Building a Culture of Participation
Workshop Report

June 26, 2013
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# Table of Contents

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**WORKSHOP DESIGN**

**DAVE MESLIN FEATURE PRESENTATION**

**LOCAL CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT SUCCESS STORIES**
- **NATHAN EDELSON**
- **PETER WHITELAW**
- **SHIRLEY CHAN**

**BREAKOUT EXERCISE DESIGN AND REPORT-BACK**

**ANALYSIS**

**ENHANCED OUTREACH**

**CITIZEN AMBASSADORS**

**COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING**

**FORMALIZING RESIDENT GROUPS**

**APPENDIX A - BREAKOUT EXERCISE GROUP NOTES**
- **GROUP 1**
- **GROUP 2**
- **GROUP 3 - “UP THE CREEK WITH DIALOGUE”**
- **GROUP 4**
- **GROUP 5 - “CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT LEAGUE”**
- **GROUP 6**
- **GROUP 7 - “ENGAGEMENT WHERE YOU LIVE”**
- **GROUP 8**

**APPENDIX B: BREAKOUT EXERCISE CASE STUDY**

**APPENDIX C: BREAKOUT EXERCISE KEY CONSIDERATIONS**
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Executive Summary

Workshop Design

Building a Culture of Participation was jointly presented by Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue, SFU Public Square and the City of Vancouver to explore opportunities for increased citizen political empowerment in official City decision-making. This workshop brought together City employees and members of the City’s Engaged City Task Force with a diverse group of community leaders and residents-at-large. The breakout portion of the workshop was governed by Chatham House Rule.

Feature Presenter Dave Meslin

Feature guest and community organizer Dave Meslin presented examples of active citizen engagement in local politics. Common themes included the use of sophisticated branding, finding ways to make engagement enjoyable, involving under-represented communities and avoiding polarizing language. Meslin proposed four pre-conditions for citizens to engage with their cities: confidence; knowledge of the political system; an expectation of malleability or responsiveness; and a sense of ownership over their city.

Local Success Stories

Consultant and former City of Vancouver planner Nathan Edelson presented on community planning in Renfrew-Collingwood. Edelson emphasized the importance of face-to-face meetings to allow different stakeholder groups to hear from each other and identify compromises between competing interests, as well as investing in a neighbourhood’s capacity and institutions to implement the resulting vision.

Peter Whitelaw, a Senior Planner at Golder Associates, described the 2005 consultation process for the Arbutus Street rail corridor. Planners established trust by reflecting back citizen’s ideas with on-the-spot drawings. A successful outcome required all stakeholders to surrender partial control, including the creation of a citizen panel to independently certify the final design against a series of predetermined principles.

Shirley Chan, president of the Sun Yat-Sen Gardens, presented on her role opposing the demolition of Chinatown and historic Strathcona to make way for a freeway in the 1960’s. Chan highlighted how residents empowered themselves around a clear goal and increased community ownership through short term neighbourhood improvement projects. Chan also emphasized the potential consequences when cities are not responsive to residents’ needs.

Breakout Exercise

Participants engaged in a breakout exercise to design a model engagement process that would actively empower citizens in deciding the future of False Creek South. With some City-held leases set to expire in the 2020’s, the community’s future is uncertain. Breakout groups were encouraged to consider aspects of engagement such as representation, accountability and City oversight. Each group pitched their final ideas to 3 panellists, followed by a short question and answer session.

The breakout groups’ pitches shared many common themes and ideas. Several groups suggested the creation of a preliminary statement of principles, values or goals to guide the process and create trust. Other groups stressed the importance of creating a vision for the
community’s long-term future, rather than only focussing on immediate needs or the desirability of specific buildings or structures.

Several groups emphasized the importance of building awareness and historical knowledge. Reflecting the ideas of Dave Meslin, groups branded their ideas with names such as “Engaged Citizen League.” Many of the most vibrant ideas involved gathering community members and residents in a range of creative and engaging formats. Continuous communication between community members, stakeholders, and decision-makers was identified as key to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness.

Panellists and groups also discussed how engagement processes should achieve balanced representation, including citizens from outside the community. Groups expressed the need for neutral facilitation throughout the process. Ideas for how to manage engagement ranged from the City working with citizen advisory groups, to citizens independently managing aspects of the process.

Analysis
Several recurring themes emerged during the workshop that could empower citizens in City of Vancouver decision-making. Approximately half of participant ideas focussed on outreach tactics to increase stakeholder awareness and input. Examples of actionable ideas included: Actively canvassing locations associated with specific stakeholder groups; Establishing a semi-permanent physical location for information sharing and feedback; Extending awareness campaigns to include direct mail and multiple languages and; Using game-style formats to encourage team building and receive input.

Several breakout groups proposed ambassador-style roles for citizens, which could be relevant to the City’s existing Neighbourhood Champions program. Using standardized questions or a discussion guide, citizens could potentially host “kitchen table” consultations with neighbours or engage their neighbours and other stakeholders in one-on-one conversations. Groups suggested that the City could provide 3rd party support to reduce power imbalances among multi-stakeholder groups and reflect back unfiltered citizen input to create a sense of accountability and transparency.

Some groups proposed methods for citizens to actively frame issues, develop options, and identify preferred solutions. Suggestions included: The use of open-ended questions to let citizens set the agenda; Mechanisms for citizen groups to propose their own policy solutions and receive City feedback; Facilitated dialogues that allow stakeholder groups to hear each other and find compromises; Creating a panel of citizen representatives to certify the final plan against pre-determined principles, and; Presenting options to citizens for voting instead of asking for feedback on a single proposal.

Several breakout groups proposed that resident groups could manage major aspects of engagement if they were representative of their communities and neutral on policy outcomes. Presenter Dave Meslin suggested a model from Los Angeles where Neighbourhood Councils receive city support, recognition and funding if they meet official standards in areas such as elections, governance, and advertising. Further investigation would be required to explore whether a similar system would be appropriate for the Vancouver context. This idea could be combined with other activities that encourage active engagement and a sense of community, such as neighbourhood clean-up campaigns and participatory budgeting.
Workshop Design

Objective
The Building a Culture of Participation invitational workshop took place on Thursday, May 30 2013 at SFU’s Goldcorp Centre for the Arts. The goal of the workshop was to explore opportunities to increase citizen political empowerment in official City decision-making. The event featured community organizer Dave Meslin, who presented case studies of active citizen political involvement from the Greater Toronto Area.

Partners
Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue, SFU Public Square and the City of Vancouver jointly presented the workshop. The Centre for Dialogue is one of only two university centres in the world focused exclusively on the study and practice of dialogue. The Centre funded Building a Culture of Participation through its Bruce and Lis Welch Community Dialogue, a yearly event designed to encourage transformative social change through dialogue.

SFU Public Square is an initiative of the President’s Office aimed to establish Simon Fraser University as the go-to convener of serious and productive conversations about issues of public concern. At its fall 2012 inaugural Community Summit, SFU Public Square presented research on urban isolation in partnership with the Vancouver Foundation.

The City of Vancouver is consistently named one of the world’s most liveable cities. The City created an Engaged City Task Force in fall 2012 to address issues of urban isolation and public participation in City decision-making. This move was partially in response to SFU Public Square’s inaugural summit. The Engaged City Task Force released its Quick Starts report the week prior to the workshop, with its final report due in July 2013.

Participation
Approximately half of workshop participants were representatives of the City of Vancouver, including Members of the Engaged City Task Force and City employees who work in the field of public engagement. The other participants were community leaders and residents-at-large. Organizers developed the invitation list to achieve broad neighbourhood representation and gender balance, as well as diversity in age, ethnicity and income brackets.

The breakout portion of the workshop was governed by Chatham House Rule, meaning that the ideas expressed in this report are not attributed to individuals, and the identities of participants are not disclosed. The purpose of Chatham House Rule is to achieve frank and open discussion and the uninhibited sharing of information. In lieu of names, a breakdown of participant registration information is included below:

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In parallel with the workshop, the City of Vancouver provided opportunities for members of the general public to give input into its engagement strategy. This included crowdsourcing feedback on the Engaged City Task Force’s *Quick Starts* report using IdeaScale. City staff and electronic feedback kiosks were present at Dave Meslin’s May 29 public lecture, also as part of the 2013 Bruce and Lis Welch Community Dialogue. At the time this report was written, this public feedback was available online at [vancouver.ideascale.com](http://vancouver.ideascale.com).

**Process Design**

The workshop began with a welcome by Centre for Dialogue Academic Director Mark Winton, and Vancouver City Councillor Andrea Reimer. Feature guest Dave Meslin then presented case studies in citizen empowerment from his projects in the Greater Toronto Area. Next, three local guests presented short case studies of successful citizen empowerment in the City of Vancouver. These included Nathan Edelson speaking on community planning in Renfrew-Collingwood; Peter Whitelaw providing an overview of the Arbutus Lands Co-Designing Process; and Shirley Chan discussing the successful opposition to building a freeway through Historic Strathcona and Chinatown.

Participants then engaged in a breakout exercise, with the goal of designing a model engagement process that would achieve citizen political empowerment in deciding the future of the False Creek South community. For the purpose of this workshop, *Citizen Political Empowerment* was defined as a citizen engagement process where the City and citizens work collaboratively to frame issues, develop options and identify preferred solutions, or processes where the decision-making power rests primarily in the hands of citizens.
Dave Meslin Feature Presentation

Dave Meslin delivered the workshop feature presentation. Meslin is a grassroots community organizer who has actively influenced the relationship between Toronto Area residents and their political representatives. His TED talk, “The Antidote to Apathy,” has received almost one million views, and his 2011 exhibition “The Fourth Wall: Transforming City Hall” explored concrete ways to increase public access and participation in local politics. Meslin used ideas from his past projects to illustrate key factors that encourage active citizen engagement.

First, Meslin discussed his 2006 City Idol competition, where every day Toronto residents presented their ideas for the city to a 600-person public audience. Meslin hoped that a more accessible space for political engagement could invite a more demographically diverse and representative group of candidates than is seen in many Canadian city councils. Citizens in the audience felt increased ownership over the political process as they nominated candidates for the prize of running for Toronto City Council with Meslin’s organizational and financial support.

Drawing from his “The Fourth Wall” exhibition, Meslin stressed that engaging, attractive branding is key to successful event promotion and can be a valuable tool in inviting citizen engagement, given that public notices compete for attention with corporate advertisement. Meslin also spoke of the important role residents’ associations can play in empowering and connecting citizens around neighbourhood issues. He cited how structured, staff supported, regulated, and sometimes even government-funded residents’ associations in American cities such as Los Angeles, Portland, and Minneapolis have been highly successful. Similarly, Meslin suggested that the use of subsidiarity in local governance can empower communities by devolving decision-making authority on appropriate issues to the community level.

Next, Meslin presented two projects that use dialogue to find common ground and depolarize complex issues. With the Clamshell Quintet, Meslin unites Toronto city councillors and staff from different political perspectives to make music together in an effort to transcend ideological divisions. Similarly, in the “Drivers for Jarvis” ad campaign, drivers were invited to support the conservation of a Toronto bike lane. While the bike lane was eventually removed, Meslin sees this project as successful in inspiring participation and awareness, and demonstrating that the typical portrayal of ‘drivers versus cyclists’ does not truly reflect the average citizen’s perspectives.

Concluding his presentation, Meslin proposed four pre-conditions citizens need to successfully engage with their cities: confidence in their own voice; knowledge of how the political system and decision-making processes work; a sense of malleability, meaning that citizens believe that change is possible and that their efforts can lead to transformation; and a sense of ownership of their city. Meslin stated that within a system of active citizen engagement, politicians should not be criticized for “flip flopping” if their change of opinion results from constructive dialogue with the public.
Local Citizen Empowerment Success Stories

Nathan Edelson, Peter Whitelaw and Shirley Chan presented three local case studies where residents were successfully empowered to make decisions affecting their communities. They identified key aspects or processes that encouraged citizen engagement, and answered questions from participants.

Nathan Edelson

Nathan Edelson worked with the City of Vancouver Planning Department for 25 years and is currently an adjunct professor at UBC’s Planning School and a partner at 42nd Street Consulting. Edelson discussed the recent history of community planning initiatives in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood, identifying key factors their success.

First, he described how community leaders representing diverse community organizations met to advise on the creation of the 1985 Joyce Station Area Plan. This plan aimed to develop various community amenities on previously industrial land and address priority issues such as housing, public safety and cultural diversity. The involvement of community leaders who were deeply connected and accountable to their constituents was a key factor in the plan’s near-unanimous support when presented in front of 300 community members at a locally held city council meeting.

Edelson stated that community planning is not just the creation of a document. The 1985 plan included resources for implementation and a capacity-building approach to address the ongoing needs of the neighbourhood. This resulted in the creation of local institutions such as the Collingwood Neighbourhood House, a local policing station, and a business improvement association.

In his conclusion, Edelson highlighted how reflective and respectful dialogue amongst people with diverse opinions is key to creating a plan that meets the core needs of all stakeholder groups. Multiple community issues were discussed in the development of the Joyce Station Area Plan, facilitating compromises between stakeholders’ different priorities and areas of interest. Additionally, the use of face-to-face meetings instead of anonymous surveys helped foster constructive relationships between different community groups, allowing them to share information and perspectives in order to meet community needs.

Peter Whitelaw

Peter Whitelaw is a Senior Planner at Golder Associates and a sustainable development specialist. Whitelaw described the 2005 Arbutus Lands Co-Designing Process, where he worked as a consultant. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) commissioned this community visioning process after a failed attempt to redevelop the land and during a subsequent court case with the City of Vancouver over land development rights.

The co-design technique allowed planners to develop ideas directly with the public over a series of workshops. Facilitators and artists created on-the-spot drawings of citizens’ ideas. Whitelaw explained that this immediate visual reflection of citizen’s ideas made them feel heard and forged a sense of trust. Ideas became more accessible and tangible, and residents were able to easily give feedback on each other’s suggestions using a simple voting system.

The CPR established a set of principles to guide the planning at the start of the engagement process. To build trust with residents, the CPR set up an independent advisory panel of community representatives to review the final design and confirm if it meaningfully reflected
these principles. Whitelaw also spoke of how the engagement team worked collaboratively with another group that started their own consultation process mid-way through the project. A successful resolution required all parties to surrender partial control over the process, allowing for meaningful collaboration.

Shirley Chan

Shirley Chan is president of the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Gardens and member of the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee. She shared her experiences as one of the key community organizers challenging the proposed construction of a freeway in the 1960’s that would have resulted in the demolition of major residential areas and lower-income communities.

In contrast to the two preceding case studies, Chan’s talk highlighted how community members from Strathcona and Chinatown empowered themselves rather than depending on encouragement or assistance from a third party. Campaigners like Chan knocked on doors raising awareness and recruiting support, eventually creating the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants’ Association. Children of the community helped non-English speaking residents express their opposition. Chan stated that the residents drew strength from their sense of unity and collective action, as well as from wider community support they received.

Various factors contributed to their sense of empowerment and ultimate success in stopping the freeway construction. Defending their homes, the residents’ work held deeply personal meaning. They also had a clear vision and a willingness to collaborate and open up to the wider community. She explained how this collaborative work continues today between the many committees working to keep the heritage community alive. Additionally, Chan spoke of the importance of short-term goals to increase community ownership and sustain engagement, such as community clean-up projects.

Chan expressed the need for relationships between decision makers and the community to be respectful, not patronizing. She described a defining moment in the freeway opposition, when a Federal politician understood the impact of public policy decisions on citizens and further insisted that the City secure the support of citizens directly affected by decisions before Federal funding would be made available. On the Freeway, he advised that the Federal Government would not fund a project that had garnered so much citizen opposition. The successful opposition of the freeway project helped to establish Vancouver’s distinct urban design and saved the heritage Strathcona and Chinatown areas, now home to many residents and the iconic Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Gardens.
Breakout Exercise Design and Report-Back

During the breakout exercise, mixed groups of citizens and city representatives designed a model engagement process based on a real life case study of the False Creek South community. Developed between the mid 1970’s and 1990, False Creek South is home to approximately 5,000 residents, providing a dense mix of affordable and family housing. The community is primarily built on land leased from the City of Vancouver, with lease renewals due in the 2020’s and 2040’s. The community is facing growing difficulties securing mortgages for major renovations and selling property due to the lack of long-term security of tenure. This uncertainty may cause a decline in community re-investment, impacting residents and various stakeholders. The full case study provided to breakout groups is available in Appendix B. Participants were encouraged to make assumptions where they lacked full information.

The goal of the exercise was to create a model engagement process that empowered citizens to help decide the future of the False Creek South community. Groups were encouraged to consider specific aspects in the design of their process: pre-conditions for success, initiation and management, citizen representation, group and power dynamics, the role of experts, standards for reporting, accountability for outcomes, and city oversight and approval. The participant handout used to present and define these considerations is available in Appendix C. Each group was assigned a facilitator and a note-taker, and detailed notes from each group discussion are available in Appendix A.

Groups gave a 2-minute pitch of their final ideas to a panel and other breakout groups, followed by a 3-minute question and answer session with the 3 panellists. The breakout groups’ pitches shared several common themes. First, several groups identified the creation of trust between parties as a necessary pre-condition for a constructive process. Some groups suggested the creation of a preliminary statement of principles, values or goals to guide the process. One group questioned whether it was possible to develop a long-term community vision without first providing some form of certainty to existing residents. Another group recommended the involvement of an independent 3rd party to facilitate the engagement process and help achieve consensus between different stakeholder groups, including the City and residents.

Several groups emphasized the importance of building awareness of the issues at hand, as well as of the history of the neighbourhood. Groups diverged on whether the engagement process should begin with specific topics to focus discussions, or an open-ended question that allows citizens to frame the discussion themselves. They proposed various outreach strategies to reach citizens in their homes and daily lives, such as through direct mail, citizen ambassadors, or information displays in public areas such as parks or bus routes. Groups discussed the importance of using accessible terminology, pictures and multiple languages to reach more citizens. Reflecting Dave Meslin’s suggestion of branding, groups generated several names and slogans for their ideas such as “Engagement where you live,” “False Creek Future Fun,” or the “Citizen Engagement League.”

All the pitches involved gathering community members and other stakeholders together in a range of creative and engaging formats. Some gatherings focused on understanding the community’s history and heritage through activities such as storytelling, video screenings, walking tours and art projects. As with the suggested awareness campaigns, there was a focus on engaging citizens where they live and work, and highlighting community assets in fun and informative events. Building relationships between stakeholders and breaking down polarization was also a recurring theme. A sense of attachment to place and community was identified as a
requisite for participating knowledgeably in the political process. One group proposed a festival with representatives of various community groups such as families, First Nations, resident associations and other stakeholders.

The discussion often focused on including the full diversity of perspectives within the community and addressing barriers to engagement, such as language, in order to create a truly representative group of engaged citizens. A few times, panellists asked how this process could involve citizens and interest groups from outside the community. While some groups said that they could hold events in public space such as the seawall to engage the general public, others suggested starting first with local residents.

Community-building events were often paired with methods to involve citizens in creating a vision for the community’s future. One example was the use of co-design, where planners create visual representations of citizens’ ideas. This process immediately reflects back citizens’ ideas so that they are confident that their input has been received and understood. Some groups proposed consulting each stakeholder community separately, while other groups suggested bringing together different stakeholder communities using a neutral facilitator to create a single shared vision. In some engagement processes, City Hall acted as an intermediary to resolve competing stakeholder ideas. In other processes, stakeholders presented ideas to each other in a workshop setting and responded to each other’s ideas to find agreement. Groups identified continuous communication between community members, stakeholders, and decision-makers as key to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness.

The level of proposed citizen involvement ranged from large-scale community meetings to small-scale “kitchen table” conversations. Several groups suggested the creation of citizen planning boards or advisory councils that would organize gatherings and act as intermediaries between residents and the City. Other groups suggested that citizens engage their community one-on-one as ambassadors or canvassers and report findings back to the City. Whether large-scale or small-scale, these ideas share in common a desire to devolve certain engagement responsibilities to citizens themselves.

Panellists often inquired about the logistics, funding and labour required to implement ideas. Groups often suggested that citizens directly take responsibility for certain costs and responsibilities. One group suggested the use of a community database to help citizen’s self-organize and share information. Groups expressed the need to ensure neutrality and accurate representation within any group that has a formal role in the engagement process, including residents’ groups.

The panel continually challenged groups by asking how citizens would be empowered in the decision-making that would follow initial consultations. Groups emphasized the importance of first establishing trusting relationships, informing citizens, and creating a sense of community. Panellists also asked how decision-making power would be shared between government, residents, and other stakeholder groups. One group proposed that all major stakeholder groups should share decision-making power to ensure balanced outcomes. Another group suggested that citizens would be able to propose draft policies to the City for feedback, which reverses the current process. Other groups stated that citizens should act only as advisors, and that it is the City’s responsibility to ensure that its final decisions adequately reflect the wishes and concerns of citizens.
Analysis

This section identifies recurring themes in guest speaker and breakout group presentations that could help to further empower citizens in future City of Vancouver community engagement processes. Emphasis is placed on concrete ideas that are actionable in different city contexts. Further consideration would be advisable to determine the practicality for implementing individual ideas, such as resource requirements or tensions with competing policy objectives.

Approximately half of breakout group ideas focussed on methods to increase awareness among stakeholders. This differs somewhat from the intended workshop focus on citizen political empowerment. Citizen political empowerment was defined for the workshop as “a citizen engagement process where the City and citizens work collaboratively to frame issues, develop options and identify preferred solutions, and/or citizen engagement processes where the decision making power rests primarily in the hands of citizens.”

Several factors may have contributed to this increased emphasis on outreach. More workshop time could have been spent defining empowerment and contextualizing the ideas of presenters. Time also may have been insufficient for groups to fully construct a multi-stakeholder decision-making process. Finally, some groups may have made a conscious choice to explore the connections between outreach and empowerment, recognizing that awareness is a key aspect of any engagement process, and that an aware public is more likely to see its interests considered by elected representatives.

Enhanced Outreach

Presenters and breakout groups emphasized that city outreach must be as sophisticated and creative as corporate advertising. They stressed the importance of making activities dynamic and enjoyable as well as informative to attract individuals who would not normally attend a meeting. This could involve food, storytelling, competitions and other techniques to animate activities.

Suggestions include:

- **Actively canvassing locations associated with specific stakeholder groups.** Examples relevant to False Creek South include dog parks for pet owners and the sea wall for those living outside the community. One table suggested following up with groups that may not attend public meetings, for example, low-income groups or those not proficient in English.

- **Creating a semi-permanent physical location** where stakeholders can view information and provide input on their own schedules. This approach might differ from current “open house” style events that occur at a specific date/time.

- **Extending the reach of awareness campaigns** by directly mailing information or surveys to affected households, placing advertisements on buses or in other public spaces, posting information in local businesses, and providing information in multiple languages.

- **Using game-style formats to encourage team building and receive input**, such as one group’s suggestion for a “Citizen Engagement League” (see Group 5’s notes in Appendix A) where teams are built to support diversity in dialogue and foster belonging and collaboration.
Citizen Ambassadors
Several breakout groups proposed ideas for how citizens could actively engage the neighbourhood as ambassadors of the planning process. These suggestions are potentially relevant to The City of Vancouver’s Neighbourhood Champions program, which works towards this same goal. Several of the suggestions rely on the City providing some form of standardized questions or discussion guide that supports citizen ambassadors in this process.

Suggestions include:

- **Kitchen table conversations** where individuals host local discussions on a defined topic and submit their input to the City.
- **One-on-one engagement by citizen volunteers**, potentially reaching a wider range of stakeholders than would attend an open house.
- **Providing access to a database of community contacts** to assist citizens who wish to self-organize.
- **Provide 3rd party support to reduce power imbalances** among multi-stakeholder groups. This 3rd party non-profit would provide process design, training and coordination services.
- **Reflecting back unfiltered citizen feedback** to create a sense of transparency and accountability, in addition to creating official summaries. Methods discussed to reflect back citizen feedback include a web-based platform where all citizen comments are recorded and available for viewing, or presenting an exhibit of resident-guided drawings that depict different visions for the future of the community.

Collaborative Decision Making
Several groups suggested processes that give citizens a heightened role in framing issues, developing options, and identifying preferred solutions.

Suggestions include:

- **Posing open-ended questions to stakeholders**, allowing them to directly contribute to a vision and/or principles that frame the planning process.
- **Creating mechanisms for citizen groups to propose their own policy solutions**. If the City were to provide a structured process for this to occur and/or offer direct feedback or discussion, citizen groups would potentially submit more detailed and fully formed ideas than might occur if citizen ideas are anonymously aggregated. This process could be open-ended, or designed to generate options for achieving policy targets defined by the City (e.g. a certain level of density in a neighbourhood).
- **Facilitated, multi-stakeholder dialogues** that allow stakeholders with differing interests to listen to each other and find potential compromises. This dialogic approach emphasizes citizen-to-citizen communication, rather than just citizen-to-city communication. Presenter Nathan Edelson highlighted this type of engagement as key to the success of the Joyce Station Area Plan. An example used by one group was participatory budgeting processes where trades-offs and agreements are made collectively among representative neighbourhood groups.
- **Creating a panel of citizen representatives** to review draft proposals against a set of planning principles that are determined at the start of the planning process. Presenter Peter Whitelaw described how a similar process built community trust and confidence.
during the 2005 Arbutus Lands Co-Designing Process. Several groups suggested similar roles where citizens helped to manage the planning process.

- **Presenting options to citizens for voting.** This type of approach was suggested by several breakout groups, and was used in the 2005 Arbutus Lands Co-Designing Process, where citizens voted on each other’s design ideas. An extension of this idea could see city planners presenting multiple options to citizens for achieving the same policy objective (e.g. different built forms for achieving a specific density). This approach of framing choices and trade-offs for citizens in the latter stages of a planning process, rather than asking them for feedback on a singular plan, could provide citizens with a clearer understanding of how their feedback would be received and acted upon.

**Formalizing Resident Groups**

Several breakout groups emphasized that resident groups should take formal responsibility for managing major aspects of engagement. A key precondition for this idea was that resident groups would need to be representative of all stakeholders, and could not simply reflect the opinions of specific individuals or interests.

Resident and Neighbourhood Associations in Vancouver are currently ad-hoc groups that vary widely in their approach and representation. Presenter Dave Meslin suggested an alternate model used in cities such as Los Angeles, where a Department of Neighbourhood Empowerment oversees a network of 95 Neighbourhood Councils. The City of Los Angeles provides support, recognition and funding to councils that meet official standards for areas such as elections, governance, and advertising. Whether or not the exact terms of reference for Los Angeles Neighbourhood Councils are applicable to Vancouver, this model provides one example of empowerment the City of Vancouver could investigate further.

Presenter Shirley Chan also discussed the role of using short-term projects, such as clean-up campaigns, to maintain citizen engagement over the long-term and build momentum towards the long-term goals of the community. Resources to undertake community projects could be included within a formal resident group’s mandate, which would help to emphasize the underlying purpose of community-building and increase residents’ pride in their neighbourhood.

The Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force *Quick Starts* report includes recommendations for participatory budgeting and creating a centrally maintained “listserv” of resident email addresses. Officially sanctioned residents groups potentially could help to oversee the participatory budgeting process in their community and use city-hosted communications tools, such as the listserv, for outreach.
Appendix A - Breakout Exercise Group Notes

Group 1

Summary of Model Engagement Process

- Start with a clear statement of intention from City Hall (i.e., support for residents to remain in the area). City Hall must commit to firm guiding principles.
- Establish a Community Planning Board to design a process of asset inventory and idea gathering.
- The Community Planning Board’s first effort is to gather resident perspectives on the neighbourhood as is (asset inventory).
- The second stage is focused on idea gathering through multiple mechanisms to ensure broad representation.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- A clear statement of intention from City Hall and a commitment to guiding principles.
- A focus on creating trust in order to pursue any kind of long-term vision.
- The City should take a bold stance, and needs to come out and say that they support, in principle, the notion that the residents will be enabled to remain in the area.

Initiation and Management:

- The City of Vancouver, as an owner, needs to lead the process.
- A fun block party, as an inaugural event, would help to build awareness and get people engaged at the outset.
- Training sessions (outlined below) would be a part of an inaugural event.
- A group of local residents, inclusive of multiple stakeholders, would form a task force to determine both a process and an eventual proposal.
- Establish, at the outset, the foundations of a local institution that would remain over the long term.

Citizen Representations:

- There need to be resources available to help people understand and access the information they need.
- Create institutional capacity in the community for sustained engagement, focused on building facilitation skills, graphic design skills, and communication skills.
- Have citizens undertake a video inventory of area to get a visual perspective and understanding of the current neighbourhood, and values.
- Set up a speaker’s corner to allow residents to record stories and messages about the neighbourhood in a non-threatening way.
- Host storytelling nights, to hear stories from residents and the community, as well as local leaders.

Group and Power Dynamics:

- A speaker’s corner, with low barriers to access, would help alleviate power dynamics.
• Have City Staff come to neighbourhoods to listen and engage with residents in order for Citizens to trust that City Hall is interested in listening,
• Focus on city presence in the area and in engagement sessions.

Role of Experts:
• To train local residents with collaboration, dialogue, facilitation, and communication tools to undertake and participate in long-term discussion.

Standards of Reporting:
• The process should focus on identifying what residents love about it, and the way the area is perceived. This should be reflected in final reports. This is only possible over time, through multiple, varied events.
• Include the long-term history of the area to contribute to shaping the long-term vision.

Accountability for Outcomes:
• The community needs a set of fundamental guiding principles to build citizen trust in the process. These should include the provision that residents can remain in their homes and agreement from the City that it will receive and consider residents’ proposal.

City Oversight and Approval:
• A community advisory board, supported by the city, would determine the engagement process.

Three Key Points from Discussion
• City Hall needs to take the first step in citizen empowerment, establish some degree of certainty, and demonstrate genuine trust towards local residents to participate in decision making
• Time needs to be spent at the outset to gather perspectives from residents of the existing assets and value of the area (history), as a means to start long-term visioning, and to build relationships and capacity necessary to engage residents in dialogue and discussion.
• Multiple tools, mechanisms, and efforts need to be employed to ensure broad participation and representation in the asset inventory of the neighbourhood, planning ideas and all other engagement efforts.
Group 2

Summary of Model Engagement Process:

- Supportive Community Education Process - this process can be thought of as a cycle:
  - Education
  - Gatherings
  - Action Groups
  - Communication to decision makers
- Each stage would involve a community event.
- An awareness campaign could be coupled with the processes and events to ensure that the key issues are being reinforced alongside citizen empowerment/engagement initiatives.
- Sharing and storytelling will be an important component of the education process, as it will lend insight to both the history and potential future of FCS.
- Brand: SPEAK – acronym to describe key notions of process/events
  - Story, process, education assets, kids
  - The above listed elements are what the group noted as being central to the process and a potential solution.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- Education is the key component for success.
- The branding and framing of the issue are integral to the success of the engagement process. The legal issue should be re-framed so as to resonate with community members in an emotional capacity and engage their interest.
- Needs and processes would be based on the demographics of the neighbourhood.
- Inclusivity and accessibility are necessary factors for the process.

Citizen Representations:

- Having all citizens represented is a key to success due to varied nature of the community, which is composed of 1/3 market, 1/3 rental, and 1/3 non-market residences.
- Significant research is essential to understand what citizens needs are and what demographics live in the community of FCS.
- Stakeholders extend beyond residents as FCS attracts people from all areas of Vancouver.
- A multi-pronged process and approach would allow for several entrance points into the engagement process.

Role of Experts:

- The experts in this scenario would be the community members themselves.
- A ground-up approach would be employed to activate community members as change makers.

Accountability for Outcomes:

- Because of the grassroots approach to the issue, all community members will be accountable for the solution(s).
City Oversight and Approval:

- Resident action groups would draft initial report recommendations and provide these to the City, rather than the City creating a plan and presenting it to the community.

General Notes/Observations:

- A main component of the process will be visioning, focusing on the future of the community. Community members will reflect on the potential impacts and changes to their lives, homes, and community.
- The process would be focused on creating engagement proactively, rather than reactively. Time will allow for education and preparation in this situation, as leases don’t expire for at least 7 years.
- It is important that whichever vehicle is used to communicate messages, discussion and intention always center on the issue at hand.

Three Key Points from Discussion

- **Awareness, accessibility, and education** – Unpacking the situation, and defining key terms like ‘lease’ (with help of the community organization Re*place) is essential to make the facts accessible to all stakeholders.
- **Assets** – Build off existing community assets and partner with community organizations, businesses, schools and other associations to build a purposeful and powerful network.
- **Understanding history** – Showcasing the neighbourhood’s past will allow the future to be thought about in a more comprehensive and informed way. This could be done through sharing stories and focusing on inter-generational relationships.
Mission

To develop an engagement process that empowers citizens and stakeholders to decide the future of SFC.

Goals:
- Citizen Representation
- Diverse Group
- Metro Vancouver
- 1000 F2F
- 1 Year Process

Strategy:
- Identify Stakeholder Groups
- Create Ground + Launch Event
- Future Scope - Urgency
- Feeding Back / Looping in with each opportunity
- Public + Performance Spaces, schools
- Month-by-Month Process + Feedback

Methods:
- Performances, Dialogues, Meetings, Potlucks, Festival, Workshops
- Use Public Space
- Notices
- Presentations
- Interactive
- Objects
- Posters / Flyers
- Student Debate / Movable
- Questionnaire
- Flash Mob
- Social Media / Online

Actions:
- SkyTrain Advertising
- Potlucks / Table
- ‘What’s a fair share?’
- ‘Enough for All?’
- ‘How do we share abundance?’
- ‘Join / Brainstorm – How do we engage?’
- Repeat

Figure 1: Visual depiction of Group 2’s engagement process
Group 3 - “Up the Creek with Dialogue”

Summary of Model Engagement Process

- Hold a series of public meetings on a boat between City representatives and representatives and public from False Creek South neighbourhoods.
- Develop a plan to satisfy all stakeholders on a given boat ride.
- Artists create visual representation of plans discussed on the boat, which are then presented to the public for feedback. Feedback is then incorporated into next meeting as the plan continually develops over the summer.
- At the end of the summer, the plan and all its iterations become the basis for the final planning sessions.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- Establish clear understanding of all major issues for all parties.
- Identify existing agreements.
- The community should involve the City early in the process and establish each group’s goals.

Initiation and Management:

- The City could divulge long-term plans, allowing for discussion between leaders and the public on future development.

Citizen Representations:

- Each engagement meeting is open to the public so as to receive the widest range of feedback.
- The feedback received will determine what is discussed in the next meeting, and the visual presentation will change accordingly.
- Meeting locations will gradually move up the creek to incorporate as many participants as possible.

Group and Power Dynamics:

- The False Creek South case could become a case study for future City engagement plans and developments.
- Focus on moving away from the polarized “us and them” mentality between public and City leaders.

Standards of Reporting:

- Artistic visualizations of plan can spark ongoing conversations about the future of False Creek South.
General Notes/Observations:

- The group spent much of their time understanding and agreeing upon the issues at hand. For example, there was confusion over the different land ownerships of the area. This cut into the time they had to discuss a citizen engagement process.

Three Key Points from Discussion

- All community issues need to be clearly defined before any worthwhile planning can occur.
- Involve the Engaged City Task Force in implementing the False Creek South community consultation as an opportunity to pilot new ideas and innovations in community engagement.
- Involve all the stakeholders early in the process to see if there are already areas of agreement.
Group 4

Summary of Model Engagement Process:

- Create a fun, community based planning/engagement method, such as a community planning festival
- Ensure that the event is accessible and attracts groups and individuals that are not usually involved in decision making

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- Creating awareness of issues and policies is crucial for “success.”
- The group questioned how information could be presented to the public in a way that is perceived as neutral.
- Accessibility and reducing barriers is important (for example, dress codes).
- The festival should create awareness around selected issues.
- Enhanced awareness will lead to empowerment and engagement later in the process.

Initiation and Management:

- Existing groups and affiliations should establish clear goals and collaborate in the process.
- City officials should approach the public as opposed expecting the public to seek out the City. Engagement should happen “at the kitchen table”, “in your own backyard,” etc.

Citizen Representations:

- It is important to acknowledge the public’s voice.
- Community members’ views need to be presented in a way that encourages discussion.
- Participants questioned how to involve individuals who do not agree or care about the City Council and civic issues.
- One of the participants provided a personal example of her experience at a recent community-planning forum where her community experienced an environment where their opinions and voice mattered, and this made a strong impact on the community response. She described experiencing a shift in her confidence and ability to engage in civic issues after experiencing this forum.

Role of Experts:

- Stakeholders should be included in the decision-making process, ideally with a chosen leader to represent their objectives.
- Organized groups and established city groups could advocate for civic interests.
- Participants questioned who should be invited to the table and who would make the decisions.
- “Experts” could go out into the streets for community consultation.
- Granville Island’s history should also be reviewed.
General Notes/Observations:

- Team four spent the majority of the conversation discussing the process that is currently used for decision-making, gradually shifting to describing what “pre-conditions for success” look like.
- Major themes were: accountability, transparency, inclusivity, accessible information and raising awareness.
- Later on, the team shifted into a more creative process and began discussing fun ways to engage with community members and the general public who use False Creek and are affected by its development (including False Creek residents as well as people who do not live in the area).

Three Key Points from Discussion

- The importance of accountability (including transparency and access to information).
- Inclusivity: Creating events and processes that are accessible and appealing to individuals that are not usually involved in decision-making.
- Creativity: approaching decision making in a fun and exciting way that appeals to diverse crowds.
Group 5 - “Citizen Engagement League”

Summary of Model Engagement Process

- Create a “Citizen Engagement League” composed of decentralized, diverse teams.
- Membership would be open, inclusive, without tryouts, and continually open to new members.
- Teams are coordinated in a collaborative fashion by coaches and captains who are non-partisan and are trained in facilitation and tools for creating equal group dynamics.
- Meetings are held in public spaces (parks, schools, libraries) using a visual identifier, like the Olympic blue jackets (e.g. hats, t-shirts, capes, flags).
- Coaches/captains are equipped with iPads, and the ability to report back and show that community input is being captured.
- Matches are held at major decision-making points in the process. Practices provide engagement points (potlucks, in decentralized community gathering spots) to develop the game plan for matches and build capacity.
- At major milestone matches, captains lead their teams and present their ideas to other teams. At the end of a match teams collaboratively find common ground on the decision at hand. For example, at the onset of the process a major milestone would be identification of shared principles.
- During team practices, teams would draft the principles they feel provide the best foundation for decision-making in the project. At the match, teams share their principles, common ground is identified and trade-offs are worked through on principles that conflict in order to finalize a set of planning principles.
- After practices, citizens are better prepared to play in the matches (decision-making meetings). Practices are open to everyone and include learning how Council works, voting strategies, strategic skills, etc.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- Establishment of house rules, such as spirit of the game, inclusivity and fair play

Initiation and Management:

Management is less of a City process – a non-partisan, non-profit group is brought in to coordinate the league and coaches are professional facilitators who create teams with a purposeful mix of stakeholder reps including residents, city staff, developers, businesses and various interest groups.

Citizen Representations:

- “Players” can join at any time, as long as they know the rules and attend an initiation “ceremony.”

Group and Power Dynamics:

- Developers and other business sector players are encouraged to participate – especially if there is a new project coming up.
- Coaches are professional facilitators and captains are trained in facilitation techniques to ensure balanced dialogue in practices, matches and tournaments.
Role of Experts:

- Coaches and captains have facilitation skills, but there are no ‘experts’ leading the teams, their roles are as players, like everyone else on the team.

Standards of Reporting:

- Designated listeners/ambassadors in each team report back to the public and City, giving residents in the neighbourhood an idea of the process and what is coming up.
- Ambassadors are required to record what is being heard in the community and put those issues on every meeting agenda.

Accountability for Outcomes:

- The league mantra is “What has been heard, has to be shared.”
- Final outcomes include more engaged citizens, trained residents/stakeholders with the skills to engage, and a plan that everyone has ownership of, with buy-in from all players in the tournament.

City Oversight and Approval:

- City staff are team players in the process and active participants in matches.
- Coaches and captains bring forward ideas to the “final match” which includes senior City staff and any other key decision-makers as referees.

### Three Key Points from Discussion

- Multiple levels of entry/commitment into political processes are needed.
- There is a hunger for fun, engaging and playful ways to get involved in local planning decisions
- There should be opportunities to provide skills and training to disengaged or uninformed citizens.
- Engagement should be proactive not reactive.
Group 6

Summary of Model Engagement Process

- The focal concept and brand for a one-year engagement process would be an open-ended question: “FCS: How do we...?” In deliberately leaving this central question open-ended, this process would empower citizens and stakeholders to decide the future of False Creek South.
- The process would encompass diverse public spaces and interactive activities, such as performances, talks, flyers, notices, web, dialogues, long-table dinners, participatory posters and student debates.
- To bring issues in question alive for citizens in and beyond False Creek and to communicate their relevance, certain questions would be directly brought forward for discussion, such as “FCS: How do we ensure a fair share for all?” and “FCS: How do we share abundance?”
- The target for direct face-to-face interaction and feedback would be 1000 individuals. A larger number would be engaged through strategies such as Facebook and noticeboards.
- Each piece of the engagement process would incorporate looping feedback opportunities, from requests for feedback on every notice to interactive elements in performance pieces.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- The identification of stakeholders and the nature of their stake would be a key first step in the process. Decisions for the future of False Creek South will impact the city as a whole, making it important to reach beyond citizens residing in the neighbourhood.

Initiation and Management:

- The process would be overseen by a Steering Committee composed of a diverse group of stakeholders. The process would be led by a core group of residents and the most involved stakeholders.

Citizen Representations:

- The complexity of ensuring that the Steering Committee be democratic and representative was acknowledged. While no perfect process exists for appointing committee members, stakeholder associations would choose their own selection process.
- The principle of transparency throughout the engagement process was highlighted as being key.
- Diverse platforms of engagement would be necessary to engage with the diverse stakeholders.
- To engage with a large number of stakeholders, initial outreach would be to community associations and groups who would be the conduit to engaging with their networks.
Group and Power Dynamics:

- Every stage in the engagement process would be participatory and inclusive of citizens, including the framing of issues, the defining of mission, and the selection of preferred means of engagement.
- Given the potentially polarizing nature of issues in this neighbourhood, the process would be structured to focus on how stakeholders can come together around common concerns.
- Language accessibility would be essential with materials produced in different languages.

Standards of Reporting:

- Monthly progress reports would be sent to stakeholders with requests for feedback.

City Oversight and Approval:

- A city representative would participate in the core group to ensure proper process and adherence to budget but would not be highly involved in steering the process.

Three Key Points from Discussion

- Focus on creating an empowering community process, structured around a central open-ended question that creates space for citizens and stakeholders to frame the issues, mission and means of engagement.
- Diverse platforms of engagement would be necessary to engage with the diverse stakeholders.
- Every stage in the engagement process would be participatory and inclusive of citizens with looping feedback opportunities built into each communication and activity.

Figure 2: Visual depiction of Group 6’s engagement process
Group 7 - “Engagement Where You Live”

Summary of Model Engagement Process

The Engagement Where You Live process involves three fluid stages:

- **Informing** residents and citizens of the factual parameters of potential future change in the neighbourhood and that there are upcoming opportunities to engage in a citizen-driven visioning and planning process.
- The City will pose a number of open-ended questions to facilitate discussion and dialogue on the future of the neighbourhood and community.
- **Engaging** where people live and on a neighbour-to-neighbour basis. Opportunities are provided to get to know each other.
- Engagement opportunities are provided at different levels and in different ‘families,’ including: community park picnics with picnic blanket hops and information areas, kitchen table talks with neighbours, bulletin boards, information on transit and at transit stops/hubs, in tourist areas and snail mail documents to residents and businesses. Websites and social media would provide different ways to give input and see the cumulative input thus far of everyone from all different types of engagement (e.g. via word clouds and summary ‘what we heard’ blurbs).
- **Communicating** in an ongoing and iterative fashion among the community (writ large; includes businesses and developers etc.), with non-residents, and among City departments.
- The advisory board also plays a key role in distilling and communicating ideas from the community to the City and back again, including via the website.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- Embodiment of certain practices and principles within and throughout the process is essential to its success: transparency, credibility, iterative process, building confidence in the community, minimizing barriers to participation.
- The function, role, responsibilities and authority of the advisory board need to be clear.

Citizen Representations:

- Members of the advisory board would either be self-selecting and/or nominated by members of the larger community at pre-arranged events.
- Existing neighbourhood associations would be honoured but not taken for granted as necessarily representative of all stakeholders and interests.

Group and Power Dynamics:

- The group questioned whether residents and local businesses would have a proportionality ‘greater’ role in decision making than non-residents of the area.

Role of Experts:

- Experts would be invited to contribute to the process and inform the advisory board on technical issues and particular subject areas where expertise was deemed beneficial.
Standards of Reporting:

- Reporting would be from the ‘Engagement where you live’ processes/events to a crowd-built website that collected all of the ideas and feedback.
- There would also be an iterative communication and reporting process between the advisory group to the City and back again.

City Oversight and Approval:

- The City should be geared and resourced to be a full partner in the process, as well as a potential source of facilitating funding (e.g. neighbourhood grants) and provider of some communication platforms such as the dedicated website.
- Decision-making and approval processes were not fully discussed.

Three Key Points from Discussion

- People making decisions about not only the outcome but also how the process plays out.
- The City can structure the ‘fire-starter’ questions, and the promotion of the fact there is an engagement process happening, but the doing of the engagement is determined by how the people self-identify opportunities to engage, discuss, dialogue and communicate with one another (in person, in small groups, in large halls, informally, online, etc.)
- All of these feed iteratively into a transparent decision making process.
Group 8

Summary of Model Engagement Process

- The group prioritized citizen engagement strategies that provide an opportunity to involve residents of South False Creek.
- The existing False Creek Residents Association’s first step is to engage in an awareness campaign to expand its membership.
- Engagement strategies include community events and celebrations to invite neighbours to gather, as well as an online forum to support conversation.

Pre-Conditions for Success:

- An assessment and awareness campaign of the South False Creek Residents Association.
- Identify existing neighbourhood associations and organizations (asset inventory).
- Explore barriers and accessibility concerns for involvement in neighbourhood organizations.
- An active resident body is essential to create the foundations for future decision-making bodies that are inclusive.
- Shared accountability, including a sense of care and trust, are important elements in establishing a participatory community decision-making process.

Initiation and Management:

- Residents were identified as the initiators and managers of the process.
- A fun event, such as a block party, could start the engagement process to encourage community participation at the outset.
- Communication among community members could be facilitated through online forums, public postings and the creation of a physical common space.

Citizen Representations:

- Create a membership organization by broad and inclusive outreach to South False Creek residents.
- Organize a place-making event to encourage community connection and citizen empowerment.
- Assess community assets and strengthen networks.
- Create multiple and accessible opportunities for citizen input via online forums, a physical space with information postings and a series of gatherings.
Three Key Points from Discussion

- The focus of the discussion was on strategies for citizen engagement and education, which is seen as the entry point for the conversation before branching out to the other stakeholders.
- Efforts are needed to reach out to the community, such as open neighbourhood events that encourage connections among the residents and a place-based framing of the conversation through personal stories of the past and future visions for the South False Creek community.
- mediums and tools for meaningful citizen contribution are integral. Establishing a diversity of accessible ways for a large and diverse population of the community to enter the discussion, such as personal conversations, online forums, neighbourhood meetings and providing information in multiple languages.

Figure 3: Visual depiction of Group 8’s engagement process
Appendix B: Breakout Exercise Case Study

**Workshop:**
Building a Culture of Participation with Dave Meslin

**Case Study:**
False Creek South

**Location:** False Creek South (FCS) is bounded by Cambie Street; 6th Avenue; the waters of False Creek; and, Fir Street extending to the Pennyfarthing development adjacent to the Burrard Street Bridge.

**History:** False Creek South (FCS) is a series of enclaves built in the midst of unremediated industrial lands between the mid 1970’s and 1990 and home for approximately 5,000 residents. FCS introduced Vancouver into global prominence as a pioneer of urban reclamation for livable community building. FCS’s density is more than twice the average density of Vancouver, and provides more than half the density of the downtown peninsula in its compact low and mid-rise building forms, with a strong mix of affordable and family housing.

**Issues:** The FSC community is primarily built on land leased from the City of Vancouver, with lease renewals due in the 2020’s and 2040’s. The long term maintenance and resale of dwellings can require a 30-year security of tenure (2042 and beyond). Challenges include a growing uncertainty about whether residents will be able to remain in the area, as well as difficulties in securing affordable mortgages for major renovations and property sales. This uncertainty may cause a decline in community re-investment that impacts residents and other stakeholders.

**Stakeholders:** Residences in the community include market strata, leasehold strata, co-op, rental, seniors housing and care homes. Recreational uses include Granville Island, Charleson Park, Sutcliffe Park and the seawall. Transportation interests include taxis, truckers, boating marinas, the Olympic Village Skytrain station and a railway right-of-way last used to service the 2010 Olympic streetcars. Commercial interests include real estate agencies, developers, light and heavy industry, retail businesses, and the service industry, including restaurants. Other potential stakeholders include First Nations, a large arts community on Granville Island, beneficiaries from affordable or subsidized housing, and the citizens of Vancouver who collectively own leasehold properties.
Recent Developments: In February 2012, City Council unanimously voted to work with the False Creek South Neighbourhood Association (FCSNA) and other stakeholders to chart a new future for the community. The FCSNA recently proposed the following principles as basis to initiate the growing conversation with the City:

1. Existing residents can remain in the community beyond 2036;
2. Achieve a demographic mix that is similar to the region’s average, with a stronger emphasis on providing housing for moderate income families;
3. Seek opportunities for increased density, while respecting the area’s historic design;
4. Continue to embody the City’s affordable housing, financial and sustainability goals; and,
5. Model an inclusive process for dialogue, decision-making, partnership and change.

Special thanks to the Re*Plan committee of the False Creek South Neighbourhood Association for providing background information and content for this case study.
Workshop: Building a Culture of Participation with Dave Meslin

Breakout Exercise: Dave Meslin’s 4 Ingredients for Citizen Empowerment

- **Ownership** *(expanded living room)*
- **Tools** *(how the system works)*
- **Confidence** *(citizens’ opinions matter)*
- **Malleability** *(change is possible)*

Considerations for Citizen Political Empowerment in City Decision-Making

- Pre-conditions for success
- Citizen representation
- Role of experts
- Accountability for outcomes
- Initiation & management
- Group & power dynamics
- Standards for reporting
- City oversight & approval

Citizen Political Empowerment

Breakout teams are asked to design a model Citizen Political Empowerment process for deciding the future of False Creek South. For the purpose of this workshop, Citizen Political Empowerment is defined as a citizen engagement process where the city and citizens work collaboratively to frame issues, develop options and identify preferred solutions, and/or citizen engagement processes where the decision making power rests primarily in the hands of citizens.
Breakout Exercise:
Considerations for Citizen Political Empowerment in City Decision-Making

Pre-Conditions for Success
What pre-work is necessary to prepare citizens and politicians to engage in more collaborative decision-making and to establish both groups’ trust in each other and in the process?

Initiation and Management:
Who should design and manage the engagement process? For instance, who should set the terms of reference, facilitate the process, and manage interactions between empowered citizens and interest groups?

Citizen Representation:
How can the City ensure the empowered citizens are representative of the City and include members who have barriers to participation? Are participants chosen or do they self-select? How can the City prevent the process from becoming politicized? In what way should stakeholders who have direct interests in decision outcomes be involved?

Group and Power Dynamics:
How can the engagement process promote dialogue and effective working relationships among diverse participants? How can the process prevent dominant members from overriding other voices, especially where some participants face barriers in language, education, or social standing?

Role of Experts:
What is the appropriate role of experts to inform the opinions and decisions of empowered citizens?

Standards for Reporting:
What are the appropriate standards for reporting the input and/or final decisions of empowered citizens? What information do citizens who do not participate in the process need to know?

Accountability for Outcomes:
How are empowered citizens accountable to stakeholders and the wider citizenry? What forms of accountability exist in a citizen-driven decision-making process? How can the City ensure that empowered citizens act in a fair and reciprocal manner when giving input that will impact their fellow citizens?

City Oversight and Approval:
Who is accountable to the electorate for final decisions and how? What expectation is there for Council to act on the decision or recommendation, especially if Council does not agree with the outcome?