

- OCP Official Community Plan

- Strategic Plans –most municipalities have a five year plan which includes a budget plan which sets out where money will be spent
- Land Use Bilaws
- Youth Civic Strategy
- Neighborhood Plans
- Waste Management Plan
- Parks Master Plans
- Specific Action Plans: such as Greenways, Bikeways, and Pedestrian Mobility or Emergency Preparedness Strategies

These will be available at your planning department. They usually have a cost to buy them. You could ask for them also at your Library to see if they have copies on hand. These are all plans that have been endorsed by the appropriate advisory bodies and either Council or Regional Governments.

A typical neighborhood plan has a series of objectives and recommendations for Policy and Action.

If you can find support for your ideas written up in official documents and then quote them in your briefing notes and presentations this provides a foundation of support that already exists that you can point to.

“In our Neighborhood plan there is a recommendation 9.1.2 to establish bicycle routes that provide alternative access through the Neighborhood, and in the Youth Civic Strategy to provide opportunities to increase youth transportation services”. A direct way to accomplish both of these objectives would be to create a bicycle route in our neighborhood around our high school.”

Other Opportunities for Input

Often there are other opportunities for the public to give input into the decision making process that might affect what you are trying to accomplish. These opportunities include:

- Public consultation for regional growth strategies, official community plans, neighborhood plans
- Stakeholder consultations (specific interest and community groups)
- Open Houses (zoning, development, plans, collect input)
- Sitting on an advisory or special committee
- Special council meetings
- Surveys
- All candidates meetings

3. Building and Showing Support for Your Initiative

Through **Building** and **Showing** public support for our project and our ideas we accomplish the following things:

- We show that it is a community priority and signals the issue as important. If we need to affect policies, a politician is much likelier to respond to a large number of constituents than just a few.
- We get more people involved. For the project to be realized we will need a lot of hands. Through actively building support we also engage more people in accomplishing the goal.
- We can access the resources we need. Generally we need to prove that there is both community support and benefit in order to access resources to accomplish our goal
- We gain credibility. Support for our initiative give us credibility and therefore a greater impact.

There are many ways to build and show community support. Building support is done through talking to people about the idea, hearing their concerns and incorporating their ideas into the larger vision. Activities such as events, public meetings, and community mapping sessions or Design Charettes are good ways to get people more actively engaged and in supporting the project. Through generating partnerships or building coalitions around the issue is another good way to build support. Media coverage is also a good way to paint a positive picture of your idea in the larger community but also to let people know how they can get involved.

In order to demonstrate that your project is supported you need to be able to show the involvement of people and their support of the project. Some ways to do this are through gathering letters of support, petitions, positive media stories, and community maps that have been made by people in the community.

Media

Media is a powerful tool for you to use to both educate a wide audience about what you are doing and also to get them involved. Think about what message you want to get out there and what audience you want to reach. Possible channels include:

- Local radio or television talk shows
- Letters to the editor
- Talk Back Lines (CBC radio has “Talk Back”)
- Writing an Opinion Editorial
- Sending out a news release or news advisory to your local papers
- Neighborhood or school newsletters
- Holding a news conferences
- University or College papers and radio stations

Usually media around a subject is a tactic that can also be used if you are meeting resistance from local decision makers to support your project. If you can provide a story that shows broad community support and benefits that is good. If you can also present a

“win- win” approach to the story rather than putting a negative light on your local council if they are resisting, the better you will be at keeping good relationships with council. It should be a last resort to put out a negative media story that shows council blocking a great idea. You had better be ready with a lot of community support if this is the tactic that you try.

There are a lot of good resources available to you about getting the word out. You will want to think about: What do I want to accomplish by working with the media; how do I work with them; how to find out who to contact; what types of channels are out there for us to use; how to write a news release; hints on creating a message; how to be a good spokesperson to the media; and what a media tool kit should include. The following resources are good places to start for this information.

www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/downloads/J1_ToolKitPart_III.pdf

www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction/media_relations_planning_e.html

www.impacs.bc.ca

Letters

Letters to show support or raise concerns can be used in many instances. It is said that every letter that is written actually represents about 500-1000 voters opinion. You might want to get letters for something you are proposing to show that it is supported by more than yourself or your group. It is good to get letters from individuals as well as organizations.

Here is how to write an effective letter⁴:

Try to stay away from form letters, they carry less weight, if the letter is an original letter then they show that the person has actually thought about the issues. Hand written letters are the best.

- Write the letter to a particular person or a committee
- Keep the letter short and simple and one page in length
- Say what you want them to do about it
- Be sure to include the date your name and mailing address
- Be polite and positive in approach
- If you would like a response, include a specific question at the end of your letter

If you get a form letter or unsatisfactory letter back, write a letter back that says, “I am sorry, but your answer really wasn’t responsive to my concerns.” The second letter is highly effective.

(Fictional Letter)

⁴ Hints from the Sierra Club of Victoria Group Newsletter Winter 2002 Issue 17

Date:

Regional Director _____
Greater Vancouver Regional District

Greater Vancouver
Regional District
4330 Kingsway,
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4G8

Dear _____

I am very concerned about the impact of climate change, and in particular to do with single occupant vehicle use. In a recent survey you stated that, due to residents interest in keeping taxes lower, that there would not be improvements to public transportation routes this year, and in particular to bicycle routes. The cost of inaction to human health and the environment is unacceptable. The Kyoto Protocol is a small step in the right direction, and we have a responsibility to uphold our end of the bargain. Could you please let me know how this decision and the GVRD transportation planning policy is helping to meet the Kyoto targets?

Sincerely,

Name
Signature
address

It is also important to send letters that recognize Councillors work on your behalf, it keeps them informed and thinking about your issue, and everyone likes to be thanked!

Following is an example of a letter that was sent to a councilor (See LifeCycles Story on Community Gardens in Parks Policy)

Date:

Dear Councilor _____
City Hall 1 Centennial Square
City of Victoria,

Dear Councilor _____

We would like to thank you for supporting the motion regarding the establishment of a community gardening site in Fairfield at the meeting on March 7. Although the motion did not pass, it looks like we are still moving forward in the process to establish a site in the neighborhood. We appreciate the support that you expressed and recognize your consistent commitment to community concerns.

We look forward to your ongoing support on this issue as the question of establishing a policy to recognize community gardens as a legitimate activity for city parks. This will be reviewed by the Parks Advisory Committee, and will come before Council again. We are encouraged by the direction that Council has given them in this matter. Please let us know if there is any more information that would be helpful to you in supporting this policy.

Sincerely,

Signature

Printed Name

Address and contact number

Petitions

If you aren't afraid to do a little leg work or have an enthusiastic batch of volunteers making a petition can be another way of showing support and putting a little pressure on your elected officials to support what you want to do. The idea is that a petition will show a great amount of support by the number of people who sign it. A petition with a few signatures on it will not be that successful. The petition then can be taken to your neighborhood association or elected officials to show support for your cause. It can also be used to back up a presentation, or for a media story.

A Petition is a document that states what the concern or issue at hand is, and what you would like to do, or have done to solve it. People sign their name on the petition to show that they support what is stated on it.

For example:

January 12, 2003

Healthy City Petition

Nelson, British Columbia

This Petition is sponsored by the Nelson Youth for Healthy Cities Society.

To the Nelson City Parks Department:

“Because we are concerned about the health of the citizens of Nelson and the protection of our environment, we request that the Nelson City Parks Department cease the utilization of any types of pesticide, fungicide, or herbicide applications for cosmetic purposes on the parks or boulevards within the City of Nelson”

Signed,

1. Name (printed) Address, Signature

Petition Tips:

1. **Good spelling and grammar.** Before using your petition, get a friend to proofread it. Many people won't take you seriously if you misspell words or make grammatical errors.
2. **Include a "sponsor" on the petition.** This is the author of the petition. Use the name of the group to let people know who is leading the petition. If you do not belong to a group you can either sponsor it yourself or ask another group to sponsor it.
3. **Include the petition's "recipient".** This is the specific person(s) or group(s) who will eventually receive the petition and signatures in this case the City of Nelson Parks Department.
4. **In the "body" of the petition itself, state the problem you want solved and the action that should be taken.**
5. **Include places for signatures.** Underneath create a place for the persons name (it needs to be legibly printed), their address, and their signature and make sure that each page of signatures has the introductory paragraph on it.
6. **Have a Backgrounder ready.** Many people may not be aware of why this issue is important; having some materials about it will be useful.
7. **There are lots of opportunities for petition signing.** You can go door-to-door, go to an event, a parade, a school, a march, a party!
8. **Have multiple copies of the petition.** This way you can carry one with you and get others to do the same. You can then staple all the pages together.
9. **Ask people to only sign it once.** Having multiple signatures of one person on the petition makes it look less credible.
10. **On-line petitions.** You can also do on-line petitions and have people send them to their list serves. These types of petitions seem to have less impact, but they can supplement your main petition.

Most of the petitions that we are doing are locally focused but a fun website to look at, to post a petition, and with examples petitions is at:

<http://www.petitionpetition.com/>

Partnership and Coalition Building

Building up a network of groups is very useful. It is always necessary to have a small core group to move your idea forward but getting support from others, especially those most effected by your idea (like neighbors!) is a very good idea. If you can get your neighborhood association to agree that is a good idea. Sometimes you can ask people to sign on to an issue-specific statement or position. That means they sign a paper that says they support what you are proposing! It would help your case if you can get a broad range of groups to support you, for examples a seniors group as well as the youth group. You can use this to get council attention as well as media attention.

It is much easier to get something accomplished through working with others than alone. The more people and groups that get involved the more volunteers there are, the pool of expertise is greater, and the more likely the initiative will meet the needs of a broader segment of the community. Granted some aspects of working with others are challenging, but the involvement of others makes for a richer, more relevant, and successful experience and end result.. It is of particular importance to work with others in community action projects or when we are trying to affect policy.

“With every community project that we do, a key element is building partnerships. By bringing together a diverse range of people we bring together a diverse range of opinions, expertise and energy. Not only are the projects more responsive and accountable to community needs and assets, it also accomplishes a further goal of building community relationships. These relationships are powerful when we need to work with local authorities, and gain their support for the project.” LifeCycles Project Coordinator

Who would make good partners?

Look carefully at who might be interested in the initiative besides the young people you are working with. Who could contribute? Who might benefit? It is very likely that you will find a whole range of allies that each bring some form of resource and also credibility to the idea. Sometimes unlikely allies make interesting partners. Who'd a thunk that that the seniors center singing club would help support your creation of a community garden because they are looking for a nice green and sunny place to get outside and sing in the summer?

When can building a Coalition be important?

When we are working with our local governments, as with other levels of government, showing strong and united support for a single initiative or issue can bring results. The first thing you need to do is determine your central issue or idea and then think of who might be logical allies that would support it. Then think about who else might support it because it solves a problem for them or helps them out?

Linking different groups concerns under a common agenda and working together on key issues increases the likelihood of developing win-win-win scenarios, where citizens, local government, and developers recognize and act on opportunities to do the right thing.^{xi}

Once we identify the groups and individuals, how do we get everyone together on the same page? Sometimes this can be done by taking your background document about your initiative and meeting and discussing it with an individual or group. Many groups meet on an ongoing basis and you can ask to be put on the agenda for a five minute presentation. It is always good to remember to present the idea in terms of the groups interests so they can see why they might be interested. Make sure to listen carefully to concerns, because if they have them it is likely that others will too and you will need to work to address these concerns. Other ways are to invite groups and individuals to a meeting. Using tools like community mapping can be useful to build on the idea. In this way the vision moves beyond yours, to something everyone relates to.

4. Building Engagement in Your Initiative

Not only does partnership and coalition building increase the support for you project it also engages more people and organizations in it, and as we stated above makes it more responsive to community needs and assets as well as builds on greater energy and creativity.

Below are two neat tools that you can use to help you get individuals of all ages and walks of life more involved. They are tools that are more visual in nature and therefore are more interesting and accessible to a wider audience.

Community Mapping

Community mapping provides an inclusive and visual way for people to pool their experiences and knowledge about their neighborhoods and communities. At its simplest, making community maps require a place to gather, some colored markers and a sheet of paper. More complex mapping may start with a base map, representative icons, be digitized and linked to a data base.

Whatever the end product, community mapping is as much about process as it is about 'getting the map done.' As a participatory and creative educational tool, mapping relies on the active engagement of the participants. The process of map-making can bring together diverse perspectives and people to create conversation and common understanding.

For people concerned with development issues or with community action projects mapping is a powerful organizing, planning and advocacy tool. Citizens can use mapping to locate and affirm the historical, physical, social, cultural and even spiritual attributes of their communities. Through the process of creating and revising maps, communities are better equipped to proactively address their interests and concerns.

Community maps have been used to map: all of the favorite spots in a neighborhood for dog walking; green areas of the ecological features of their neighborhoods; all the children under five in an area to assess day care needs; fruit trees to identify potential

food sources and donations; all the places in a neighborhood that youth think make their community healthy; areas of crime for Neighborhood Watch programs; walking paths and bike paths that are important to a neighborhood; and walking distances and the need for resting benches for seniors.

Some of the ways that youth groups have linked mapping to their efforts to influence policy include:

- making a map atlas of a city lot that told of its ecological, social, culture, and historical values to the community to save it as a neighborhood park
- map of bike routes to influence transportation policy
- maps of natural areas and their ecological values to protect them during development planning processes
- visual maps of features of skateboard parks that would meet the needs of all levels of users to influence facility design

Community Mapping could be used to:

- Gather information in a community about why a park is important to residents
- To figure out where to put walkways, bike paths, or traffic calming
- To show the ecological, social, cultural, economic values of a piece of land to a community
- Find out what school children would like to see in their school yard
- To look beyond enrollment numbers to assess the value of schools to communities in considering at school closures

(Insert Mapping Resources Book Information HERE)

Resources:

Common Ground Community Mapping Initiative www3.telus.net/cground
Including their resources links <http://www3.bc.sympatico.ca/cground/links.html>
Groundworks Learning Center www.gworks.ca
Youth Community Asset Mappers at EYA
<http://www.eya.ca/youthmappers/indexmain.htm>

Design Charettes^{xii}

Community Design Charettes bring people together to solve community design challenges. By working together in a specific time period citizens and officials can come up with creative solutions. Charettes try to pull out as much problem solving from the participants as possible. This can help build a sense of ownership through involvement in the planning process.

What is a Community Design Charette?

"The best way to get the most creative proposals to address the most difficult problems from the most accomplished designers in the most compressed period."

In a community Charrette, although we involve accomplished designers, the community are also considered as “designers”. The goal of the process is to put forth feasible and creative solutions to real problems

A Community Design Charrette can be one session or a series of visioning workshops, focus group discussions and design sessions that are visually engaging, interactive and collaborative. Charettes offer participants and opportunity to meet in an informal, friendly atmosphere to discuss and debate issues and achieve workable and specific solutions to community or neighborhood concerns. They can be used for a variety of purposes from reaching consensus on a community’s long-term vision, to finding workable agreements to site-specific projects

In order to get the expertise that is necessary, as well as meeting the communities needs, it is important to invite the right people. Planners, architects, landscape architects and other professionals, elected officials, citizens and community groups, school administrators, teachers, youth and seniors are all important to invite.

A Charette involves these people working together to discuss a problem (how to improve the compatibility of diverse of transportation modes in a neighborhood) or to create a common vision (such as how to create and use community green spaces).

For example, we want to make a change to our community park, such as put in a community garden, a basket ball court or a nature trail. How do we do this in a way that does not conflict with other park uses, discourage certain people from using the park, or degrade the site ecology? It can be a challenge. New ideas for how this can be done and potential conflicts can be resolved are needed in order to discuss and plan it before the bulldozers arrive, and before the funds are committed.

This is where the design charrette serves a vital purpose. Only through actual discussion and proposals can we assess the tradeoffs and, hopefully, the synergy between different, sometimes conflicting, goals. The idea is to come up with a win-win situation.

Maps and models are good visual tools to use in a Charrette setting.

Resources

BC Smart Growth Toolkit, Community Design Charettes by Patrick Condon,
<http://www.udeducation.org/teach/shortevents/charette/index.asp>

Conclusions

It doesn't end here.....

At the end of the day when it comes to affecting change in your community, whether in the realm of local action projects or policy work-the word is---JUST DO IT! The experience of youth and youth organizations is that action gets results. You must plant seeds in order for anything to grow.

So you have an idea that will make your community a better place?

bike lanes?

skate park?

?graffiti gallery

park\community gardens?

?youth health program

youth festival?

?greenways

murals or art projects?

Well get going....

What do you need to do?

- Know what you want and how to describe it
- Know why it is important and beneficial to your community
- Find out who else supports the idea
- Know who you need to ask or what process you need to go through to make it happen-Go find out!
- Take it forward!

This manual is designed to explain the importance for youth to be involved in the planning, decision making and creation of their communities. We have looked at the different ways that youth get involved in policy and decision making and talked about the importance of real participation. We have focused on the participation of youth through local action projects in communities, and how this has influenced not only local but regional, national and international policy.

The manual has been called Youth Hands! Youth Voices! To demonstrate that it is by getting our hands dirty in our communities and by uniting our hands working together with others in our community that our voices can be heard. It is our hope that decision makers will also **take note** that when they consider youth participation, they will look at appropriate active forums for getting youth involved and supporting them when youth come forward with ideas and activities in their communities.

Finally this manual has tried to give some practical tools to assist youth in communities in taking their ideas from a tiny seed, through the channels of decision making, and in building support to grow them into reality.

We have provided examples of how youth from across British Columbia are working to do this, and we hope that these stories have inspired you to get digging in your community.

Your ideas are valid, you are creative, and there are others out there to give you support and guidance (don't forget the resource pages!) so JUST DO IT!

ⁱ Adapted from *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*, David Driskell, Earthscan Publications and UNESCO, 2002

¹ ⁱⁱⁱⁱ **The Youth Engagement Initiative**, by Michael Delli Carpini for the Pew Charitable Trust Foundation

ⁱⁱⁱ Zammit and Dolgber, 1995, *to Engage or not Engage...What is our Policy?* Joah Lui, Environmental Youth Alliance, January 2000.

² ^{iv} *Metropolis Conversation Series Number Six Growing Up in Cities, Creating Better Cities, Creating Better Youth*. Workshop Report prepared by UNESCO August, 2002

^v *Dimensions of young people's participation, Creating Better cities with Children and Youth*, Earthscan Publications and UNESCO 2002

^{vi} Adapted from Roger Hart's *Ladder of Participation, Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*

^{vii} Mission statement, Toronto Youth Cabinet, Report by Kahinde Bah

^{viii} Report by Kahinde Bah

^{ix} Smart Growth Tool Kit, Smart Growth BC

^x Adapted from *The Smart Growth Guide to Local Governance Law and Advocacy Chapter 10-Public Participation*

^{xi} SmartGrowth BC Toolkit Coalition Building 111-23

^{xii} Adapted from *Community Design Charettes* by Patrick Condon www.sustainable-communities.agsci.ubc.ca