Rethinking the Region V

a forum on

Citizen Advisory Bodies

and Urban Policy

Co-hosted by the SFU Urban Studies Program

and the Vancouver City Planning Commission

June 17, 2017

Vancouver City Hall
Acknowledgments

As co-hosts of Rethinking the Region V, the SFU Urban Studies Program and the Vancouver City Planning Commission would like to express our gratitude to all the speakers, moderators, volunteers, participants and others who contributed to making this event a success.

Convenors
Professor Anthony Perl, convenor for the SFU Urban Studies Program
Nola-Kate Seymour, convenor for the Vancouver City Planning Commission

Event coordinator
Karen Sawatzky

Administrative and planning support
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### Schedule

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<td>8:30–9:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>9:00–9:30</td>
<td>Introductions and welcomes from Nola-Kate Seymour, convenor and chair, Vancouver City Planning Commission; Khelsilem, member, Squamish First Nation, and commissioner, Vancouver City Planning Commission; Anthony Perl, convenor and professor, SFU Urban Studies Program; Peter Hall, director, SFU Urban Studies Program</td>
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**Keynote session**

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| 9:30–10:30| Tina Nabatchi, associate professor of public administration and international affairs at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University  
*Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy: Rethinking Local Civic Infrastructures* |

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#### Panel: Citizen Advisory Committees Influencing Policy

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| 11:00–12:30| Moderator: Daniella Fergusson, commissioner, Vancouver City Planning Commission  
Sherry Baker, Township of Langley, Seniors Advisory Committee  
Steven Eastman and Lillian Howard, City of Vancouver, Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee  
Michael Hrybyk, City of New Westminster, Intelligent City Advisory Committee  
Freda Pagani, District of West Vancouver, Community Energy & Emissions Plan Working Group |

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#### Panel: The Seattle Experience

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| 1:15–2:45 | Moderator: Frances Bula, urban affairs journalist  
Michael Austin, commissioner, Seattle Planning Commission  
Kathy Nyland, director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods  
Jamie Stroble, commissioner, Seattle Planning Commission  
Tim Wolfe, director, Community Investment Division, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods |

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#### Panel: City Councillors on Working with Citizen Advisory Bodies

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| 3:00–4:00 | Moderator: Gordon Price, fellow, SFU Centre for Dialogue  
Councillor Linda Buchanan, City of North Vancouver  
Councillor Adriane Carr, City of Vancouver  
Councillor Sav Dhaliwal, City of Burnaby  
Councillor Nathan Pachal, City of Langley |

**Reflections and Wrap-up**

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<td>4:00 –4:30</td>
<td>Ken Cameron, adjunct professor, SFU Urban Studies Program and UBC SCARP</td>
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Welcome from the SFU Urban Studies Program

Welcome to Rethinking the Region V: A forum on Citizen Advisory Bodies and Urban Policy. This event is the fifth in a series of annual gatherings convened by SFU’s Graduate Program in Urban Studies to consider a topic of importance to the Vancouver region’s future. Today, scholars, urban development professionals, planners and policy-makers, students and citizens will consider how the role of municipal advisory bodies has evolved in and around Vancouver, as well as look at the approaches and practices to citizen involvement used in another Cascadian city, Seattle. This program will provide opportunities to discover how citizen advisory bodies have influenced urban policy and to consider larger questions regarding how citizens engage with local governments on policy advice, including questions of representation, equity, influence and accountability.

This forum seeks to

• better understand the range of activities and issues that citizen advisory bodies are involved in within Metro Vancouver and Cascadia, as well as the history, structure, influence and limitations of those groups,
• learn about some examples of how citizen advisory bodies have influenced urban policy in Metro Vancouver and Seattle,
• appreciate the role of citizen advisory bodies in today’s urban policy context, including the increasingly large role for digital forms of citizen engagement,
• reflect on who is involved in citizen advisory bodies and for what purposes.

As a participant in this forum, you can help to advance our understanding of these questions:

• Are citizen advisory bodies an effective way to involve the public in urban policy-making from the perspective of local governments?
• How could these bodies better assist the local governments they advise?
• Are advisory bodies an effective mechanism for citizens who want to influence their local governments?
• What, if any, are the possibilities for making these bodies more effective mechanisms for citizen involvement and/or influence within Metro Vancouver?
• Are citizen advisory bodies adequately representative and accountable? Do they help diversify the voices at the policy table, or just amplify the ones already represented?

Thanks for joining us and rethinking an important part of our region’s urban policy practice.

Dr. Anthony Perl
Professor of Urban Studies & Political Science
Faculty Convenor, Rethinking the Region V
Welcome from the Vancouver City Planning Commission

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) is delighted to be partnering with the SFU Urban Studies Program on the 2017 Rethinking the Region forum on the role and impact of advisory groups on decisions about our urban form and experiences. Our mandate is to advise the mayor and council on matters affecting the long term future of the city. Last October, representatives of VCPC participated in Habitat III, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador. UN member countries, including Canada, adopted a New Urban Agenda (NUA) to guide cities internationally for the next 25 years. (For the best reports on the outcomes and the efforts of cities around the world to implement the New Urban Agenda, please see Citiscope’s web site www.citiscope.org). After reviewing the Agenda and participating in discussions with other cities from around the world, VCPC decided to reference the New Urban Agenda as an overarching lens through which we might assess Vancouver’s current and future progress. We identified five themes that we perceive as having particular relevance to Vancouver and the region.

1. Resilience (in the face of climate change, sea level rise and disasters)
2. Engagement for Real (participatory planning and public engagement)
3. Financing Public Life and Space
4. A City for All (diversity, inclusion and affordability)
5. Creating Common Unity (the role of communities and corridors)

Today’s forum on advisory groups is particularly important to our interest in participatory planning and public engagement. While we have a long history of public engagement in this region, VCPC sees gaps in the overall effectiveness and satisfaction with some of these processes. Open houses, town hall meetings, short presentations to advisory groups and electronic surveys are pretty standardized in the region. The process is predictable and often leaves participants dissatisfied. The public feels that their views haven’t been incorporated, developers feel they are asked to give too much, advisory groups feel consultations are token, and staff feel caught in the middle. On a continuum of participation that moves from show-and-sell to co-design, Vancouver residents and advocacy groups seem to desire shared power at the co-design end of the continuum, while the city and developers prefer to operate from a show/sell/adjust/defend model of power retention. In this context then, what can be done to make engagement more meaningful? Is there a role for advisory groups to bridge the gaps that emerge?

Tina Nabatchi’s insights will provide a framework for our discussions. The forum is focussed on case examples from the points of view of advisory group members and of elected officials who receive advice from such groups. We are especially grateful to the members of the Seattle Planning Commission and the Department of Neighborhoods for joining us and sharing their experiences.

VCPC will be incorporating our learning from today’s forum into our ongoing work to provide insightful advice on the topic of “Engagement for Real.” Thank you for your attendance and participation.

Nola Kate Seymour, Ph.D
Chair,
Vancouver City Planning Commission
Anthony Perl is professor of urban studies and political science at Simon Fraser University (SFU). He was appointed to the Vancouver City Planning Commission in 2015. Before joining SFU, Anthony worked at the University of Calgary, the City University of New York, and Universite Lumiere in Lyon, France. He received his undergraduate honours degree in government from Harvard University, followed by an MA and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Toronto. His research crosses disciplinary and national boundaries to explore policy decisions made about transportation, cities and the environment. He has published in dozens of scholarly journals and received prizes for outstanding papers he presented at the World Conference on Transport Research and the Canadian Transportation Research Forum. He has also produced five books, including as co-author of *Transport Revolutions: Moving People and Freight Without Oil* and of the Oxford University Press textbook, *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*, third edition. He has advised governments in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France and the United States on transportation and environmental research and policy development. He also served on the Board of VIA Rail, Canada’s national passenger railway. Anthony is also an adjunct professor at Griffith University’s Cities Research Institute in Brisbane, Australia, and a Fellow of the Post-Carbon Institute, in Santa Rosa, California.

Nola-Kate Seymour is chair of the Vancouver City Planning Commission and the retired president and CEO of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (1999-2010). Under her leadership, the ICSC won international recognition in urban planning and design, solid waste management, urban greening, energy efficiency and food security, and Canada’s top award for long-standing commitment to international cooperation. She has worked at all three levels of government, including serving as director general in Environment Canada and executive director of a royal commission of inquiry. In the non-governmental sector, she headed two large international conference events and was deputy to the president of the International Centre for Sustainable Development. She has contributed to many international summits and events as a speaker, delegate, and organizer. She served on advisory committees for the World Urban Forum and the World Peace Forum in 2006 in Vancouver and headed a team of writers that produced *From Ideas to Action: 70 Actionable Ideas for the World Urban Forum 3*. She has three interdisciplinary degrees: a Ph.D. in social psychology, a master’s in community development and a bachelor of arts in recreation administration. She has taught at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Her writing and research centers on communities and empowerment. Nola-Kate received the UN Association’s Global Citizen Award in 1995, the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal in 2002 and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.
Tina Nabatchi is an associate professor of public administration and international affairs at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, where she also co-directs the Collaborative Governance Initiative for the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). Tina’s research focuses on public participation, collaborative governance, and conflict resolution. She has authored over 60 publications, including two recent books: Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy (with Matt Leighninger; Jossey-Bass, 2015) and Collaborative Governance Regimes (with Kirk Emerson; Georgetown University Press, 2015). Her award-winning research and teaching is internationally recognized. She has presented to, consulted for, and trained a wide variety of executive and professional groups from around the world, and has worked with numerous U.S. agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Tina has also has worked with the World Bank to design and implement a massive open online course (MOOC) about citizen participation, and with the Obama Administration on the development and evaluation of U.S. national action plans for open government.

Abstract: Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy: Rethinking Local Civic Infrastructures
In 1961, Jane Jacobs insightfully argued that “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.” More than 50 years later, we still recognize the power of this statement, but where are we in making it a reality? To what extent does everybody have a role in creating our cities? What could city government and residents gain in terms of better public policy and more effective program and service delivery if we encouraged and harnessed the many voices of ordinary people? Filled with examples at the city-scale, this presentation explores the forms of public participation, and explains how giving good process, activating local leaders and networks, using the building blocks of participation, and providing systemic supports can help us rethink our civic infrastructures and advance urban governance for 21st century democracy.
Panel: Citizen Advisory Committees Influencing Policy

Moderator

Daniella Fergusson is a community and stakeholder engagement practitioner with a background in urban planning, design, political science and web development. She is a principal at MODUS Planning, Design & Engagement and a commissioner on the Vancouver City Planning Commission. On the forefront of rapidly evolving digital engagement thinking and practice, Daniella helps organizations become more participatory, transparent, and accountable. A skilled project manager and problem solver, Daniella has led numerous community planning and engagement projects in Canada and the US, and now provides training and tools that enhance and expand the field.

Panellists

Sherry Baker has sat on and chaired many provincial, regional and local boards over the years. She currently sits on the Township of Langley’s Seniors Advisory Committee and chairs the board of the Encompass Support Services Society. Sherry was elected to Chilliwack city council in the 1980s and served there for six years. She completed six years as a public member on both the Board of Registration for Social Workers and the College of Occupational Therapists of BC. She is the past chair of the BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support and past chair of the South Fraser Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, as well as a founding board member of the Minerva Foundation for BC Women. She was also a founding member of the United Community Services Coop (now Realize Strategies). She was awarded the Canada 125 Medal “in recognition of significant contribution to compatriots, community and to Canada” and received the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Sherry holds a master of arts in applied behavioral science from City University in Seattle, a bachelor of home economics from the University of British Columbia and a diploma in business administration from Fraser Valley University. She has owned and operated a private consulting and counselling practice since 1990. She was hired as executive director of the BC Association of Community Response Networks in 2010.

Steven Eastman is Ojibwa from the O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi Nation of Northern Manitoba, as well as a born and raised Vancouverite on the unceded Coast Salish lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-waututh First Nations. Steven has served as co-chair of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee (UAPAC) for the City of Vancouver since the committee’s inception – three terms. Steven also served one year on the Civic Asset Naming Committee for the City of Vancouver. He has a background in working with and advocating for the urban Indigenous community, and has worked for such organizations as ALIVE (Aboriginal Life in Vancouver Enhancement Society) and InDigital, a program dedicated to introducing Indigenous youth to careers in technology. Steven has also sat on other advisory committees, including the Advisory Committee to the Citizens Assembly for the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan and the Advisory Committee for the Pearson Dogwood Redevelopment Project. Through his role with UAPAC, Steven has provided feedback and guidance on a number of city projects and plans, including the Northeast False Creek Park and Community Plan, the new Saint Paul’s Hospital development, the Downtown Eastside Community Plan and the Arbutus Corridor Transportation Plan, among others.
Lillian Howard is a member of the Mowachaht-Muchahlaht First Nation and is of Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka’wak and Tlingit ancestry. Lillian has been co-chair of the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee (UAPAC) since it was established. She currently works at the Provincial Health Services Authority with Sanyas Cultural Safety Training, and at Sheway. With a team of others, Lillian founded and now co-chairs the Uplifting Indigenous Family Fund (UIFF) which is led by an advisory council. UIFF was created to assist families of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Lillian has worked at the BC Women’s Hospital, the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre and the Wish Drop-in Centre Society. Prior to attending graduate studies in 2004, she was involved in Indigenous politics and worked with such organizations as the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council as a co-chair, as well as the Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the Wuikinuxw and Snuémyuxw First Nations. During this period, she sat on various environmental organizations such as the Environmental Aboriginal Guardianship through Law and Education, the BC Environmental Network, the Canadian Environmental Network and BC Spaces for Nature. Lillian participates in the North Pacific Tribal Journeys, an annual event for individuals, family and community healing journeys and cultural processes. She believes in family and culture and community-building based on the concept of Ishuk ish Tsawalk, which means all is one and everything is interconnected. Lillian has a master of arts in environmental education and communications from Royal Roads University.

Michael Hrybyk is co-chair of the City of New Westminster’s Intelligent City Advisory Committee. As part of his committee work, he has contributed to the city being named one of the Smart 21 cities in 2017 by the Intelligent Community Forum. He has also advocated for the creation and ongoing development of Bridgenet, the city’s open access fibre network. Michael is a member of the faculty of Douglas College, where he teaches in the Computer Studies and Information Systems Program. He is also a part-time instructor in the BCIT School of Energy, teaching the computer networks course in the Bachelor of Technology in Electronics Program. In 2016, Michael retired from BCNET, where he was the president and CEO, and had managed the organization since 1994. Under his leadership, BCNET transformed into a full IT shared-services organization for all of the province’s higher education and research. He was previously with the BCIT Technology Centre, where he served as the director of the Group for Advanced Information Technology R&D. Michael has 30 years of experience with Internet networks, Unix systems and software development. He has a master’s degree in computer science from Johns Hopkins University, and held the position of manager of computing systems and networks there, where he also helped create the first campus-wide ethernet network.
**Panel: Citizen Advisory Committees Influencing Policy**

Freda Pagani is a retired architect and holds postgraduate degrees in environmental studies and resource management. She has served on the District of West Vancouver’s planning commission, urban design panel and four working groups, the latest being the Community Energy and Emissions Plan Working Group. Her Ph.D. work focused on using creativity in the design of more sustainable buildings. Freda was the founding Director of the Campus Sustainability Office at the University of British Columbia. During her tenure she established UBC as a leader in campus sustainability. The office functioned without operating funding and was supported by savings it made through proactive resource management. In her previous position as associate director of campus planning and development, Freda initiated the concept of the C. K. Choi Building as a demonstration green building. This building received many awards for its innovations, including nomination by the American Institute of Architects as one of the top 10 green buildings in North America and recognition in a recent UN study as one of the first green buildings in the world. She has won many awards, including the B.C. Minister’s Environmental Award, the UBC Alma Mater Great Trekker Award, the Canada Green Building Council’s Educational Leadership Award. She was made a Fellow of the Cascadia Regional Green Building Council as well as the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. Freda has taught and lectured worldwide on green buildings and sustainability.

**Panel: The Seattle Experience**

**Moderator**

Frances Bula has been working in journalism for more than 30 years, much of that time covering urban issues and Vancouver city politics. Currently, she covers city issues for The Globe and Mail, as well as writing on that topic for Vancouver magazine, BCBusiness, and other publications in Canada and the U.S. Frances is also a journalism instructor at Langara College, an adjunct professor at the University of B.C., and a member of the SFU Urban Studies Program’s Council of Advisors. She has received several awards and fellowships, including the Canadian National Magazine Award for best columnist and the Atkinson Fellowship in Public Policy, which she used to study homelessness and housing issues. She has a master’s in communications from Simon Fraser University.
Panel: The Seattle Experience

Panellists

Michael Austin is a planner with Perkins+Will, where he is involved in planning and design projects throughout the Pacific Northwest. He brings experience in community outreach, neighborhood-scale planning, and data visualization. He received his Masters in Architecture from Pratt Institute in New York and his bachelor’s in city and regional planning from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, during which he studied abroad in the Czech Republic. An active member of the local design community, Michael became interested in joining the Seattle Planning Commission after serving as the “Get Engaged” representative for the East Design Review Board. He brings a passion for seeking equitable planning solutions to both short and long-range efforts that will shape the various neighborhoods of Seattle, and the city as a whole. Michael lives in Pioneer Square with his fiancé and dog. He enjoys traveling on weekends and participating in design competitions.

Kathy Nyland’s path to policy and public service is a little less traditional than most. Her neighborhood advocacy work has led her to achieve a rare trifecta: beating city hall, working with city hall, and now working in city hall. Over the years, Kathy has strategized and advocated on behalf of neighborhoods and other underrepresented communities. She founded a neighborhood business association, chaired Seattle’s City Neighborhood Council organization, mobilized her community, and prevailed on a number of David-versus-Goliath issues, including the creation of Seattle’s zero waste policy. Prior to taking on her role as senior policy advisor in Mayor Ed Murray’s administration, Kathy served as chief of staff to a Seattle City Council member. In 2015, Mayor Murray appointed Kathy the director of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. Driven by a sense of fairness and a wonky passion for outreach, Kathy believes in the power of good policy and public engagement. She’s mobilized community resources, engaged broad public participation in programs and projects, and identified established and emerging community leaders, all while understanding that civic engagement depends upon access to information.
Jamie Stroble currently works for King County’s Climate Action Team as the lead on climate change-related community engagement and partnership efforts, climate justice and community resiliency, and the integration of equity and social justice into regional climate action work. Before becoming a bureactivist, Jamie worked for a non-profit in the Chinatown/International District, engaging and empowering Asian Pacific Islander (API) youth and elders around environmental justice and community development issues. She currently serves on the board of the Asian Pacific Islander Community Leadership Foundation (ACLF), the Climate Justice Committee with Got Green, and just finished her term on Mayor Murray’s Environment & Equity Initiative Community Partners Steering Committee.

A passionate community development professional, Jamie joined the Seattle Planning Commission to be a part of nurturing equitable resiliency in Seattle, ensuring livability and increasing community accessibility to city planning and policymaking, particularly for immigrants, refugees, communities of color and low-income communities. She has been active in environmental justice and equitable development, and brings a strong knowledge of environmental health, air quality, sustainability issues and social justice, and background in culturally relevant community outreach and engagement, particularly with youth and limited English-speaking populations. Originally from Hawai’i, Jamie is a University of Washington graduate and has been a Seattle resident for over 12 years. She currently lives in the Northgate/Lake City area.

Tim Wolfe is the Community Investments Division director at the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, where he oversees the departments’ community grant and funding programs. Since joining the department in 2015, he has focused on simplifying the complex requirements and application processes, building community capacity through increased technical assistance, and reducing barriers to participation in the programs. Tim also oversees Seattle’s participatory budgeting process, “Your Voice, Your Choice,” through the division, which successfully engaged more than 3,000 of the city’s youth in decision-making to allocate $700,000 in 2016 for programs related to homelessness, human services, transportation and cultural activities among others. In 2017, the department launched a broader participatory budgeting program open to all residents focused on small-scale transportation and parks improvements with more than $2 million to allocate through the process. The city received close to 900 ideas for projects in one month. Prior to working with the Department of Neighborhoods, Tim worked for the City Budget Office as a fiscal & policy analyst with a broad portfolio of city departments. Before working for city government, he served as both field organizer and director on state and local campaigns where he developed a passion for community organizing and deeper understanding of Seattle’s unique neighborhood topography.
Panel: City Councillors on Working with Citizen Advisory Bodies

Moderator

Gordon Price was the director of the City Program at Simon Fraser University until the end of September 2016, and is now a fellow with the SFU Centre for Dialogue. In 2002, he finished his sixth term as a city councillor in Vancouver, BC. He also served on the board of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (Metro Vancouver) and was appointed to the first board of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink) in 1989. He blogs on urban issues and transportation, with a focus on Vancouver, at Price Tags: www.pricetags.wordpress.com.

Panellists

Linda Buchanan is serving her second term on council for the City of North Vancouver, where she was born and raised. She holds a degree in nursing (honors) from the University of British Columbia and her public health career has included providing preventative nursing services to the Squamish Nation, coordinating a program for children, youth and families and leading a North Shore physician’s immunization project for Vancouver Coastal Health. She currently works in schools and community clinics. Prior to being elected to council, Linda served as a school trustee with the North Vancouver Board of Education. She is one of the founding members of the Ridgeway Heritage Committee and is proud of their success in having Ridgeway Elementary, one of the most significant heritage buildings in North Vancouver, restored. People who know Linda describe her as an exceptional leader, a collaborator and a strong advocate for our community. Linda is the principal author of the North Shore Child and Family Friendly Charter and championed the creation of the Child, Youth and Family Municipal Strategy. Her current priorities include working toward having the city become a dementia-friendly community. Her work with citizen advisory bodies has included the City of North Vancouver’s Advisory Planning Commission and its Heritage Advisory Commission. Linda lives in the Ridgeway/Grand Boulevard area with her husband Kevin and their four children.
Adriane Carr was re-elected in 2014 to her second term on Vancouver City Council. She is currently the council liaison for the Vancouver City Planning Commission, the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee and the Vancouver Food Policy Council. Born in Vancouver, councillor Carr earned a master’s degree in urban geography under David Ley and Walter Hardwick from UBC in 1980, writing her thesis on the role of citizen groups in building community spirit and shaping development in the neighbourhood of Kitsilano. Councillor Carr taught for 12 years at Vancouver’s Langara College, serving on the Langara Faculty Association board and, for several years, as chair of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies. In 1989, she left teaching to join the executive team at Western Canada Wilderness Committee, a group founded by her husband, and helped it grow into one of Canada’s largest membership-based conservation groups. Councillor Carr is a well-known leader in green politics. In 1983 Councillor Carr co-founded the BC Green Party, North America’s first green party, and in 1984 launched the Green Party of Vancouver. She led the BC Greens from 2000–2006, then served as Green Party of Canada’s deputy leader from 2006 to 2014. She currently chairs the Vancouver elected Greens caucus. Councillor Carr has two adult children and lives in Vancouver’s West End with her husband Paul George.

Sav Dhaliwal is proud to be serving his fifth consecutive term as a Burnaby city councillor and was recently appointed chair of Burnaby’s newly created Sustainable City Advisory Committee, which advises council on policy issues related to the city’s social, economic and environmental sustainability. Prior to becoming a city councillor, Sav spent many years volunteering for minor sports organizations, including as president, and a life member, of the Burnaby Minor Hockey Association. He also served on the Burnaby Parks and Recreation Commission for six years as chair. He was founding chair of the Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame Committee and worked closely with the City in designing the Bill Copeland Sports Centre. Sav has served on many committees and has welcomed the opportunity to represent Burnaby at the provincial level as the president of the Lower Mainland Local Government Association (now past-president) and at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Sav is currently serving at the national level with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) as the chair of the Standing Committee on Municipal Finance and Intergovernmental Arrangements. He is also a director of the Metro Vancouver Regional District board.

Whether through his blog, working with various community groups, the City of Langley’s Parks and Environmental Advisory Committee, or the city’s Hunter Park Task Force, councillor Nathan Pacha has worked hard to bring forward awareness around intersecting components of sustainable and accessible community design. Over the years, he has written thousands of blog posts, served on the Abbotsford Inter-regional Transportation Select Committee, hosted sustainability workshops, and has helped bring world-renowned urban design speakers to the community. He has appeared in print, radio, and television talking about land-use and transportation issues in our region. As a strong supporter of agricultural and green spaces, he authored a report on the Agricultural Land Reserve entitled “Decade of Exclusions? A Snapshot of the Agricultural Land Reserve from 2000-2009 in the South of Fraser.” He believes that we need a diverse transportation system and co-authored a report — “Leap Ahead: A transit plan for Metro Vancouver” — to bring awareness to the importance of accessible transit networks.
Ken Cameron has 26 years of experience in senior planning and management positions in local government in the Greater Vancouver area, most recently as manager of policy and planning with the Greater Vancouver Regional District. He played a key role in the adoption of the Livable Region Strategic Plan in 1996 with the formal support of the region’s 21 municipalities, an accomplishment that was recognized in 2002 by the UN Habitat Program’s Dubai awards for outstanding contributions to the human environment. Between 2004 and 2009, Ken served as chief executive officer of the Homeowner Protection Office, a provincially owned corporation that licensed residential builders, oversaw the operation of the privately provided home warranty insurance system and provided financial assistance to owners of homes subject to premature building envelope failure. Since 2009, Ken has served as a consultant on regional planning and governance for a number of public sector clients. He is an adjunct professor of Urban Studies at Simon Fraser University and of community and regional Planning at the University of British Columbia. Ken is past chair of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities and a fellow of the Canadian Institute of Planners. With former Premier Mike Harcourt and local writer Sean Rossiter, Ken authored City-Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver, which was published by Douglas & McIntyre in 2007.
About Citizen Advisory Bodies in Metro Vancouver

To provide context for the day’s discussions, here are some things we learned while organizing this forum about the citizen advisory bodies that operate in Metro Vancouver:

- All 21 municipalities have some type of ongoing citizen advisory body or committee, as does the Tsawwassen First Nation.
- Metro Vancouver as a regional government does not have ongoing citizen advisory bodies in the way that its member governments do, but it does sometimes set up public advisory committees for specific projects. TransLink also has a Users’ Advisory Committee.
- About 250 such groups officially advise local governments in Metro Vancouver, with the precise number depending on the definition of citizen advisory bodies.
- Some smaller municipalities have only two or three citizen advisory bodies, while larger ones, such as Surrey and New Westminster, have 12 to 20. Some of the most common types of citizen advisory bodies are committees or commissions on the following topics: planning, transportation, social policy or community services, heritage, environment, and public art.
- While there is much overlap in the names and topics of citizen advisory committees, in some cases name variations suggest the committee has wanted to take a more locally tailored approach to an issue. For example, in New Westminster, the advisory committee that deals with bicycle and pedestrian issues is called the Actibiped Committee and Burnaby now has a Sustainable City Advisory Committee rather than an environment committee.
- The types of citizen advisory bodies in each municipality provide a window into the concerns and challenges in that community. For example, only some municipalities have an agricultural committee or one for dealing with railway or airport issues. Others have advisory committees to deal with a particular property or geographic area, such as Coquitlam’s Riverview Lands Advisory Committee and Vancouver’s Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee.
- The City of Vancouver alone has about 30 advisory bodies, including some types unique in Metro Vancouver, such as the Urban Aboriginal People’s Advisory Committee, the LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee and the Renters Advisory Committee.
- Metro Vancouver residents participate in an advisory capacity on both local government standing and select committees, as well as commissions and more project-oriented task forces and working groups. Under the Community Charter (see sections 141-143), the mayor “must establish standing committees for matters the mayor considers would be better dealt with by committee and must appoint persons to those committees.” At least half the members of those standing committees must be council members. Select committees, by contrast, require that a minimum of only one member be a council member and may be established by council to “consider or inquire into any matter and to report its findings and opinion to the council.” Advisory planning commissions are provided for in the Local Government Act (section 461), as well as the Vancouver Charter (section 574). The Local Government Act (section 597) also deals with the establishment of heritage commissions.
- Some Metro Vancouver local governments have recently reviewed their approach to public engagement and/or the role of their advisory committees. These include Burnaby, New Westminster, West Vancouver and Vancouver.

It is important to note that while the citizen advisory bodies that are the focus of this forum are officially mandated and supported by their local governments to provide them with advice, many other groups also play a vital role in, or attempt to influence, local government policies. These include advocacy groups, developers, nonprofit service providers, and resident, business improvement and professional associations.
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