

Citizen Insight Councils

City of Victoria, BC, Canada

2010 - 2011

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July 2011

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¹ *Wise Democracy Victoria* (WDV) is a non-profit society serving businesses and communities by facilitating higher level collaborative conversations. WDV has a history of successfully convening and facilitating councils made up of randomly-selected individuals (www.wisedemocracyyvictoria.org). Email: grranko@shaw.ca

Also see www.wisedemocracyyvictoria.wetpaint.com for archived material on the first three Wisdom Councils held in Canada, including copies of the unanimous statements and media coverage.

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Introduction

This paper has been prepared to document an innovative approach to civic engagement undertaken by the City of Victoria, using randomly-selected Citizen Insight Councils. In 2010, the City began the ambitious task of updating its Official Community Plan (OCP), in response to changing community priorities and themes and goals clarified in a new sustainability framework.

Citizen Insight Councils are based on Jim Rough's social innovation; the Creative Insight Council (see www.tobe.net). This new name was chosen by the City to reflect the civic nature of the process.

What is an Official Community Plan (OCP)?

Established under the authority of the Province of British Columbia's Local Government Act, an Official Community Plan is a city-wide plan. Taking a comprehensive and long-term perspective, the OCP is the principal policy document used by City Council to guide decisions related to growth, land use, building heights and transportation. The current Victoria City OCP was last updated 14 years ago, in 1995.

Towards an Engagement Strategy

In 2009, Victoria City Council identified engaging with residents as one of its top priorities, and set out to formalize their approach to civic engagement. In 2010, City Council adopted *Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement*, making Victoria one of few municipalities in the Province of British Columbia to develop a municipal engagement strategy. The strategy identifies principles and best practices for reaching out to inform and involve citizens in public decision-making. A copy of the strategy is available online at <http://www.victoria.ca/residents/engaging-our-citizens.shtml>.²



² Prepared by HB Lanarc (see http://www.hblanarc.ca/projects/project_details.asp?ProjectID=109).

In preparing the strategy a variety of input techniques were used; including focus groups, a public ideas fair, stakeholder interviews, workbooks and fact sheets to spark discussion, and an online input board called *Ideascale*.

WDV provided written input in the public ideas fair and was asked to participate in stakeholder interviews. WDV also posted the idea of using randomly-selected councils on the *Ideascale* online board (see www.ideascale.com). Out of roughly 50 ideas posted, this idea was eventually ranked second in support through a process of online participants voting ideas up and down (see Appendix A). The popularity of the idea captured the attention of City planners and WDV was asked to

submit a proposal to convene and facilitate two or three randomly-selected Councils. The City accepted the proposal and WDV was contracted to organize and facilitate two Councils as part of the OCP update process.



What is a Citizen Insight Council?

The Citizen Insight Council process is based on a format created by the Centre for Wise Democracy (www.wisedemocracy.org), an internationally recognized organization that helps to develop creative solutions for citizen engagement. Similar approaches to citizen engagement have been successful in communities in the United States and Europe.

The process used in Citizen Insight Councils engenders a quality of conversation and thinking that is heartfelt and creative; where non-linear “shifts” and breakthroughs are natural. A specially trained Dynamic Facilitator assures the choice-creating quality of thinking and conversation. The dynamic facilitator follows and takes advantage of the group energy instead of extrinsic factors like agendas, guidelines, or objectives, to manage the process.

Overall, during the implementation phase of citizen engagement, input was received from at least 5,000 people over 12 months as the OCP was updated and a new process for creating neighbourhood plans established. A community survey engaged almost 3,000 Victoria residents in identifying top priorities for the future. Two community forums enabled over 500 citizens to listen to keynote speakers and take part in conversations on topics central to the OCP. Over 300 people engaged themselves in Community Circles, a format designed to enable citizen-led input, and the three Citizen Insight Councils (see www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca).



The Victoria Citizen Insight Councils

In undertaking Citizen Insight Councils the City of Victoria demonstrated a willingness to engage with citizens at a high level of public participation, by engaging randomly selecting citizens for in-depth conversations. “This is an exciting initiative,” said Mayor Dean Fortin. “Whether you’re 18 or 85, people have important ideas and insights about our city. The Citizen Insight Councils allow people to come together in a casual setting, hear each other’s ideas and work towards a common goal. The direction set by these groups will benefit the entire community and directly shape Victoria’s future.”

Using a city property database, five-hundred addresses were randomly selected, with letters of invitation sent to the residents. Follow-up phone calls were made to approximately eighty people on the list. This process presented any citizen of Victoria 18 years or older with a chance to be selected to participate, providing a unique opportunity for involvement by a wide cross-section of community members. Simon Nattrass with WDV was the key organizer for all three CICs, working closely with City staff.

Altogether, twenty-one individuals accepted the invitation and took part in two CICs, held on May 28-29 and June 5, 2010. In May 2011, a third CIC was convened by the city, with the original twenty-one individuals invited to help review the draft OCP. Seven individuals attended and were unanimous in their complements to the city on the success of the draft in addressing their input.

Dynamic Facilitation: a Key Ingredient

A specially trained Dynamic Facilitator assures the choice-creating quality of thinking and conversation. The three Victoria CICs were facilitated by Dan Doherty and George Sranko, both trained by the originator, Jim Rough. Jim’s website provides the following description for dynamic facilitation:

The primary role of the dynamic facilitator is to support the creative process of each person in the group and the group as a whole, by creating a reflective environment where each person and the group self-organizes. The group enters the “creative flow zone” of choice-creating. [Choice-creating](#) is similar to dialogue in that people explore topics open-mindedly and open-heartedly, yet unlike dialogue it helps groups address practical problems and reach specific conclusions. Choice-creating is similar to deliberation in that the result can be a thorough examination of a practical issue, including pros and cons of various solutions; yet unlike deliberation, it uses a non-judgmental and an open-ended process.

-- from www.tobe.net/DF/DF/how-it-works.html

The dynamic facilitator follows and takes advantage of the group energy instead of extrinsic factors like agendas, guidelines, or objectives, to manage the process. S/he uses four charts – Solutions, Problem Statements, Concerns, and Data – to help people be fully heard. No one is judged, each comment is

valued, and the group starts thinking creatively together. Being fully heard and oriented toward choice-creating brings out people's natural ability to seek shared outcomes that will take everyone's views into account.

Summary of Results for Victoria CICs:

Citizen Insight Council # 1: May 28-29, 2010

The first CIC followed the Wisdom Council model of a day and a half. Members met Friday evening for three hours and on Saturday they met for approximately seven hours, including a lunch break.

The City asked Council members to address this question (Dan Doherty facilitated):

How can the OCP help move Victoria toward sustainability?

Session Highlights:

Density was identified as a primary issue in response to this question. CIC participants reached general agreement on the following points regarding density:

- Develop diverse neighbourhoods that include all age groups and family constellations so we have vibrant communities that people care about, where kids can grow up happily and healthy.
- Diversity helps people open up & communicate, helping all be good neighbours
- Community gardens and greenspace promote health. Helps mitigate people's fear of other and of green space (the bushes!)
- Create democratic places, processes and events (run by the people for the people who live there)
- Develop places...the village square (such as public squares that give European cities soul, Cook St, James Bay SQ). Rather than Calif-like Suburbs, or our Songhees where in some spots, you don't see any people. Our Humbolt valley development has people but no green space (the Marriot); it's all pavement. We prefer a balance of green space.
- Help people have a stake in their community, have ownership, so they are not passive
- Provide community policing so people know constables as visible members of their community
- Do things, host shape spaces and developments to reduce fear and improve relations
- Do it in a way that is environmentally sound

Specific solutions

The following table provides an overview of the range of issues discussed and some of the solutions presented to the city by the CIC.

Citizen Insight Councils, Victoria, BC, Canada

OCP TOPIC	Concern/Goal	Solution/Strategy
Arts and Culture	<p>Celebration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we balance adult-oriented events with family events? How do we encourage more celebration in our community. We need a space for social gatherings, it provides permission, 20,000 people singing together, feel a sense of 'city' Communities identify through celebration 	<p>Celebration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need more city celebrations that don't involve alcohol. We need more sensitive policing for major events, because they are in a difficult position. Now they seem to be reactive, rather than proactive. Too much drunkenness is a problem for them to handle. Celebrations should be... Secure and safe, modeled after Montreal/Quebec, done in larger areas (blocked off from cars), more like Luminara, change police training (Vancouver?), need more cultural festivals, entertainment-based instead of drinking-based. Create a city square, like in Montreal. Citizen gatekeepers check for booze so it is safe for families
Community Well-being	<p>Diverse/Holistic Community (soc):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth/family-friendly. Ensure seniors are useful. Create a livable downtown with a year-round farmer's market, groceries, daycare, parks, shopping. Serve and support local food producers More availability of pet-friendly rentals, kid-friendly rentals. Childcare is hard to find. Is that a planning issue? Working people need their kids near work? <p>Health –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can the city do to assert community health as a priority? (social services, sense of well being) 	<p>What can the city contribute in a partnership to promote health?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of churches that are being sold E.g. real estate boards are helping re: hard to house first nations people appreciate services, but distrust... foster a sense of community by visibility eg. China town communicate to the public what is being done -Coolaide mental health center (so public know, so those who need the services know) where do food banks fit in? <p>Health/Social Svcs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> city could help people know what is available to help the get out of their addiction or situation -home issues work on public perception, Homeless as people who need help/attention -not fear help public know who to call to help youth/homeless (complicated) 310-1234 helpline for children put info close to those who need it reclaim visible info space for social use (currently used for ads)
Economy	<p>Growth/Economy (econ, soc):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market forces drive prices up, so there is not enough affordable housing and rentals. We have rising property taxes but fewer services, e.g. cutting back in Beacon Hill park...there are fewer flowers and more bark mulch. How to balance Tourist/Developer vs. residents. How do we keep it affordable to live here? Density – what is a sustainable balance? Some argue that growth and density improve the tax base and services, yet social services are cut as we grow more. It appears money is going to one group. Millions go to banks; people's rent goes up after renovations, it is an endless cycle of taking money from one group by another group. 	
Environment	<p>Green space is important, at risk and should be a priority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we protect wildlife and habitat? We need to focus on composting, what are we doing with our soil? How do we make Pandora Green more workable as a place for community...gardens instead of trying to discourage use with pavement, or paving it so it can be hosed down in the morning...after the street people move out for the day? <p>Solution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria needs pedestrian corridors and open development with landscaping. 	
Food Systems	<p>Preserve soil quality and food security.</p>	
Heritage	<p>Heritage values are important to the quality of our city, but this quality is at risk through inappropriate development and disregard...the jewel of the ocean surrounding us, and the need to preserve sight lines and perspective to preserve what we have.</p>	

Citizen Insight Councils, Victoria, BC, Canada

OCP TOPIC	Concern/Goal	Solution/Strategy
	<p>Solution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value and preserve features (buildings, environs) that evoke/recall our Heritage. 	
Housing and Homelessness	<p>Affordable Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have lots of housing restricted to age 55+. Or kids must be on the 2nd floor or higher. Where are the homes for families and kids? What is the city doing about affordable housing for people who LIVE here? How do we balance local affordable living with landlords rights to make money, also other services and inflation (how can a person feel they have control in their life). <p>Homelessness and mental health are important issues that affect our communities in many ways. instead of being medicated in institutions, they are self-medicating on the street.</p> <p>Data: Street Link has 100 beds, 20 at the sobering centre for a total of 120 beds which is increased to 180 for extreme weather. The CoolAid survey estimates there are 1550 people living on the street in Victoria. http://intraspec.ca/Homeless_Survey.pdf When beds are full, next step for police is to put people in jail. It is a revolving door system with no treatment phase.</p>	<p>Affordable Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure a percentage of revenue from new development for affordable housing <p>Social Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools: Future needs, what are they? What to do with existing surplus buildings eg. Blanshard school Allow companion animals in apartments, have a spay/neuter program. Reduce animal breeding via pet stores in favour of finding homes for shelter animals. ensure access to education <p>Homelessness solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide harm reduction services to help those who live on the street. Homelessness//street people are sleeping in doorways. In USA sidewalks are leased by businesses as private property, could this help empower business owners to manage the space in front of their stores?. If some prefer to sleep outside, we should provide facilities for them. We need to tailor services to different people. Host open, community-centred forums on important decisions. When the city/VIHA planed the downtown shelter, only only lip service was given to public input. This breeds distrust and cynicism.
Infrastructure	Sewage treatment needs to be more efficient due to increased density.	
Land Use Management	<p>Density – Creating a community, include need (econ, enviro):</p> <p>Thoughts from the CIC on Density, both high and low:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People want to walk downtown. Density reduces the need for personal vehicles, and increases need for good transit, things like car co-ops. We want community vision over profit. Every (box, square, something?) matters. Why would we put up anything that is not beautiful? Victoria to grow 20,000 over the next 30 years, CRD to grow 100,000. Who is coming to Victoria? Seniors X2, mid=same. A familiar pitch is that when density goes up, the price of services goes down, but it seems that prices go up and level of services go down. Density causes loss of quaintness...the reason tourists come here Tall buildings create wind tunnels and gray (shadow) areas. I love that I can buy an affordable condo. We don't need more high-end condos. Need stuff for families. How do we balance a sense of community vs. efficiencies that come with a larger town? 	<p>Density – Creating a community, include need (econ, enviro):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide incentives or motivation for what we want. Secondary suites, development that serves the community. Or...earning permission is Incentive enough Focus density downtown, old Bay building should be far edge. Focus medium density around commercial nodes (villages), would help improve amenities in places like Quadra Village, Cook St., etc. Don't block view corridors. Keep height further back, not huge. Go for a European feeling. Build where the land is lowest so as not to ruin skyline. Rock bay could be like False Creek, Yaletown without towers, need to work on Selkirk. City should be clear on where high rises can go and be strict. City could have guidelines for environmental features in new buildings. What about rooftop gardens, parks, geothermal heat, fuel cells, reuse of greywater, on-site sewage treatment, and beautification for new development? Aesthetic quality should be considered with new buildings. Creating communal space with new development, allowing for community. Provide facts so we can de-polarize discussion on large, complex, persistent issues, such as: What is the truth regarding the impact related to density? (benefits/problems)

Citizen Insight Councils, Victoria, BC, Canada

OCP TOPIC	Concern/Goal	Solution/Strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the plan for commercial nodes? Villages? More downtown density? • How does increasing density provide more tax income compared to services required by the increased population and usage?. • Is it time to get light rapid transit? • Do we have enough density for LRT? 	
Neighbourhood Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livability/Quality of Life and Environment (social): • Foster opportunities for community celebration • Do more to help people feel safe. • Private Security companies hire people who are not well trained, are poorly paid. They are used as deterrent e.g. Swift St businesses collaborated to hire a security firm to deal with chronic social issues and property violations, when they feel they should be served by the police. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand block-watch (i.e. eyes on the street/reporting). Neighbourhood watch (i.e. safehouses for kids). • Policing: patrol on foot or bike (less in cars), know the community, talk to people. • Local businesses collaborate to use the same security company.
Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more places to have pets off-leash. • Preserve green (natural) spaces 	
Transportation	<p>Transportation (econ/soc/enviro):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation involves a network of multiple users. Pedestrian, light rail, bikes, buses, bridge (Johnson), parking. <p>Density = traffic, how do we deal with this? The volume of North Shore (Collwood/Langford) traffic is a growing concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage less reliance on cars • Data: there are no new parkades planned. • Continue to enhance bus service. Timing and routes. • Provide secure places for bikes like Chain Chain parking service, parkades. • Fact: the number of cars entering town daily is down, while the number of people is up. • Move parked cars off Douglas? • Stations, corridors, interconnections, public engagement strategies. • How to mitigate NIMBY and compromised side deals due to expediency, politics or favoritism (influencing who you know). • Make the night bus work economically. Would private mini-busses be a solution? 	<p>Transportation (econ/soc/enviro):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote public transit, bikes, walking, flex car, car co-op, walkability. • Lighting – fear of darkness, promote security. Create corridors of safe feeling. Be sensitive to women/kids/seniors etc. Train corridor – well lit, walk, bikes. Minimize light pollution, focus “task” lighting. Happy medium, aesthetic, balance. • Share bus lanes w/ bikes, feeling of efficiency. • Fuel bus w/ doggy doo, waste as resource (like San Francisco) • Pedestrianize Government St to Warf to Yates and/or side streets. • Invite BC transit to go to communities and talk about community-centred program for big picture. Make bus riding a community experience. “ride together” and serve lattes. • Amp up conversation re: transport hub/network including light rail before it's too late with clogged highways. • Lay infrastructure before building train. Get ready in order to save money. Buy property in advance over a period of time. • Consider a one-way system. • Change lane priority at different times of day. • Run main route nodes to transfer to local mini-bus • Traffic lights – coordinate for flow (flip side is to induce traffic calming). • We need safe bike lanes, physical separators. Shelbourne street is too narrow to be safe. • How do we improve bike lane safety? Solution: build a traffic meridian between cars and bikes, create exclusive bike-only lanes.
Urban Design (also see density)	<p>Waterfront (environmental/social):</p> <p>Provide a Dallas Rd. to Johnson St bridge pedestrian walkway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike/walk/bridge/ferry/kayak/rowers. • Preserve view corridors. • Marine habitat/greenspace. • Middens (native shore line). • Fishermans Wharf. 	

Citizen Insight Councils, Victoria, BC, Canada

OCP TOPIC	Concern/Goal	Solution/Strategy
	The waterfront is poorly developed. Some say it is "underdeveloped", given all our water, is it that bad to have some undeveloped? Solutions: We need a balance of bike/walk/water travel. What if we make Rock Bay work like False Creek in Vancouver?	
Other: Governance and Engagement	Governance/Engagement (econ/soc): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people live here and don't get into the community. How could they be more involved? What if we were asked more often "How would you like to be engaged?" If an issue emerges, someone needs to take it on and engage others. Use community associations effectively. Use multiple methods when surveying. Should city communicate more or less? Concern: Taxes rise, services drop. 	Governance/Engagement (econ/soc): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage active democratic processes Use CIC process in order to shape issues so special interests do not drive the agenda. Inform the public and empower people to be engaged. (opinions matter) Anticipate legal ramifications of city decisions. eg. Marina/arena. Be clear and aware. When querying the public, how to word the question...simple Send a letter or email to everyone, provide an online survey and a citizen's account for voting. Provide incentives. Why do I live here? Approach planning questions from this angle in order to keep a values-based perspective on development and service decisions; rather than how much money made or saved. <p>We want the city to say "These are our standards", then staff and council vet proposals and make decisions accordingly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> raise the bar so developers and others know the standards and have the opportunity to respond accordingly, and contribute to a quality living environment, rather than trying to do an end-run on the system hold to the values that residents express and hold themselves to, knowing the residents will support decisions so-made Look at what are others doing. How have they solved the problems before us?. Who can we hold as an example to live up to?: Portland, Vancouver's positive Olympic results.
Engagement	How should people be engaged? (soc): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have other cities done it? People need to be informed, use online surveys, kiosks like in the OCP update, library display/booth. When floating a decision, bring people to the idea, using democratic process. Use community centres as a hub for community planning. We need a city staffer whose job it is to engage community 	How should people be engaged? (soc): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a permanent place where people can share their voice and connect with others. Community Centres could be part of this. A city room staffed and with plain language information. When soliciting public opinion, provide voting columns based of different stakeholders so you can see what they think and come to a better understanding of the issue (online and mailout). Host a conference, where the Mayor talks to citizens. E.g. Centennial Square stage, forum, get info, contribute, engage. Mayor's podcast every Monday, discussing issues, inviting/connecting (YouTube channel?)
Civic Decision Making	Decision making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the highest level, it's about how decisions are made. Does the solution or decision match the aesthetic values and psychological needs of those who live and work in Victoria? For example how were decisions made regarding the Save on Foods arena, ugly public art, and the Songhees condo farm? Uptown, the big gray box on one of Victoria's (Saanich's) most prominent corners. Victoria could learn from others. Are the right people informing the City? Are they hiring the right people? Are those people enabled to do good work, or blocked by politics? Why are decisions taking so long; are they made hastily just to save too much talking? Population of CRD is projected to be 	Decision making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City projects need to be accountable, eg. Independent audit. I want the law and the city to protect citizen's interests (over those of special financial interests or external groups/individuals). Provide facts so we can de-polarize discussion on large, complex, persistent issues, such as: What is the truth regarding the impact or alternatives to amalgamation (regional integration/coordination)? How can we plan for the future of the City of Victoria when we haven't addressed amalgamation? Do we need amalgamation? (or how can we facilitation regional integration?) How can city provide info on why work is being done? eg. Searchable web page with data on projects and decisions.

OCP TOPIC	Concern/Goal	Solution/Strategy
	<p>500,000 by year _____. What does this mean to the quality of life? What can be controlled or managed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are different funding dynamics related to different community initiatives. Different funding bodies. 	

Citizen Insight Council # 2: June 5, 2010

The second CIC took place in one day over a period of 6 hours. George Sranko facilitated. In this CIC the City posed the following question:

How can neighbourhood planning be improved to better engage citizens, address local issues and further citywide objectives?

Unanimous Perspective of the CIC

The following points represent the unanimous conclusions reached by the CIC members:

Public Engagement:

- The number one challenge is to improve two-way communication between the City and residents in creating and realizing a sustainable future for Victoria. The CIC's vision for Victoria is to have a City that is highly engaged with its citizens and vice versa.
- The CIC emphasized the need for ease of access to pertinent information -- including City plans, zoning and development proposals, park plans, and all proposed changes that could impact the lives of residents. One suggestion is to have an online portal for each neighbourhood, which would serve as a one-stop website with links to all the information a resident might be searching after.
- The CIC strongly recommends the idea of a drop-in resource centre in each neighbourhood. These would be comfortable physical spaces where residents would feel at ease to meet informally over a coffee to discuss neighbourhood priorities, any proposed changes, visions for the future, etc. These centres would have maps and extensive neighbourhood-related information available, along with tables and chairs where people could hang-out and interact. City staff or informed resource people could perhaps appear on a scheduled basis to take part and/or facilitate meetings. The focus for these centres would be to provide a forum for positive civil discourse on an ongoing basis, rather than the often confrontational interactions at city council meetings or during public hearings where the focus is often on contentious issues. The notion is that these centres would provide a permanent venue for improving the two-way flow of information. There may be a role for community associations in providing these centres and keeping the information updated. One important aspect would be to have mechanisms for receiving ideas from residents and ensuring that they are transmitted to the appropriate counsellor and/or city department.
- The CIC would like the City to play a more visible and proactive role in facilitating civil discourse among residents and their community associations. They see an organic and flexible system that assists citizens in identifying common ground and working in a collaborative fashion. The long-term vision would be articulated in the OCP and associated regulations and policies,

with implementation by the city, along with the help of community associations, private businesses and engaged residents.

- The CIC emphasized the notion of communication flowing in all directions – up, down and sideways. They felt it was important for the Community Associations not only to keep in touch with residents via newsletters and websites but to interact with one another on a regular basis and to tackle difficult issues in a collaborative manner (i.e., location of needle exchange), by way of appropriate forums facilitated by the city. In addition, situations such as that of Fernwood, with two competing community associations splitting the neighbourhood, should never be allowed to occur. In this instance the City should have played a facilitative role long before the schism became intractable and affairs deteriorated to the point of legal action.

CICs Vision for Victoria in 2040

The CICs overall vision for Victoria is captured in the following statement:

Victoria should be accessible by all, for all.

In addition, the CIC outlined the following specific top priorities:

Transportation:

- Integrated transportation that is environmentally conscious and can grow with the needs of the population.
- Improve the attractiveness of non-automobile transportation. Make cars like smoking.
- Need one process to guide creation of strategy.
- Involve all modes of transportation (bike, walk, car, taxi, bus, etc.) and user groups in process.
- Make it easy to get from A to B without a car.
- Reduce the amount of space available for car parking downtown.
- Use some parking spaces for bike parking rather than having bikes take up sidewalk space.
- Need space and designated lanes for motorized handicapped transport (3-4 wheel scooters)
- Separate bike lanes with medians.
- Examine transportation strategies in other cities, to see how they integrate pedestrians, bikes, and other vehicles.
- Light rail is strongly supported as a key aspect of the transportation network.
- Need more pedestrian crossings/ zebra crossings with flashing lights
- Need more bike lanes.

Waterfront/Shoreline/Water Protection:

- Develop OCP policy that ensures that existing waterfront parking areas will be phased out by a certain date; i.e., the parking lots at the end of Fort St., Ship Point, Enterprise, and Ogden Point will not be used for parking after 2020. These waterfront sites have tremendous value to the citizens and must be used for people-friendly purposes, such as markets, parks, or public gardens.
- In any waterfront development, water views should not be obstructed at street level.
- The entire waterfront in the City should be tied together with a continuous walkway.
- Continue to improve the quality of water in the harbour.
- Continue to “daylight” streams wherever possible (by uncovering streams within culverts, under parking lots, etc)

Affordable Living Strategy:

- Increase the number of subsidized units in new developments, and ensure that there is a long-term commitment to that housing with follow-up compliance checks on a regular basis.
- Increase in the amount of self-sufficient housing (ie. Dockside).
- Increase overall quantity of rental available; continue to allow more secondary suites.
- Explore innovative housing solutions. eg. Section 904 offers creative tools.
- Develop an all-inclusive homeless housing initiative with the goal of having some form of housing available for every person in the City.

CIC members were asked to provide written feedback on the logistics of the session, including time spent, quality of the facilitation, etc. The results are shown in Appendix D.

Citizen Insight Council # 3: May 28, 2011

The third CIC consisted of seven members from the two previous councils held approximately one year earlier. These individuals were contacted by email and telephone in May 2011 and invited to participate in a follow-up CIC to provide feedback on the draft OCP.

The CIC took place on May 28, 2011 in the City Council chambers. The session was four hours long and began with a presentation by a Senior Planner, to brief the participants on the input received by the City and how it was being addressed in the draft OCP. George Sranko facilitated the session. There were five women and two men, ranging in age from 20s to 70s.

The following question was posed by the City:

“Did we get it right?” “Does the draft OCP match your vision for how the City should look in the next 30 years?”

Summary of Input

Overall, members of the CIC were very impressed with the OCP process and gratified with the way their initial feedback had been integrated into the draft OCP. The participants felt heard on the issues that were most important to them, and felt that the vision established by the OCP matched their own for Victoria in 30 years.

The CIC provided feedback on several key points, including the following:

Health & Safety

- Would like to see integrated health centres with an array of health professionals; would make better use of public facilities (to complement existing hospitals); would be good to redesign old buildings for multi-use and 24 hour service
- Having safe injection sites is important key to helping those with addictions

Urban Design

- Taller buildings (up to six stories) and increased density are part of the solution; i.e., having high-density town centers and core area zoned for six stories is a reasonable choice given overall goals of the OCP
- Growth could be accommodated with better urban design in order to avoid skyscraper look and feel; use of terraces and roof-top gardens
- Make better use of public spaces and facilities (i.e., schools) for benefit of community

Transportation

- Agreed with the hierarchy of transportation priorities, e.g., emphasis on pedestrians, cyclists, and transit before vehicles
- Need better infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists; this OCP provides a plan that helps establish the way forward.
- City could look for innovative solutions from other jurisdictions for pedestrians; e.g., ‘scramble’ corners
- Need to have a strategy in place for motorized scooters – how do they fit in? One idea is to have speed limiters and speed limits on sidewalks
- Current plans for LRT do not go far enough into James Bay – terminal should be beyond Belleville at Mile 0

Communication/ Citizen Engagement

- We want to know what’s planned for our streets and surrounding areas; need iterative project engagement and regular updates
- Feedback/cooperation needed between city and citizen initiatives. - Maybe community newsletters or prior notification about street closures etc.
- Make information available on the city website re: parks maintenance, traffic, general workings of city so that people can find out about projects in their neighbourhood
- Provide simple mechanisms for citizens to provide ideas and input to the city on ongoing basis

Key Issues Cross-referenced with Draft OCP

In its report to the City, WDV provided a cross-referenced table to indicate where CIC comments could provide additional input to the draft OCP, as shown here:

ISSUE / SUGGESTION / COMMENT	RELEVANT SECTION	SUGGESTED ACTION
Need integrated/centralized health centres which include services for mental health and addictions.	15	AD
Support safe injection sites	13.28	LC
Density as set out in draft OCP is satisfactory	Fig. 7, 13.1	NA
Density should be aesthetically accommodated to avoid visual overcrowding.	6.2, 8.16 – 8.24	NA
Ensure public space is used efficiently (i.e. Schools)	9.8	LC , SD (school dis./ Parks & Rec.)
Outdoor advertising needs to be downplayed/eliminated	8.5	LC/AD
Transportation hierarchy reflects priorities accurately	Fig. 9	NA
Need more cycling/pedestrian infrastructure	7.15, 7.16.1, 7.17, 17.19	NA, SD (cycling MP)

Legend

NA = no action, this goal is already covered accurately in the plan.

LC = existing language could be modified to better reflect this goal, but no additional items are required.

AD = item would need to be added to reflect this goal.

SD = could be integrated into a supporting document or referred to another department rather than the OCP/Planning.

For more information on the draft OCP and how it reflects the results from the three CICs see www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca.



Discussion

Based on feedback received from the City and council members, the Citizen Insight Councils have proven successful in gaining valuable citizen input to updating Victoria's OCP. Key benefits include the fact that randomly-selected individuals represent a cross-section of the community, particularly in a series of cycles. In addition, CICs can provide a voice to citizens who are more hesitant in contributing their views or may not be as persuasive as the more vocal residents, organized stakeholders, or paid lobbyists.

In terms of WDV and our work as a non-profit, this approach has proven to be a good funding source. By providing contract services to municipal government, and potentially more senior levels of government, this approach can serve as a model to other groups interested in providing similar services. Much of this work is oriented towards making a positive contribution to society and we often find ourselves in a quandary of trying to make a positive difference while putting bread on the table. Similar partnerships with government could sustain groups who want to convene wisdom councils and insight councils as a public service but find it difficult to raise adequate funds.

Governments in general are becoming more open to innovative civic engagement strategies, as demonstrated by the City of Victoria and numerous other case studies around the world (for example, see www.participedia.net). This provides an opportunity for trained dynamic facilitators to integrate their services with official institutions and processes (e.g., community planning). We at WDV are constantly keeping our eyes open for opportunities to offer our services or to help resolve contentious issues at the local level.

On the other hand, we believe it is important for facilitators to remain independent and not to become captive to any particular ideology or partisan perspective. Working with government requires extra care with documentation, as issues can quickly become politicized. It is important to remain neutral and to report the results accurately and in congruence with the perspective of the Council, no matter who the sponsor might be.

Some further points for consideration:

- Government sponsorship can make the job of random selection less onerous and more efficient, having access to digital databases such property addresses and voter lists. From our experience it appears that each CIC requires invitations to roughly 500 randomly selected individuals, with follow-up telephone calls to 80 or more, in order to convene a council of 12 members.
- We achieved good results with both the one-day and one-and-a-half-day timeframes. In many ways, the shorter timeframe is more appealing to participants and likely an easier "sell;" in similar circumstances we will likely recommend the one-day CIC.
- We find it very beneficial to have a note-taker on a computer at the back of the room, augmenting the facilitator with flip charts at the front of the room. This enables the team to document the discussion in greater detail than the facilitator alone can capture. In the long run, this has proven invaluable in providing comprehensive and nuanced reports to the sponsor (be it government or the community as a whole).

Appendix A: *IdeaScale* Results Showing Top-Ranked Ideas

Idea Number	Title	Details	Vote Up	Vote Down	Net votes	Comments
25	Establish a 311 call centre; Offer email news, blogs and feeds	Ideally, Victoria should have its own '311' system [to handle urgent but non-emergency calls] like many other municipalities such as Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg and others. What about sharing costs for a 311 system with Saanich and other municipalities in the Greater Victoria region? Also, for those who have Internet access, an email newsletter as well as a blog with an RSS feed would enable citizens to receive news about the City, especially if they could sign up to follow specific topics of interest, e.g. the Johnson Street bridge.	68	23	45	1
28	Engage at Level 5: Collaboration = Wise Democracy (e.g. Wisdom Councils)	Use the Wisdom Council model to engage citizens at "level 5" on the participation scale (1=inform, 5=collaborate). It is a demonstration of deep leadership and respect to involve people in the decisions that affect them. Proven engagement processes such as found at www.wisedemocracylvictoria.org provide principles and structures to make this work. The Wisdom Council is a group of 12 randomly selected individuals who meet to discuss important issues, then report back to the community. The creative solutions are astounding. Thanks for asking!	78	53	25	8
35	Fully Fund Public Participation Activities	Establish a budget for all departments and City Council to regularly and meaningfully engage the diversity of Victoria's citizens. For public participation to be done well, adequate resources must be dedicated for this purpose. Funding is needed to support new uses of technology, education and skills training, travel, administrative support, and expert assistance such as facilitators. Departments should incorporate participation into the full cycle of project planning. Full-time positions should be established for public participation experts to build City staff skills, familiarity with technology, and other capacity building needs.	38	16	22	2
40	Community Consultation: Not just lip service - the real deal	Community conversations with ample notice provided. Avoid short timelines as they show no respect for the time required for democratic process.	28	7	21	2
38	Create a CRD Program	Scrap this idea in favour of a CRD program! Why? Because Victoria is just a small part of the metropolitan area. Nothing can be accomplished here without the cooperation of surrounding municipalities; e.g. Blue Bridge decisions or public transit!	27	10	17	2
36	Billboard	Maybe the city of Victoria could publicly post all recent changes in public policy and new events on announcement board outside city hall	29	14	15	0
26	Convene Conversations that Matter!	Convene neighbourhood conversations about the future we want to have for this region.	47	32	15	1
47	community associations	Help fund community associations to become meaningful places for ongoing, participatory citizen engagement. The structures already exist -- it's a matter of using them.	15	2	13	0
43	Provide More Notice of Process	Ensure as many City of Victoria residents know about this process as possible, and provide more time for input - it appears rather rushed!	16	3	13	0
33	Calendars	Provide subscribable calendars. Garbage collection would be a popular one. I'd subscribe immediately.	31	21	10	1

Source: <http://www.victoria.ca/residents/pdfs/engaging-our-citizens-ideascale-report.pdf>

Appendix B: Invitation letter from City regarding CIC #1&2

May 2010

 **VICTORIA**

Dear Fellow Victorian,

It is my pleasure to personally invite you to participate in an exciting new initiative that is an important part of shaping the future of our city. As part of an increased effort to engage residents of Victoria, and in an effort to hear from as many different people as possible during the development of the Official Community Plan, the City has partnered with Wise Democracy Victoria, a local non-profit group, to facilitate two Citizen Insight Council discussion groups.

An Official Community Plan sets direction for a city's growth, transportation, housing, services and infrastructure. City Council, staff and citizens will refer to the community plan to help make decisions on things like where to locate affordable housing and what the community's transportation priorities are.

If you have received this letter, then you are one of a small number of citizens randomly selected to be a member of a Citizen Insight Council. We hope that you will lend a few hours of your time to this rare and unique opportunity to help provide a direction for the next 30 years of Victoria's future.

Each Citizen Insight Council will consist of 12 Victoria citizens who will address a question that is central to the Official Community Plan update. Facilitated by Wise Democracy Victoria, each group will meet for an in-depth discussion in either late May or early June. The dates are listed below.

Your thoughts and ideas will be welcomed and developed in a respectful environment to provide insights and identify new choices for the benefit of the entire community. Citizen Insight Councils provide an opportunity for open discussions with the direction of the conversation and ideas up to you and the 11 other participants. The input from the Citizen Insight Council will directly influence the shape of Victoria's future through the Official Community Plan.

Please accept our invitation to participate in one of these Citizen Insight Councils by contacting one of the individuals below before 9pm on Friday, May 14th. This is your chance to lead the way and shape the future of Victoria for you and your fellow citizens.

Sincerely,

Dean Fortin, Mayor of Victoria

This invitation is extended to one member of your household over 18 years of age.

Citizen Insight Council #1
Friday, May 28 and Saturday, May 29
6:30 pm - 9pm and 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Citizen Insight Council #2
Saturday, June 5
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Citizen Insight Council contacts:

CS, Senior Planner
City of Victoria

Simon Natrass
Wise Democracy Victoria

What is an Official Community Plan?

Victoria's Official Community Plan sets out a vision for the City and makes choices about how the City should change over the next 30 years. The Official Community Plan makes policy choices and provides a framework for adapting to real conditions over time.

Council, staff and citizens will refer to the community plan to help make decisions on things like where to locate affordable housing, how the city will respond to climate change, what the community's transportation priorities are, and how the City will provide recreational services. The City first adopted an Official Community plan in 1986, with the last update occurring in 1995.

The Official Community Plan addresses the broadest range of topics of any city plan, speaking to elements of economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

What is a Citizen Insight Council?

Similar to a focus group, a Citizen Insight Council brings together a randomly selected group of 12 individuals to address a question that is central to the Official Community Plan update. But unlike focus groups, which tend to gauge reactions and feelings on specific scenarios, the Citizen Insight Council will be more conversation and solution focussed. Facilitated by Wise Democracy Victoria, the goal of a Citizen Insight Council is that members develop guidance and suggestions for possible solutions on a 'big picture' question central to the Official Community Plan update. Any citizen of Victoria 18 years or older has a chance to be selected to participate, providing a unique opportunity for involvement by a wide cross-section of community members. This is the first time the City of Victoria has tried this approach to citizen engagement.

How will this information be used?

Facilitated by Wise Democracy Victoria, the information, ideas, and solutions brought forward by the Citizen Insight Council will be recorded and submitted to the City of Victoria as a part of the Official Community Plan update. This information will be used to help set directions and policy priorities in the new Official Community Plan, which will guide how Victoria changes over the next 30 years. The ideas coming out of the Citizen Insight Councils will be presented to the public at a June 25 and 26 Community Forum, where citizens will explore options for the future.

What is Wise Democracy Victoria?

Wise Democracy Victoria is a non-profit society that helps develop public involvement initiatives for businesses and communities throughout Greater Victoria. Wise Democracy Victoria facilitators have been trained by Jim Rough of the Centre for Wise Democracy, an internationally recognized organization that helps develop creative solutions for citizen engagement. The Centre for Wise Democracy citizen engagement initiatives have proven successful in communities across the United States and Austria. www.wisedemocracylvictoria.org

Appendix C: Invitation letter from City regarding CIC #3

**Planning &
Development
Department**



Community
Planning Division

#1 Centennial Square
Victoria
British Columbia
V8W 1P6

Tel (250) 361-0382

Fax (250) 361-0386

www.victoria.ca

April 18, 2011

Dear N.S.:

Re: Citizen Insight Council Meeting on Victoria's Official Community Plan

The City of Victoria is updating its Official Community Plan (OCP) to create a powerful vision and detailed plan to guide Victoria's growth and change over the next 30 years. A Draft Official Community Plan has been completed and is now out for public review and comment until June 10, 2011.

The draft OCP was created through extensive engagement with citizens and stakeholders. A critical part of that engagement was two workshops with Citizen Insight Councils. These groups of randomly selected citizens provided in-depth feedback on their vision for city, key issues to address, and ideas to improve the city. As a part of this group, your input was valuable in developing the content of the draft plan.

As part of the review of the draft plan, we would like to reconvene Insight Council members to review and comment on the draft OCP, ensure their input was sufficiently, and to formally thank citizen volunteers for their contributions. We would like to invite you to a follow-up citizen insight council meeting on May 28, 2011 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m at Victoria City Hall.

Included in this package is a copy of the draft OCP, as well as a summary sheet of key plan directions. A presentation at the beginning of the May 28 meeting will go over the key points of the plan and how they address issues raised at the earlier Insight Council meetings. Additionally, we are holding four public open houses that will present plan content, which you can attend to learn more. For information on the draft OCP, including public open houses, please visit <http://www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca/>.

For more information on the Insight Council and to confirm your attendance for April 30, please contact CS, Senior Planner, at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or Simon Natrass, Wise Democracy Victoria, at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

We look forward to your participation in helping to shape the future of Victoria.

Yours truly,

CS
Senior Planner, Community Planning Division
Planning & Development Department

Appendix D: Feedback from CIC #2

Written Feedback Received

Introduction

The second Citizen Insight Council held by the City of Victoria to engage citizens in updating the Official Community Plan was conducted on June 5, 2010. There were nine randomly-selected participants (4 female and 5 male) ranging in age from their 30s to 70s. The meeting was held for six hours (from 10 am – 4 pm, with 45 minutes for lunch and a 20 minute break at 3 pm).

Near the conclusion of the meeting a Feedback Form was provided to participants with the request to please provide written comments (a copy of the form is appended to this document). Eight forms were received (one may have been misplaced).

Feedback Received

The following written comments were received. Responses shown are anonymous and each individual is represented by a letter (A – H).

Question 1: Please identify the highlights of the day from your perspective:

- A. Being able to do the brainstorming with other citizens, hearing their concerns.
- B. This was a great session. Really able to move forward in the planning session.
- C. Feeling a part of the solution; respect shown for all; good brainstorming
- D. Every participant was listened to.
- E. Meeting people with similar community interests was very interesting and informative.
- F. Sharing ideas openly with other members of my community; the feeling that my thoughts/opinions matter – of feeling connected.
- G. The facilitated free and open exchange of ideas was excellent.
- H. Very open process – lots of great ideas discussed.

Question 2: Did you feel the time allotted was appropriate? Just right... too long... too short?

Response: 6 out of 8 respondents indicated the time spent was just right or good; 2 felt it was a little long.

- A. Just right
- B. It was good, however, it would be nice to participate in another follow-on session
- C. Just right

- D. Just right
- E. It was a little long – 4 hours would be more suitable (especially on a sunny Sat. Afternoon.)
- F. Just right – could have used a morning break.
- G. A little long, a bit more break time would be better.
- H. Just the right amount of time

Question 3: Do you have any suggestions for improvement for future Citizen Insight Councils?

- A. Should continue the process and invite others to attend as well
- should be a regular occurrence
- B. I would see having some of the people at this session be invited back to participate in other follow-on sessions.
- C. That they be frequent not just for specific issues like OCP – just to make people feel empowered.
- D. Provide general information material in advance.
- E. . N/A
- F. Perhaps a bit more direction from facilitator – we got a bit too far into some issues – could steer us back on track.
- G. See above. Sitting for extended periods of time leads to mental stagnation.
- H. I think we discussed how to move forward during our CIC meeting.

Question 4: Any further comments?

- B. Good facilitation
- D. Excellent leadership by facilitator
- F. Provide water
- G. Please do many more of them and post (web blog and snail mail) the results to those who participated.
- H. Great forum! Thanks for allowing me to provide my input.

Question 5: How would you rate your overall experience today (with 1 being very negative to 5 being very positive)?

Response: Average rating by respondents was 4.3 on a scale of 1 – 5.

- A. 4.5
- B. 4
- C. 5
- D. 5
- E. 3
- F. 4
- G. 4
- H. 5