Summary of the discussion paper on approaches to community representation in North American cities, prepared for the Community Representation Framework Task Force

The Community Representation Framework Task Force requested the staff team to investigate the approaches of other North American cities to encourage the representation of community views and perspectives. The investigation centered on three areas of focus identified by the task force:

- *Representation structure* – a system by which organized community groups and individuals collaborate with City staff on community-building issues.
- *Community Involvement* – clear roles, responsibilities and expectations of different stakeholders in community-building with significant focus on the processes and practices of The City with respect to community involvement.
- *Supports and resources* – human resources, funding and programs required to build the capacity of individuals and organized community groups so they can effectively contribute to community-building processes.

The subsequent discussion and proposal of the task force has centered on establishing a preferred *representation structure*. That is the focus of this summary.

The Community Representation Framework staff team researched several North American cities, but focused primarily on the following:

- Atlanta, Georgia
- Dayton, Ohio
- Denver, Colorado
- Edmonton, Alberta
- Los Angeles, California
- Portland, Oregon
- Seattle, Washington
- Saint Paul, Minnesota
- Victoria, British Columbia
- Washington D.C.

Key Findings of Investigation

There are two main variations of *representative structure*: In some cities, local interests are represented at the neighbourhood or community scale, while in other cities neighbourhoods or communities were aggregated into larger areas or "districts" to provide representation. Also, the *representation structure* in some cities facilitates collaboration between groups like business associations, resident's associations and local institutions while in other cities, these groups act independently from one another.

Another, difference between cities in the study is how Administration acknowledges and works with community groups. Some cities focus their engagement efforts on organizations based on a geographic area (like a community or district organization) while other cities focus more (or most) efforts to engage with groups based on a specific characteristic or cause (identity-based groups). Often, they indicate, these sorts of groups are under-represented by geographically-based organizations.

And finally, the amount of funding and the dedication of resources for community groups varies as well (summarized below). Some groups are funded and/or staffed, at least in part by the municipality, while others are run by volunteers and raise their own funds. Likewise, some municipalities offer a range of training and education for individuals and community groups. These include courses on municipal processes, community leadership development and instruction on how to run a community group successfully.

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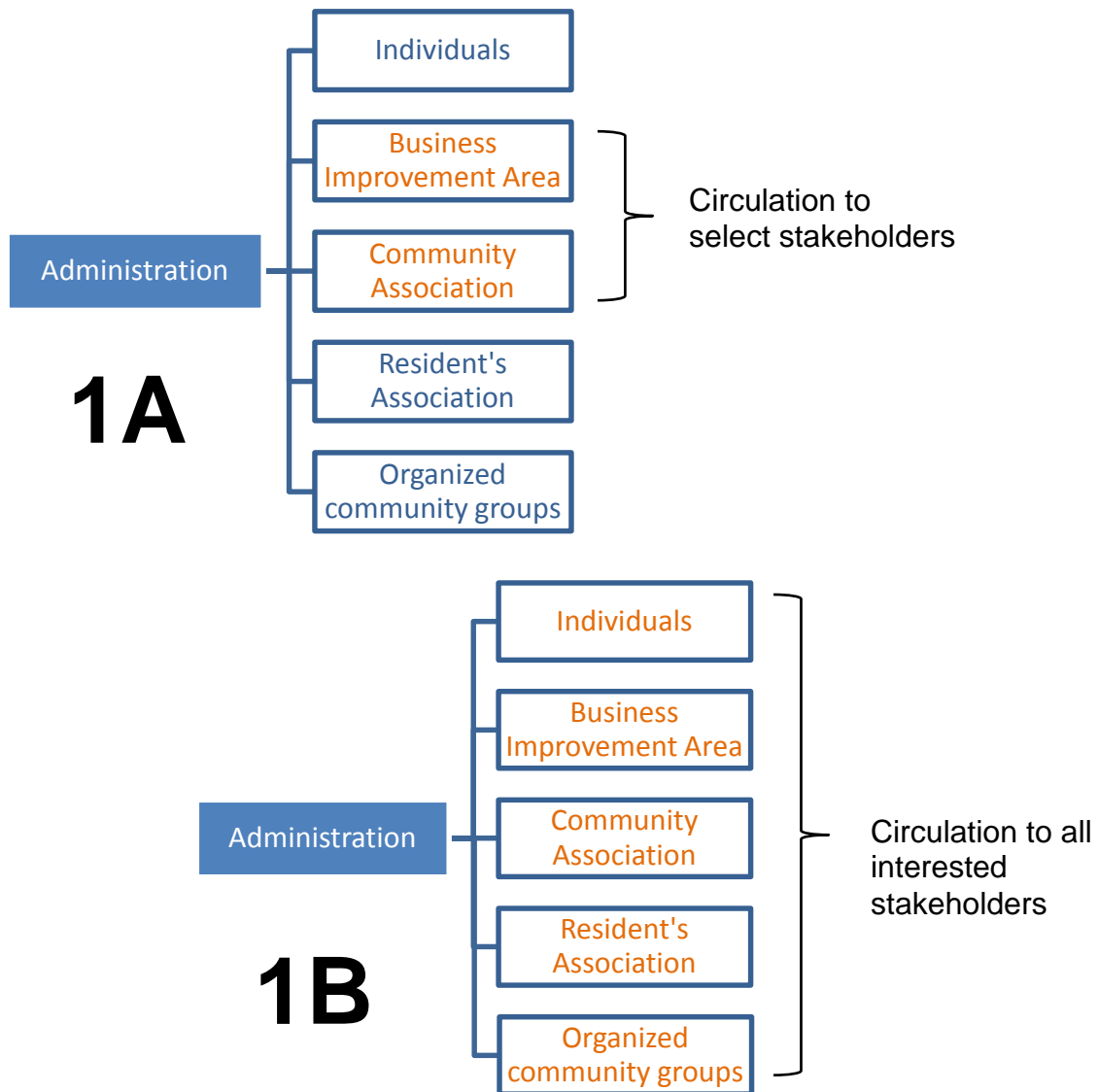| City	Community association 'equivalent'	District structures	Funding	City staff dedication
CALGARY (pop 1,246,337)	151 Community Associations	×	$6M annually Capital Conservation Grant (infrastructure only)	24 FTE Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators ($3.7M for total program)
ATLANTA (pop 472,522)	242 Neighbourhood/ Civic Associations	25 Neighbourhood Planning Units	$100,000 annually Neighbourhood Planning Units (operations) Neighbourhood grant program (beautification)	Neighbourhood Planning Units program: 2 FTE (assistant director, coordinator) 26 planners assigned to support Neighbourhood Planning Units
DAYTON (pop 140,489)	60 Neighbourhood Associations	5 Priority Land Use Boards	Community Engagement Grant program $99,161 annually for Mini-grants program (community and organizational capacity)	Priority Land Use Boards: 21 FTE professional staff (3 per board) and 7 FTE clerical staff (one per board)
DENVER (pop 682,545)	78 Registered Neighbourhood Organizations	19 Ad Hoc Neighbourhood Planning Units	$0	Administration of Registered Neighbourhood Organizations program
EDMONTON (pop 899,447)	157 Community Leagues	×	Community League Grants (infrastructure, operating and establishment) Neighbourhood Engagement Grants	32 FTE Community Recreation Coordinators
LOS ANGELES (pop 4,041,707)	×	97 Neighbourhood Councils	$3.59M annually $37,000 / Neighborhood Council (administration, outreach and projects)	26 FTE Neighbourhood Empowerment staff
PORTLAND (pop 693,863)	95 Neighbourhood Associations	7 Neighbourhood Coalitions (Support organizations)	$5M annually on community and neighbourhood involvement ($3.6 M focused on inclusion)	14 FTE Community and Neighbourhood Involvement Centre staff & 7 planners assigned to support neighbourhood coalitions
ST PAUL (pop 302,389)	232 Neighbourhoods	17 District Councils	$1.1M annually $65,000 / District Council	1 FTE Community Engagement Coordinator
SEATTLE (pop 704,352)	127 Neighbourhood Councils	13 District Councils (pre-2017)	$6500 annually $500 / per District Council (pre-2017)	Removed 2017
VICTORIA (pop 85,792)	14 Community/ Neighbourhood Associations	×	Civic grants	12 FTE Neighbourhood Coordinators
WASHINGTON (pop 681,170)	×	40 Advisory Neighbourhood Commissions	$680,000 annually $17,000 / District Commission	Administration of the Office of Advisory Neighbourhood Commissions

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The Community Representation Framework team identified five different models of *representation structure* for consideration by the task force.

Models of *representation structure*

Models 1A and 1B

In the first two models, organized groups in the community are consulted independently on civic matters. Using planning applications as an example, information is circulated to these groups independently and responses are likewise independent. The difference between these models is that with the first, circulation is limited to specific organizations, much as occurs in Calgary currently. In the second model, all interested parties (that meet basic criteria) can receive information on an application.

1A

Administration
- Individuals
- Business Improvement Area ⎤
- Community Association   ⎦ Circulation to select stakeholders
- Resident's Association
- Organized community groups

1B

Administration
- Individuals
- Business Improvement Area
- Community Association
- Resident's Association
- Organized community groups

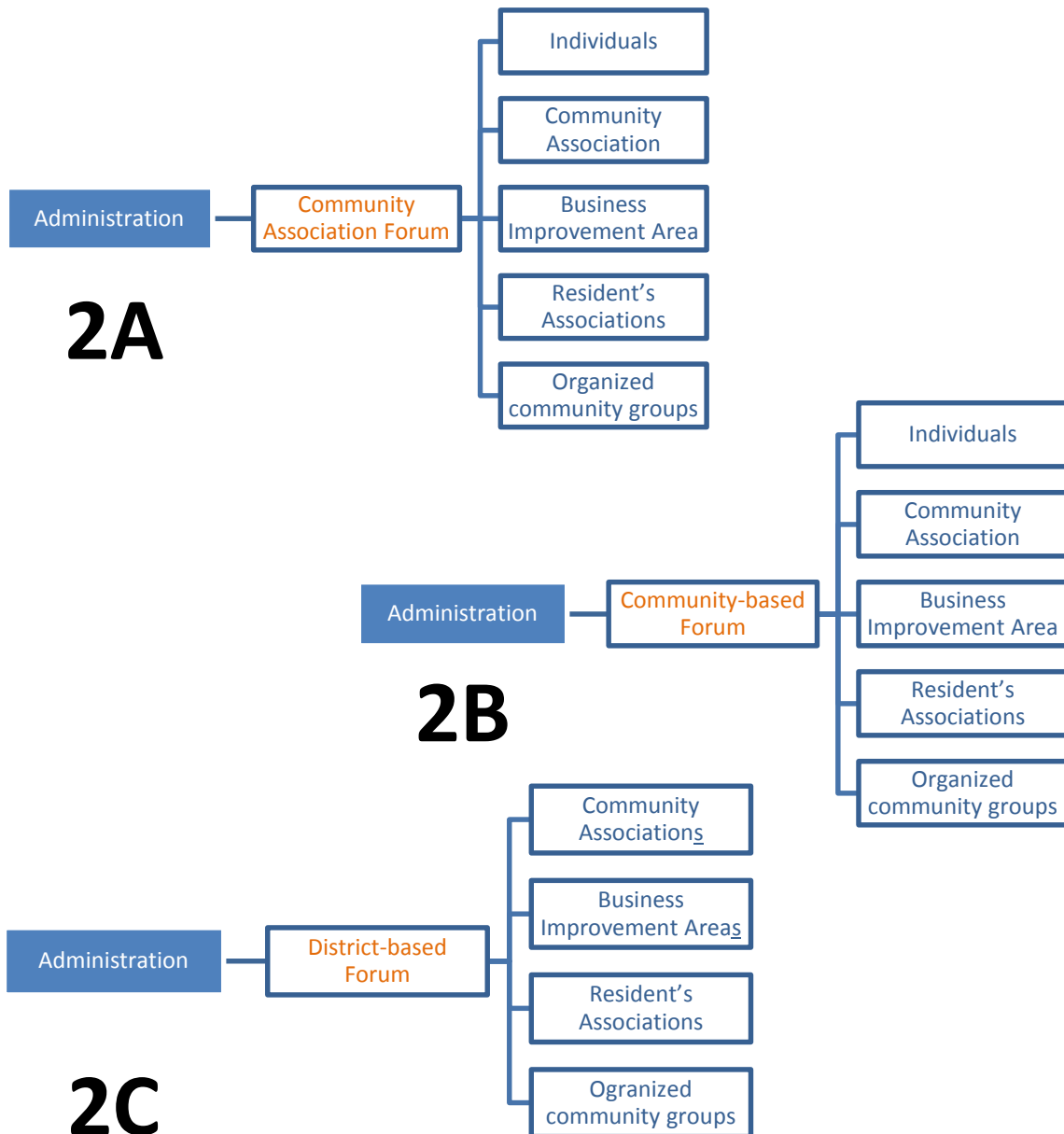Circulation to all interested stakeholders

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Models 2A, 2B and 2C

The other three models of *representation structure* provide a range of community stakeholders with an opportunity to come together to share information, discuss ideas and build consensus on a range of topics and issues that affect their community(ies).

Any of these "forum-based" models are envisioned to not only provide a common point of contact through which City-led projects can be taken to communities, but also through which community-led projects and initiatives can be posed to The City for support and assistance.

2A

Administration → Community Association Forum → Individuals, Community Association, Business Improvement Area, Resident's Associations, Organized community groups

2B

Administration → Community-based Forum → Individuals, Community Association, Business Improvement Area, Resident's Associations, Organized community groups

2C

Administration → District-based Forum → Community Associations, Business Improvement Areas, Resident's Associations, Ogranized community groups

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The variables posed by models 2A, 2B and 2C for this 'forum-based' approach include:

1) Who is responsible for convening the forum?
   a. Options - City staff, community associations, other organized community groups or a combination of residents and City staff.
2) At what scale should the forum operate?
   a. Options - community-scale, district-scale
3) What are the policies and rules by which the forum operates?
   a. Options – terms of reference, inclusiveness and diversity policy, code of conduct and conflict of interest policy, to name a few.

Task Force Preference

Members of the task force expressed preference for a forum-based *representation structure* (see schematic below), suggesting that it will provide better opportunity to effectively facilitate collaborative dialogue between various organized community groups and interests at play in communities across Calgary. Depending on the specific circumstances of communities (or districts) a flexible approach to the composition and administration of the forum is likely to lead to the most successful framework.

Forum-based representation structure