



# Discussion paper prepared for the Community Representation Framework Task Force

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### **Format and terms for citations of this report:**

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## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

### Background

Community associations and business improvement area groups have been actively representing their communities on issues of planning and development since the early 1980s in Calgary. More recently, other community groups like resident’s associations and those defined by common interests or characteristics (but not community) have expressed an interest in having a recognized ‘seat at the table’ in these matters as well.

The work of the Community Representation Framework Task Force is focused on evaluating ‘the efficacy of organized community groups’ (like community associations, business improvement areas and resident’s associations) ‘in representing communities’ in terms of Calgary’s processes of planning and development review. Key to this investigation is the consideration of the ‘roles, relationships and responsibilities of such groups in building and sustaining complete communities’.

The Community Representation Framework staff team was directed by the task force to investigate approaches to representation taken by other jurisdictions in North America and provide information and recommendations for consideration. Our initial round of investigation focused on community representation structures of Canadian cities with the exceptions of Seattle and Portland. The results of that initial work however, revealed that Calgary has one of the most highly structured systems of community representation in the country. Cities such as Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Vancouver do not have a consistent system of community organization input with respect to planning and development, while Edmonton and Victoria have systems similar to Calgary’s, with only a few variations.

Through discussion with contacts in Portland’s Office of Neighborhood Involvement, we discovered that the City of Minneapolis has recently conducted an investigation of community representation structure, and that led us to investigate a sample of cities in the United States that provide a wider range of lessons and options to consider. The final list of cities included in this case study is:

- Atlanta GA
- Dayton OH
- Denver CO
- Edmonton AB
- Los Angeles CA
- Portland OR
- Seattle WA
- St. Paul MN
- Victoria BC
- Washington D.C.

## Themes of investigation - descriptions

### **Community representation structure (Community governance)**

The Community Representation Framework team investigated the way community groups are structured (externally - as they relate to other community groups) to represent their community's perspective on civic matters to the municipality. The case study found two main variations among the cities reviewed. The first is the geographic scale at which community groups are identified/recognized as representatives of their community to municipal government. The second is whether the municipal government officially recognizes identity-based communities in addition to or instead of geographically-based groups in an effort to include a broad range of public stakeholders in civic decisions.

### **Municipal engagement and relations**

The cities included in this case study demonstrate different relationships between the municipal government and community organizations. Some community organizations are highly autonomous, with the municipality posing few, if any, requirements regarding their governance, operations and membership. In other cases, community groups are creations of the municipality and as a result, aspects of their mandates, governance and membership are highly structured.

Some municipalities have also created a variety of boards and commissions to enhance the representation of diverse views. This poses an interesting approach in which the municipality creates a body with stronger authority than that which is held by community groups. In some cases this approach is employed in addition to a formalized community representation structure, while in one case a panel is the only formal means of diverse representation.

### **Resources and supports for community organizations**

This final section of the investigation focused on municipal funding, staff dedications or programs that aim to support or enhance the basic operations of community groups and capacity building of volunteers in the community (whether part of a community group or not). Examples of training and education include programs about planning and development processes, city hall processes, leadership training and basics of running a community group successfully.

## Section 2 - Case Study

### Investigation summary

#### Community representation structure (Community governance)

All the cities used for this summary officially recognize some level of organization(s) as community representative, except for Seattle as of 2017. In all cases however, these organizations serve an advisory role in planning and development reviews, but do not have decision-making authority.

From a geographic perspective, some cities rely on community-scale organizations to represent community views and interests while other cities aggregate community-scale organizations into 'districts'. In fact, several cities use some form of district representation, referred to under various titles such as district councils, neighbourhood councils, neighbourhood planning units and advisory neighbourhood councils. Some of these were established as far back as the 1970s, and are generally comprised of areas with between 20,000 and 30,000 residents (but can be as high as 50,000 residents).

From city to city, the mandate of district organizations varies, however all of them include matters of planning and development as a core responsibility. In some cases, district organizations are the representative for all planning matters, while in others the district organization serves as the representative for policy planning while community-scale organizations are the direct municipal contact for land use and development.

A final consideration with respect to a community representation structure is whether these models help ensure a wide range of community perspectives are represented on civic matters. City councils in Portland (a community-based system), Dayton and Seattle (district-based systems) have all questioned the legitimacy of their representative organizations to adequately express the diversity of views and perspectives of their populations. Each of the three jurisdictions has taken a different approach to address this issue.

Dayton has taken the most straight-forward approach - to broaden participation within its system of district councils by consolidating its district councils (from 7 to 5). This has increased the average number of residents in each district from 20,000 to 30,000 residents. Theoretically at least, this brings a greater range of voices to each council.

Portland and Seattle have concluded that even a well-run system of neighbourhood or district representation leaves many residents out of civic discourse. In recent years, both municipalities have acknowledged that community is not always defined by geographic boundaries, but can also be defined by common characteristics or interests such as culture and language, socio-economic circumstances, housing tenure, demographics, etc. Many of these 'identity-based' communities are typically under-represented in geographic-based organizations like neighbourhood associations and district councils.

Based on this understanding, The Office of Neighborhood Involvement in Portland has shifted resources to improve the participation of identity-based communities while maintaining its commitment to support the long-established network of neighbourhood associations. Essentially, it has parallel approaches to engage both neighbourhood associations and identity-based groups on civic matters.

As of late 2016, Seattle's Department of Neighbourhoods has gone further by officially not recognizing district councils as representative organizations and withdrawing its staff support for their operations.

Now, the Department of Neighbourhoods has a stronger focus on enhancing the participation of identity-based communities and helping City staff (like planners) organize engagement with a broader cross-section of the community. Planners with Seattle’s Office of Planning and Community Development do still engage with the district councils that continue to operate on their own, however they consider input from district councils as just one component of the public feedback they seek.

A table containing information about the cities reviewed in this case study and the representation structures of each is provided on the following page.

Discussion Paper



**Table 1. Summary of representation structures**

<i>All data approximate</i>		SMALL-SCALE COMMUNITY UNITS		LARGER-SCALE DISTRICT UNITS	
	City Population	Community Association 'equivalent'	No. of Communities* / Avg. Population	What are Districts called?	No. of Districts / Avg. Population
<b>ATLANTA</b>	420,000	Neighbourhood / Civic Associations	242 / 1,700	Neighborhood Planning Unit	25 / 16,800
<b>DAYTON</b>	150,000	Neighbourhood Associations	60 / 2,500	Priority Boards	7 / 21,500
<b>DENVER</b>	682,000	Registered Neighbourhood Organizations	78 / 8,700	Planning Areas **	19 / 36,000
<b>EDMONTON</b>	933,000	Community Leagues	157 / 6,000	-	-
<b>LOS ANGELES</b>	4,000,000	Neighbourhood	192 / 20,000	Neighborhood Councils	97 / 38,000
<b>PORTLAND</b>	640,000	Neighbourhood Associations	95 / 6,700	Neighbourhood Coalitions**	7 / 91,000
<b>ST PAUL</b>	300,000	Neighbourhood	232 / 1,300	District Councils	17 / 18,000
<b>SEATTLE</b>	704,000	Neighbourhood Councils	127 / 5,500	District Councils (pre-2017)	13 / 54,000
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	681,000	Single Member Districts	299 / 2,300	Commission Districts	40 / 17,000
<b>VICTORIA</b>	90,000	Community / Neighbourhood Associations	14 / 6,200	-	-
<b>CALGARY</b>	1,239,000	Community Associations	200 / 6,200	-	-

*\* in some cases, the number of communities refers to the area covered by a community association (or equivalent) while in others it refers to the area of a geographic community.*

*\*\* Planning areas in Denver and Neighbourhood coalition offices in Portland are not representative organizations. Planning areas indicate aggregates of registered neighbourhood organizations for the purpose of crafting local area policy plans. Neighbourhood coalitions are organizations that help enhance the capacity of Neighbourhood Associations by distributing municipal funds, sharing resources and forging collaborations.*

## Municipal engagement and relations

In this case study, the relationships of the municipality to community organizations range from those in which community organizations are highly autonomous – creating their own bylaws and operating procedures - to those that are essentially creations of the municipality and are guided by well-defined mandates, governance models and operating procedures. Generally speaking, community-scale organizations are more autonomous while district-scale organizations have more clearly defined rules.

Community organizations in Denver are independent of the municipality, save for the process of registration. Organizations define their own boundaries, their name and the way in which they operate. In both of these cities, organizations may overlap boundaries and some parts of the city may have no organizations representing the views of residents and businesses.

In other cities like Edmonton, Victoria and Portland, community-scale organizations are also created through grass-roots, public efforts with little to no organizational direction from the municipality but these cities have established a more formal system in which they operate. This has resulted in more consistent and even coverage of each city by formally recognized organizations, and limited boundary conflicts.

For example, neighbourhood associations in Portland are part of a formally recognized neighbourhood network that covers the entire city (with the exception of industrial areas). Although these organizations create their own governing bylaws and generally operate with autonomy, the Office of Neighbourhood Involvement has established a set of [standards](#) (approved by Council) with direction on topics such as membership, non-discrimination, communications and grievances. In exchange, they gain formal recognition of The City and a range of operational supports.

District-scale organization are in all cases creations of the municipality for the purpose of representing a specified area of the city. In places like Los Angeles, St. Paul and Seattle, the mandate and governance of these organizations are defined by The City. For example, in 1975 St. Paul passed a [resolution](#) defining its district council system, in 1987 Seattle passed [resolution 27709](#) and in 2001, Los Angeles passes its [Plan for Neighbourhood Councils](#). All of these were approved by their respective city councils and they included (amongst other details) the scope of the district organizations' mandate and a commitment to provide City staff to support their operations.

Finally, some municipalities have taken a different approach to enhancing citizen representation and participation that complements or works in place of a system of community or district organizations. These municipalities have created citywide boards, commissions and panels. As mentioned earlier, Seattle has started to focus on enhancing opportunities for the involvement of identity-based communities. They have recently introduced a [Renters' Commission](#), a [Youth Commission](#) and a [Community Involvement Commission](#). The latter is intended to advise the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and other City departments on coordinated, citywide outreach and engagement.

Similarly, Portland has a [Public Involvement Advisory Commission](#) to develop guidelines and policy recommendations about public involvement in civic matters and comment on their implementation. Los Angeles' [Board of Neighbourhood Commissioners](#) contributes policy to govern Neighbourhood Councils and provides oversight to those organizations and the Department of Neighbourhood Empowerment.



These commissions operate in addition to strong systems of community representation. In Toronto’s case, the [Toronto Planning Review Panel](#) operates in absence of such a system (though that is not to say there aren’t engagement efforts). The 28 members of the TPRP were selected starting with a civic lottery process that sent invitations to volunteer to about 12,000 randomly selected households in Toronto. Those who responded to the invitation to volunteer were screened to ensure panel members committed to a two-year term and that the panel broadly reflected Toronto’s diverse population. The panel meets six times each year to discuss planning and development policies. By bringing new voices to the policy planning process, the results of collaboration are seen as more representative of all residents.

**Table 2. Community / City relationship**

	District Representation	Autonomy L/M/H	City Boards, Panels or Commissions	Recognizes Identity-Based Communities
ATLANTA	✓	L	✗	✗
DAYTON	✓	M	✗	✗
DENVER	✗	H	✗	✗
EDMONTON	✗	H	✗	✗
LOS ANGELES	✓	L	Board of Neighbourhood Commissioners	✗
PORTLAND	✗	M	Public Involvement Advisory Commission	✓
ST PAUL	✓	M	✗	✗
SEATTLE	✓ (pre-2017)	M	Community Involvement Commission	✓
WASHINGTON	✓	L	✗	✗
VICTORIA	✗	H	✗	✗
CALGARY	✗	H	✗	✗

## Resources and supports for community organizations

### 1) Funding

Atlanta, Dayton, Portland, Los Angeles and St. Paul provide municipal funds on an annual basis to assist the operations of community organizations specified to represent their community/district. In some cases, this is provided at a flat-rate while other cities have a formula based on population and other considerations. The total amount of funding per organization in these cities varies widely, from about \$4,000 per Neighbourhood Planning Unit in Atlanta, to about \$65,000 per District Council in St. Paul.

In Portland, funding is given to the neighbourhood coalition offices that are responsible to disperse it to neighbourhood associations, as needed. A significant portion of Portland's funding is used for Neighbourhood Associations and the Coalition Offices to hire staff to assist their operations.

Victoria and Edmonton provide funds through grant programs that the community organizations must apply for. The grants are intended to offset the costs of providing programs and services to citizens.

### 2) Staff dedication

As mentioned earlier, Los Angeles, Portland and Seattle have departments that are specifically dedicated to support community organizations. As such, the staff working for these departments can be considered a significant support for the community representation structure of each city.

From city to city the skillset of support staff varies, but can include those who specialize in community organizing and advocacy work, social work, cultural outreach and urban planning. A few examples from our case study, including cities that use a district-scale model and one that uses a community-scale model:

- In addition to the staff working in the Portland's Office of Neighbourhood Involvement, a group of urban planners and architects act as liaisons between the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and neighbourhood associations.
- Atlanta has a staff of 25 coordinators, each one assigned to support a Neighbourhood Planning Unit. In addition, planning staff and other specialists attend monthly NPU meetings.
- Dayton provides a complement of 3 mid-level managers and a clerical staff person to assist with the operations of each Priority Board.
- Victoria's Neighbourhoods Team consists of 3 neighbourhood coordinators who help Neighbourhood Associations with operational issues and with citizen initiated projects related to their My Great Neighbourhood Grants Program.

### 3) Knowledge and Capacity building programs

Edmonton, Portland, Los Angeles and Seattle run or support citizen leadership programs. These programs are intended to develop community leaders who will activate their friends and neighbours to address issues important to their community

Portland's [Diversity and Civic Leadership program](#) aims to build the capacity of under-represented communities in order to increase their constituent participation in civic governance. The program is run by partner organizations such as the Urban League, Latino Network and the Centre for Intercultural Organizing.

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues runs a Civic Leadership Empowerment workshop. This workshop prioritizes women of diverse backgrounds and teaches them the knowledge and skills necessary to participate on community league boards and committees.

Seattle's [People's Academy for Community Engagement](#) and Los Angeles' [Leadership Academy](#) emerging leaders also aim to develop skills of emerging leaders, but these programs are organized and run by The City.

Another program of interest is Seattle's [Community Liaisons](#). The City recruits members of under-represented communities and provides training on city services and processes, public speaking, interpretation best-practices, and group facilitation. Most recruits are bilingual and bicultural, with well-established connections within their (non-geographic) community. Once trained, they become contract employees of The City and provide translation services, help plan and host public engagement events and provide feedback to City workers on cultural concerns and barriers to engagement.

#### 4) Citizen empowerment

Dayton, Portland, Seattle and Victoria have matching fund programs that make funds available to community groups (not necessarily community associations and equivalents) to enhance life in their community. Projects can include improvements to public spaces like streetscapes and parks, events like festivals and community clean-up days, or other projects like art installations, community gardens or even improvements for community buildings. The importance of these programs is that they direct funds toward citizen-led projects that provide citizens with an opportunity to affect positive, tangible change in their own communities.

**Table 3. Resources and supports for community organizations**

	<b>Funding for OCG operations</b>	<b>City staff dedication</b>	<b>Knowledge and capacity building programs</b>	<b>Citizen empowerment</b>
<b>ATLANTA</b>	\$4,000 / Neighborhood Planning Unit	✓	✗	✗
<b>DAYTON</b>	\$0	✓	✗	Mayor's Fund for Neighborhoods
<b>DENVER</b>	\$0	✗	✗	✗
<b>EDMONTON</b>	Community League grants	✗	Civic Leadership Empowerment program	Sustainability grant, Revitalization fund
<b>LOS ANGELES</b>	\$40,000 / Neighborhood Council	✓	Civic U and Leadership Academy	✓
<b>PORTLAND</b>	\$24,000 / NA \$1.3M to engage Identity-based groups	✓	Diversity and Civic Leadership	Matching funds program
<b>ST PAUL</b>	\$65,000 / District Council	✓	✗	✗
<b>SEATTLE</b>	\$500 / per District Council (pre-2017)	✓	People's Leadership Academy, Community Liaisons	Matching funds program
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	\$17,000 / District Commission	✗	✗	✗
<b>VICTORIA</b>	Civic grants	✓	✗	My Great Neighbourhood grant
<b>CALGARY</b>	\$0	✓	Partners in Planning	This Is My Neighbourhood (pilot)

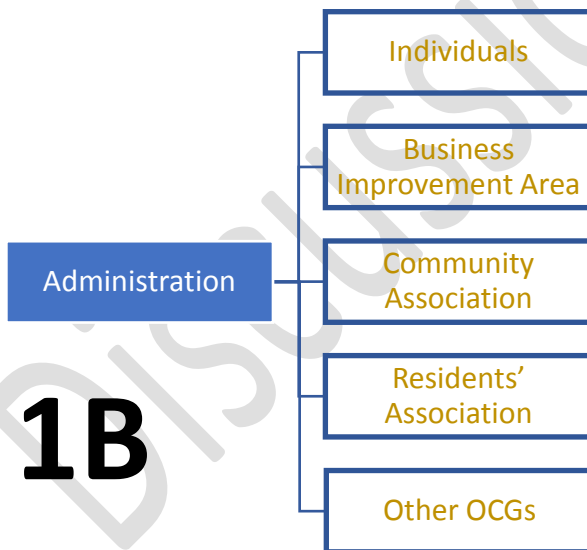
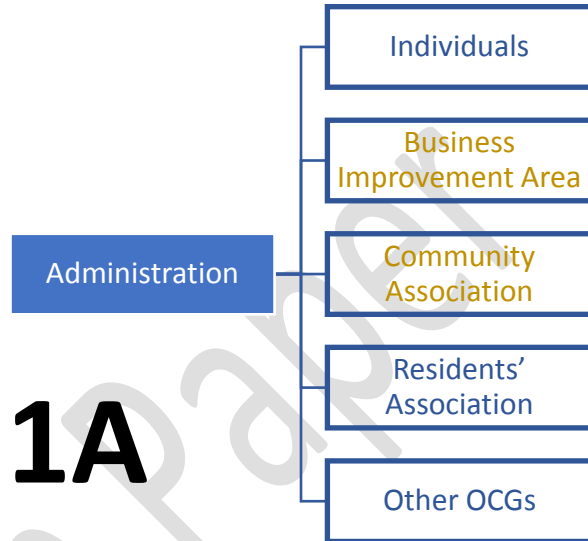
### Section 3 - Representation structures

The cities included in the case study provide us five different governance structures to consider:

#### Model 1A:

This is essentially the current model used in Calgary. It features community-scale representation, CAs and BIAs that are engaged on all planning policy, land use and development applications. Other stakeholders can contact Administration to seek information, be involved in engagement activities and to provide their input, but they don't have the option to be circulated.

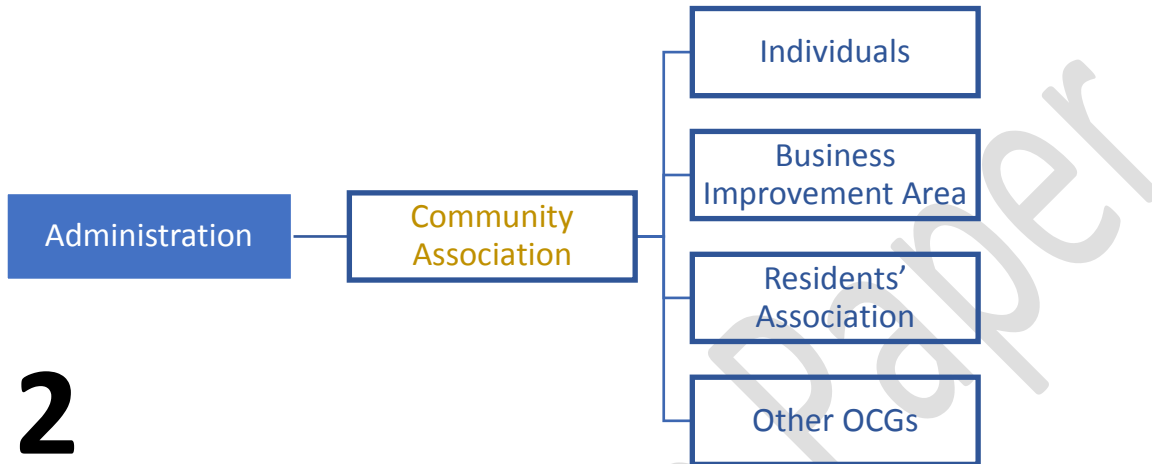
Edmonton, Portland and Victoria have systems similar to this model.



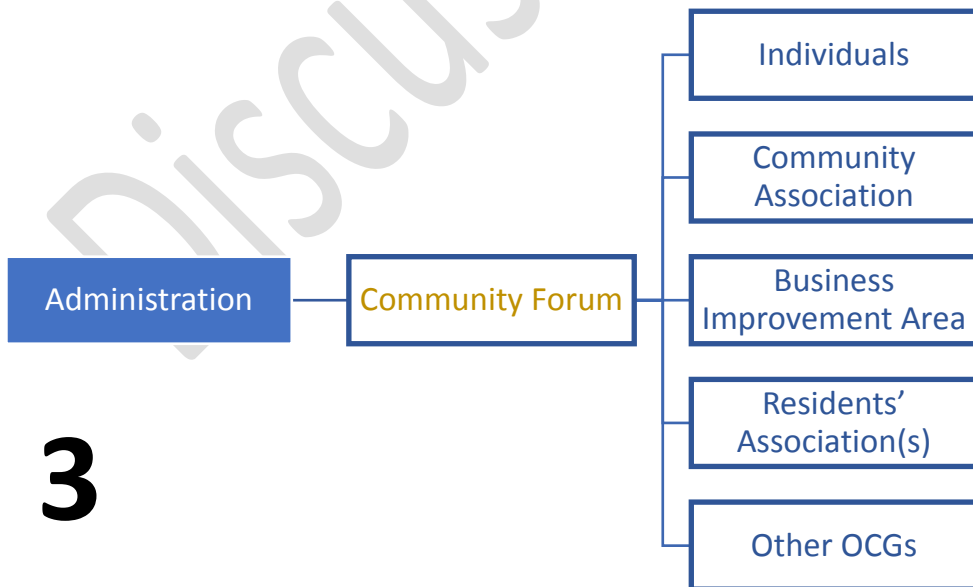
#### Model 1B:

This model is similar to 1A but with all interested stakeholders having the option to receive planning circulations as is the practice in Denver. This model still features community-scale representation, with all registered stakeholders treated equally.

**Model 2:** Representation is still at the community-scale, but the community association is directly contacted by Administration on planning policy, land use and development policy and applications. The CA takes on the responsibility to contact other organizations and individuals in the community to inform them of issues, hold discussions and pass feedback to Administration to inform their recommendations to the approving authority. No cities in the case studies have a system that demonstrates this model.

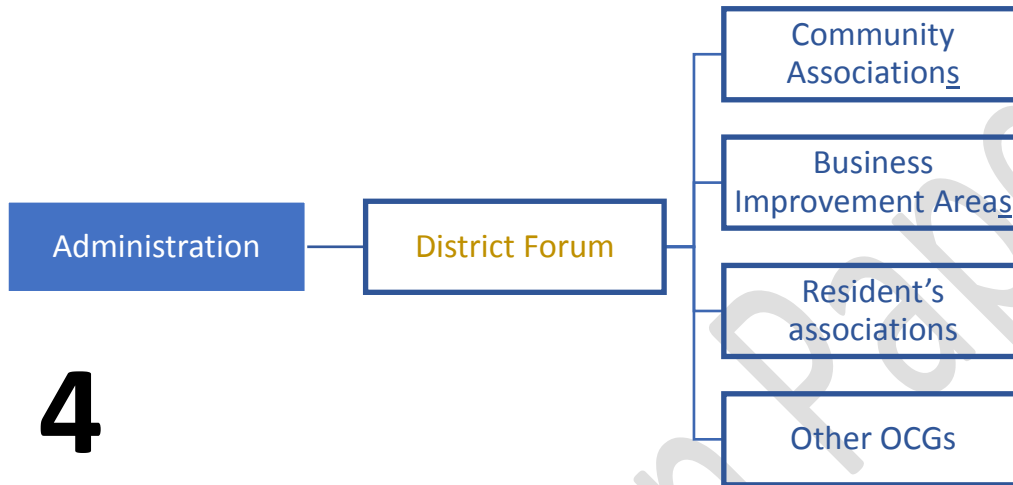


**Model 3:** This model introduces a formalized community forum, still features community-scale representation but has a formalized scope and governance defined by city council. The City provides funding and support for the forum’s operations. All community organizations and individuals have an opportunity to take part in the community forum to collaborate on and provide input on planning matters. No cities in the case study had a forum of this sort operating at a community scale.





**Model 4:** In this model, representation shifts to a *district-scale* forum, with scope and governance defined by city council. Districts are aggregates of existing, proximal communities. The City provides funding and support for the forum’s operations. All community organizations have an opportunity to take part in the district forum to collaborate on and provide input on planning matters. This model is used in Atlanta, Dayton, Los Angeles, St. Paul, Seattle and Washington D.C.



## Section 4 – Assessment and recommendation

### Principles, criteria and other considerations

During the September 14 meeting of the CRF task force, the group provided a list of principles and criteria to help guide Administration's evaluation of the information gathered through the case study.

#### Principles

- 1) Broaden engagement at local level – more diverse groups and stakeholders
- 2) All partners collaborate and engage with effective processes
- 3) Community Association is the primary point of contact
- 4) Skills, capabilities and capacity is available for chosen model

#### Criteria

- 1) Administrative burden
- 2) Training demands
- 3) Cost efficiency
- 4) Anticipated acceptance

In addition, during the internal working group meeting held on October 24, other considerations emerged that shaped the discussion and contributed to the initial recommendation.

#### Other considerations

- 1) Flexibility of the system
- 2) Inclusion of non-geographic communities
- 3) Compliance with the governance structure

A discussion of the assessment of the models in relation to the principles, criteria and other considerations appears following the assessment matrix, on the next page.

**Table 4. Assessment matrix**

		Representation models				
		1A	1B	2	3	4
<b>Principle 1) Broaden engagement at the local level</b>		L	H	M	H	H
<b>Principle 2) Partners collaborate with effective processes</b>		L	L	M	M	H
<b>Principle 3) Community Associations are primary pt. of contact</b>		Generally	No	Yes	No	No
<b>Principle 4) Skills and capacity is available for model</b>		-	-	-	-	-
<b>Criterion 1) Administrative burden</b>	CAs	M	M	H	M	L
	OCGs	M	M	M	M	M
	City	L	M	M	H	M
<b>Criterion 2) Training demands</b>	CAs	M	M	H	M	M
	OCGs	L	M	M	M	M
	City	L	M	L	H	H
<b>Criterion 3) Cost efficiency</b>		M	M	L	L	M
<b>Criterion 4) Anticipated acceptance</b>		M	M	L	L	L

Principle 1) - Broaden engagement at local level – more diverse groups and stakeholders

Models #1B, #3 and #4 were viewed as having the highest opportunity for inclusion of stakeholders in civic decision-making. These three models are equally open to all stakeholder groups who wish to participate, though there may be some minimum requirements to be considered a stakeholder.

From a diversity perspective, model #4 was seen to provide opportunity for slightly more diversity than the other two models, due to the larger area (and population) covered by the district model. Of note, the internal team recognized a trade-off between the geographic size of a representative group and the ‘local-ness’ of inputs received. Because of this, the size of a district would require careful consideration.

Model #1A was seen by the internal team as providing the lowest opportunity for inclusion and diversity of views in civic decision-making. The inequitable nature of information sharing (‘privilege’ of some groups over others) and potential for inequitable awareness of opportunities for engagement were the main reasons for this view.

Model #2 was considered to provide slightly better opportunities for inclusiveness and diversity, however the working group expressed concern that Community Associations have a wide range of capacities to take on this responsibility in an effective manner across the city and therefore it ranked lower than models #1B, #3 and #4.

#### Principle 2) - All partners collaborate and engage with effective processes

The internal team suggested that the district forum proposed in model #4 provides the best opportunity for collaboration between partners in the process. The size of population represented by a district was cited as the main reason for this conclusion.

Models #2 and #3 were considered somewhat less favourable because some communities are quite small and homogeneous and as a result, there are fewer organizations and a smaller range of views and perspectives to be shared and debated. This may simplify the process of coming to a position on a given matter, but it does not provide an environment in which groups with diverse views collaborate to solve concerns in a mutually beneficial manner. thus collaboration between groups won't occur.

Model #1A and #1B were viewed as providing the poorest opportunity for collaboration since there is no need for OCGs to work together to discuss issues facing their community. They have the option of simply writing a letter, independently, to their councillor or to administration. Robust engagement of the community could help mitigate this concern.

#### Principle 3) - Community Association as the primary point of contact

Model #2 is the only community representation structure that features the Community Association as the prime point of contact for The City. On this point, all other models propose different relationships between OCGs and between OCGs and The City.

#### Principle 4) - Skills, capabilities and capacity is available for chosen model

The internal working team agreed that the selected model will require appropriate training and education of volunteers so they can be effective participants. However, the team felt this was a difficult principle by which the models could be assessed. The criterion 'training demands' provides a high-level assessment of the perceived degree of training required to successfully implement each model and may be used as a proxy for how realistic it is for each model to achieve this principle.

#### Criterion 1) - Administrative Burden

The internal team looked at the degree of administrative burden placed on Community Associations, other Organized Community Groups and The City (Administration).

From the perspective of Community Associations, the internal team believes that model #2 places the most administrative burden on the Community Association. The responsibility of connecting with other Organized Community Groups and individuals and ensuring they have been appropriately included in the process and that their input is adequately reflected in feedback to Administration (and Council) seems considerable. Again, the varying capacities of CAs was a consideration in this outcome.

The least burdensome to CAs was deemed to be models #1A and #1B since most of the administrative function of those systems would continue to fall to The City. Models #3 and #4 would require slightly more effort because volunteers from CAs would need to spend time attending meetings of the community / district forum in addition to their regular commitment to attend CA meetings.

The City was seen to take on the most administrative burden under model #3. Under this model, not only would The City be largely responsible for the operation of the forum, but it would have to do so in more than 150 community association areas across the city. Model #4 would be less challenging, though the degree depends on the number of districts created. Model #2 was deemed the least burdensome to The City since much of the responsibility of organizing community collaboration would be vested in Community Associations.

Models #3 and #4 were identified as the most burdensome for other Organized Community Groups because of the need for volunteers to meet within their groups and a community / district forum. Model #1A likely poses the least burden since under that system these groups have no recognized role.

#### Criterion 2) - Training demands

According to the internal working group, Model #2 would pose the most challenging training demands upon Community Association volunteers while models #1A and #1B would pose the least training demands because they propose the least amount of change from the current model.

Because they aren't recognized stakeholders under model #1A, it was viewed to place the least burden on volunteers associated with other Organized Community Groups. The other models were all seen to place similar training burdens on other OCGs.

#### Criterion 3) - Cost efficiency

The most cost-efficient model is #1A (current model). Because it has the least degree of structure and it limits the distribution of planning circulations to community associations and business improvement area groups it requires the least amount of staff and other resources. Model #1B would be only slightly more costly.

Model #2 was deemed the least cost-efficient system. Concerns were raised about the amount of support The City would need to provide many community associations in order to make this an effective system in more than 150 community association areas across Calgary.

Model #3 was envisioned as slightly less expensive than model #2 because, although it too would need to be established across the city, the centralization of its administration is expected to lead to a more cost-efficient system. The cost-efficiency of model #4 was considered better than models #2 and #3 but the magnitude of improvement depends on the number of districts established.

#### Criterion 4) - Anticipated acceptance

The internal working groups felt it would be difficult to predict the level of acceptance of each model for each of the various stakeholders, although they did agree that any proposal to change the current model of representation would likely be met with some level of resistance. The CRF team will engage with public stakeholders and internally with colleagues to ensure feedback is gathered and considered with the task force before more formal recommendations are put to council.

### Consideration 1) - Flexibility of the system

Model #1B was viewed as the most flexible system to accommodate the widest range of community 'profiles', from those that have strong organizations to those with relatively weak organizations. The specific groups that are active in civic decisions can also vary from community to community and even within communities over time. Models #3 and #4 also provide a great deal of flexibility, but with a more formalized vehicle to bring stakeholders together, with scope, governance and other aspects of the forum being developed in partnership between stakeholders and the City.

### Consideration 2) - Participation of non-geographic communities

Non-geographic communities would best be served by model #4, under the assumption that the larger the population represented, the more diverse the voices become. However, the internal team recognized that although it may be the best, even model #4 may not adequately address this concern. Seattle's shift of resources away from supporting their district councils model to programs and engagement efforts aimed at under-represented groups lends support to this notion.

Other options to address the inclusion of identity-based groups may fall outside a formal community representation structure and need to rely more on engagement strategies to reduce barriers to participation, review committees composed of a broad range of stakeholders like the Toronto Urban Design Review Panel and programs focused on developing leaders and establishing contacts in under-represented communities and populations.

### Consideration 3) – Compliance with the community governance structure

Some of the group's discussion considered stakeholder compliance with the more highly structured systems of models #2, #3 and #4. In other words, 'would various stakeholders agree in general, to work within the system or would they tend to circumvent a collaborative model and simply contact Administration and Council with their own views?'

Admittedly, stakeholders will always have the right to represent their interests and perspectives to Administration and Council under any system. To encourage compliance, the system should strive to ensure stakeholders see value in participating. An ideal system will not only provide an opportunity for participants to learn, discuss and share information but they should also be secure that their perspectives will be expressed to decision makers accurately, and be considered thoroughly.

Furthermore, access to grants and other funding, the ability to participate in education and training courses and being eligible to sit on official panels or boards could be offered exclusively to active 'member in good standing' to encourage participation.

Although this report has not provided initial recommendations on specific funding models and programs, they can have more impact than just raising the capacity of individuals and community or district organizations.



## Observations and initial recommendations

With respect to the first two principles of investigation articulated at the beginning of this section (Broader Engagement and Collaboration), the current model of representation in Calgary (#1A) was considered the weakest. In its current form, the model does not distribute information that pertains to planning and development or engagement opportunities in an equitable manner. Neither does it adequately account for the broad range of capacities (and interests) of various community associations across the city and over time.

Model #1B improves upon some of these shortcomings by providing a level of flexibility that can accommodate a range of circumstances. Whether a community has a community association and a business improvement area, a resident's association or any other organized community groups, this model can adapt. The distribution of responsibility to represent community across multiple groups leads to a more stable form of representation over time. Also, model is inherently fair – it treats organizations equitably and provides them an opportunity to have a voice in civic matters so long as they meet some set of minimum requirements (membership size, for example).

The models that propose a more formalized structure of community representation (#2, #3 and #4) were seen to require more resources and pose somewhat higher administrative burden than the other models, but they could provide more opportunity for collaboration between stakeholders. The internal team felt that of the three model #2 was most problematic, due mainly to the fact that the capacity of community associations varies widely. Although Administration and the Federation of Calgary Communities could focus efforts to support CAs that struggle under this model, the resources required to make it consistently effective across the city were considered higher than simply adopting one of the other two models. As such, the internal working group favoured models #3 and #4, over model #2.

By placing administration of these systems with The City, the forums can operate with a more consistent level of effectiveness across the city. Model #3 provides representation at the community scale, and therefore at a more local level, while model #4 provides a broader district scale representation and thus promotes broader inclusion and diversity of views. The resources required to operate a community-scale forum for over 150 community associations is expected to be significant. For that reason, along with the others described already, the internal team favoured model #4.

That said, the internal team acknowledged that representation of local interests could become diluted with the increased number of people and organizations involved in a district forum. The working group also thought it would be unreasonable for a district forum, which might meet monthly, to review and comment on the high volume of planning and development applications in some parts of the city. From the perspective of adhering to planning application timelines, this would also be problematic.

For these reasons, the internal working group favours a hybrid system that combines the local representation characteristics of model #1B and the district representation characteristics of model #4. The working group suggests that for planning and development items such as development permits and minor land use applications, model #1B would provide a framework for representation. For larger land use applications, policy development and significant infrastructure projects, the district forum of model #4 would be used as the vehicle for representation.

## Section 5 – Next steps

### Establishing a framework and implementation

The initial suggestion to adopt a hybrid system of models #1B and #4 is a first step to set direction for a community representation framework. There are a number of items that need to be investigated further to ensure that this proposed system of community representation is feasible, prior to completing a report for city council. Other items listed below are for consideration after a framework is adopted by council, as the program enters an implementation phase.

#### Prior to Council (establishing the framework)

- Assessment of whether a new system can be implemented by redeploying current assets (staff, budget funds, etc.) or requires additional investment.
  - If required, what sources of funding could be proposed to support a new system?
- Principles of establishing a district
  - Based on population, area, catchment areas (such as water, transit, census tracts, etc.)?
  - Discreet to a single ward or should they cross ward boundaries?
- Programs, education, training and other support required to make the system succeed
  - Who provides the programs education, training and other supports (The City, Federation of Calgary Communities, Others)?
- Proposed approach to ensure participation of under-represented communities and populations
- Proposed approach to support any boards, panels or commissions to encourage greater involvement of a diversity of perspectives in civic decisions.

#### After council approval (framework implementation)

- What is the scope, governance and membership rules of district forums?
- What level of autonomy do district forums have with respect to The City?
- What qualifies as an organized community group to be recognized by The City?
- What changes to Administration's processes are required to adopt the new system?
- What types of planning issues should be dealt with at a community scale and which should be dealt with at a district scale?
- What incentives are required to encourage stakeholders to participate in the system and not simply circumvent it?
- How do we consult the broader community, including under-represented populations and identity-based communities under this model?

### Further consultation

The CRF staff team proposes to engage with members of the public including organized community groups, under-represented communities and populations, the development industry and internal stakeholders during the winter and spring 2018. The purpose of this engagement is to gather feedback on the initial recommendation(s), understand and address stakeholder concerns and if necessary, re-evaluate the models summarized in this report as per new information gathered.