

Public Participation Checklist

Providing an urban design framework for The False Creek Flats is as much an offering of design principles, strategies, typologies and patterns as it is about providing ways in which local communities of residents and businesses in and around The Flats can participate in envisioning a physical and social form for future developments.

This chapter provides a checklist that future work on The Flats can use to ensure adequate local involvement in the formation of The Flats' future identity and physical character. To provide a checklist at the end of this report - in an addendum form - may seem contradictory when a democratic mode of planning is intended; usually, public participation normally precedes the drafting of physical plans and design strategies. As such, it is important to consider the principles, strategies, typologies and patterns suggested in earlier chapters as more catalysts to start dialogues rather than a decision on what The Flats *should be*.

As this report is urban design-focused, the indicators provided in this chapter will pertain to design issues. Mainly, there will be two sub-sets of checklists:

- First, a set of checklist that can help establish a **working group**. The working group can in turn help planners and designers understand the communities of residents and businesses around and in The Flats, so as to establish values and desires.
- Second, a set of checklist that specifically help visualise those values and desires through **co-design events**. With co-design, participants are not just providing ideas but the forms and representations from which planners and designers can base their own work from; it is not merely translating others' values and desires into visual form but appreciating others' visual forms and transfiguring them.



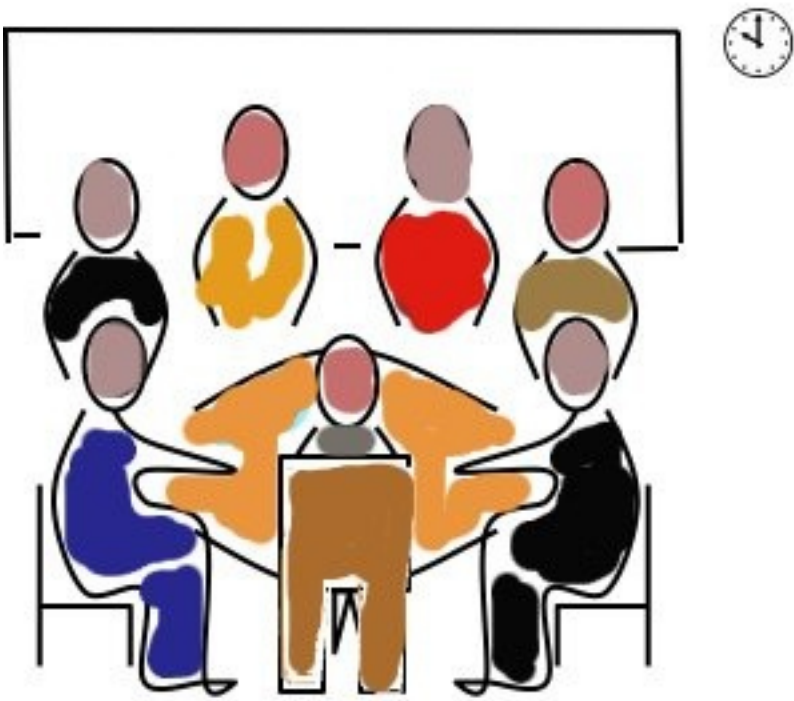
5.1. Establishing a Working Group

Establishing a community-elected design-focused working group is important to help steer the planning process. While this working group will discuss a wide range of issues, there needs to be a focus on design issues, urban forms and land-use in order to help The City in further developing an urban design framework for The Flats.

Size-wise, the working group will ideally be large enough (15 to 20 people) that smaller groups (4 to 5) within can be formed so as to provide a greater number of views and choices. Some studies have shown that the optimal size for a working group is around 7 to 20 people, with a median of 10 to 15 people. Christopher Allen calls this size a “sympathy circle” where we can begin to interact with each other at a level that genuine care toward others begin without getting to the point where other people are read as generalised personalities. At the same time this group size allows sufficient variety of views to emerge.¹

To indicate a wide socio-economic and cultural spectrum is represented in the working group the following action-based criteria as shown in the opposite table may be useful:

Action-Based Criteria	Operation	Assessment
Identify local leaders	City staff to contact local community groups to identify leaders	Yes/No
Identify local socio-economic/cultural groups and stakeholders	City staff to work with local leaders and community representatives to identify these groups and persons	Yes/No
Identify and elect representatives from socio-economic/cultural and age groups	City staff to work with local leaders to elect members for the working group	Yes/No
Identify diverse interests and form smaller groups based on these interests	Charrettes to identify diverse interests and form smaller groups	Yes/No
Channelling various interests into design-focused discussion	Charrettes to translate non-physical concerns into issues of built form and land-use.	Yes/No



(1) <http://howtosavetheworld.ca/2009/03/18/the-optimal-size-of-groups/> (Accessed: Aug 7th 2011)

5.2. Facilitating Co-Design

Acquiring a role in the design of an environment will give citizens a sense of responsibility for future developments and a feeling of belonging to the area not just in the present but in the future. Co-design is more than the usual public participation process in that it actively brings citizens into creating meaning and form. In this sense, citizens are not just making decisions, but helping City staff create the decisions from which to choose from.

With co-design, one may suggest there is a greater distribution of power here. In fact, the physical environment emerges from the interaction of people. As Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne suggest,

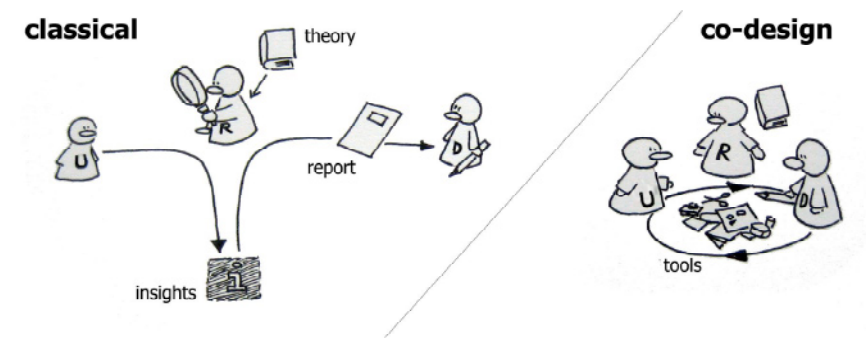
The design process belongs to the domain of social actions and interactions, is firmly embedded in a human situation, and is a focal nexus within a network of intersubjective relationships.²

Hence, co-design, generally put, is neither about designers hard-selling their designs to the neighbourhood nor a matter of the clients (neighbours) being always right. As Elizabeth Sanders, a design theorist specialising in co-design processes, suggest,

In co-design... the roles get mixed up: the person who will eventually be served through the design process is given the position of ‘expert of his/her experience’, and plays a large role in knowledge development, idea generation and concept development. In generating insights, the researcher supports the ‘expert of his/her experience’ by providing tools for ideation and expression. The [local] expert and the researcher collaborate on the tools for ideation.³

To indicate an adequate co-design process takes place a list of action-based criteria shown on the opposite table may help:

Action-Based Criteria	Operation	Assessment
Identify local artist to lead the production of visual-based content	City staff to work with working group to identify an artist for each of the smaller groups.	Yes/No
Create an enriched urban design glossary list that features not just standard terms but ones the community may value	Charrette to create a list an expanded glossary list and the elected artists may help illustrate the terms	Yes/No
Organise photo-based asset mapping	Each smaller group will walk around The Flats broadly to photograph areas viewed as important. Also, individual members will walk in a neighbourhood not their own and photograph areas they think is crucial. Working with City staff, the elected artists will produce a photo-base asset map.	Yes/No
Produce visual preference survey	Each smaller working group will assemble a catalogue of urban forms and public spaces deem suitable for The Flats. These chosen urban forms will be assembled into a visual survey; the public will be invited to rank the urban forms.	Yes/No
Host co-design charrette to generate a series of physical plans and typologies	In a two-day event, the smaller groups along with their artist will team up with planners and architects to produce physical plans and drawings of what The Flats can be. Each smaller working group will then present on their plan; the speaker will be a local community member as opposed to a design professional.	Yes/No
Host open house event	The working group will hold an open-house to showcase their findings and recommendations in the same way the planning department holds open houses.	Yes/No



(2) Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne, “Is Designing Hermeneutical?” in *Architectural Theory Review: Journal of the Department of Architecture*, University of Sydney, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1997, pp 65-97. p.95.
(3) Elizabeth Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers, *Co-Creation and the New Landscape of Design*, http://maketools.com/pdfs/CoCreation_Sanders_Stappers_08_preprint.pdf (accessed: 20th March 2009), p.8

Conclusion

In this last chapter a short concluding summary of what can be done urban-design wise will be presented. This will be followed by suggestions of the next steps that can be taken in order to ensure the principles, strategies, typologies, patterns, opportunities and most of all vision can get toward implementation.

6.1 Summary

The design principles, strategies, opportunities, typologies and patterns presented in this project are meant to aid future planning work for The False Creek Flats in terms of an urban design framework.

In summary, the framework presented here serves the following demands:

- Be aligned with the City of Vancouver's identification to **maintain adequate amounts industrial lands** for light industrial businesses as well as city serving purposes like the Fire Training Facility, The National yard and the Police Training Facility.
- **Intensify activities and population** to support the desired future commercial activities for the area, especially along arterials such as Terminal Avenue, Main Street and some sections of Industrial Avenue and Great Northern Way.
- **Connect The Flats to adjacent neighbourhoods** by introducing more north-south paths for pedestrians and cyclists by means of ped-bike bridges and rights-of-ways. This creates a fine grain grid pattern that complements surrounding neighbourhoods. Greater pedestrian permeability encourages walking, thus healthier lifestyles and lower carbon footprints overall.
- **Accommodate residential uses so as to bring jobs closer to homes** where future workers can easily walk or cycle to work as opposed to driving. Increasing the residential density is align with the City's desire to grow in a compact manner to combat sprawl. In the case of the metro Vancouver region, it alleviates development pressure to build on Agriculture Land Reserves. On a smaller neighbourhood scale, it alleviates development pressure to dramatically change the more established fabric of adjacent neighbourhoods.
- **Respect the industrial heritage** of the area by means of preserving heritage buildings and some forms of industrial uses such as storage warehouses and even the railyards which are important to host trains as a sustainable transport choice in the future where goods and passengers from near and far can

be brought to/fro Vancouver. Respect also means complementing the urban forms of surrounding neighbourhoods so that developments at The Flats would not be out of scale.

- **Restore the ecological functions** of the area that may have diminished through years of rail and industrial use by means of regenerative features at all scales from greenways, bioswales, wetland, bioretention ponds to rain barrels. This is especially important for The Flats which is flood and ponding-proned, and currently has a high degree of impervious surfaces that increase the amount of run-offs with pollutants going into False Creek.

6.2 Next Steps

To ensure the principles, strategies, typologies, patterns, opportunities and most of all vision can get to implementation, a few issues that goes beyond the scope of this urban design-oriented report should be carried out to buttress the findings of this report:

- **Zoning:** Many of the strategies – such as to ensure continuity, mix uses, include residential, integrate land uses, etc – would require the crafting of new zones that are more robust than the current I-2 and I-3 districts that occupies most of The Flats. City staff will have to investigate whether to apply mass rezoning, at least for lots with potential mixed use purposes, to some form of "I-4" district that allows for more residential and commercial-retail uses, or to rezone those lots to CD-1 upon development application.
- **Market Feasibility:** City staff should investigate the adequate amount of FSR needed to support the principles, strategies and types proposed in this report given the current/future land and development cost. Investigations should include reports on how much residential floorspace should take place to ensure economic viability in each of the sub-areas identified in this report as suitable for residential uses. Likewise, investigations on how much commercial-retail and office floorspace should take place especially along arterials. More importantly, how much residential, commercial-retail and office floorspace can take place before the impact on industrial land cost becomes unacceptable to meet City's goals to maintain inner city industrial lands. Market feasibility will also affect the way development is phased.
- **Transport Issues:** This report recommends a tram-line along Great Northern Way going towards Southeast False Creek via East 2nd Avenue. It also recommends an additional Skytrain Station at the southeast corner of Terminal Avenue and Glen Drive. Both transport

infrastructures are to accommodate a future growing population and to improve connectivity. However, the feasibility and siting of these two infrastructures should be further investigated. For the tram-line, is the population along Great Northern Way going to be sufficient to support the line. For the Skytrain station, is the number of businesses and residences along Terminal going to be sufficient to justify a new station.

- **Public Engagement:** As part of a larger design study process, a series of stakeholder workshops and open houses should be held with residents of nearby neighbourhoods, businesses at/around The Flats as well as non-profit groups engaging with issues of sustainability, community well-being, etc. This report has provided a checklist (in chapter 5) pertaining to using co-design methods as a means to help generate more visions of what The Flats can be. However, co-design events are more catered to smaller working groups. To further investigate what the public feels and envision for The Flats, larger scale surveys in several iterations should be conducted. The first iterations of these surveys, workshops and open houses can use the strategies, principles, typologies and opportunities identified in this report as a discussion-starting point.

For all the abovementioned issues, alternatives should be provided so as to supply information for the drafting of future iterations of urban design frameworks.



City Documents

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- . False Creek Flats Preliminary Concept Plan. 1996
- . I-2: Light Industrial District Schedule. 1997
- . CD-1 (402) District Schedule. 1999
- . I-3 HighTech Industrial District Schedule. 1999
- . Urban Structure Plan. 2001
- . Administrative Report on Strategic Rail Overview and Detailed Operation Study. 2005
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