

Factsheet 7

Participatory urban planning

What you will find in this factsheet :

- 1 The value added by a participatory approach;
- 2 Aim for the appropriate level of participation;
- 3 Pitfalls to avoid;
- 4 How to undertake a participatory urban planning project

Source : Toronto Center for Active Transportation

Participatory urban planning has a strong potential to transform the city and its neighbourhoods. However, it must be well planned if it is to be successful. This fact sheet lays out the general aspects of the process developed by the MUEC. Its goal is to equip stakeholders and citizens by providing them with an overview of the steps to take and the players to include. The guidebook also presents the available tools and resources. The MUEC was inspired by the process put forward by Community Planning and the work of architect Jan Gehl and activist author Jane Jacobs for their vision of the city. The process outlined here emphasizes the importance of citizen participation in creating more human-scale public spaces that meet community needs.

Réseau
Quartiers
verts



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This project was made possible thanks to the financial support of Public Health Agency of Canada.

The points of view expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

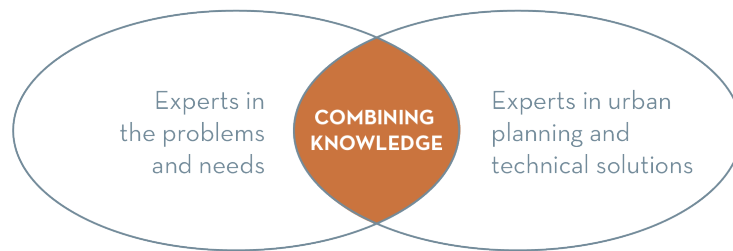


The value added by a participatory approach

Participatory planning is a proven approach to designing neighbourhoods on a human scale. It provides undeniable advantages when compared to conventional processes managed solely by professionals. Since citizens are in the neighbourhood every day, they can provide observations and knowledge that are different from experts, thereby enriching the analysis. Professionals

can then supplement the information provided by the citizens. Listening and being open to everyone's input are key ingredients for the mutual understanding of issues.

By integrating citizens' observations, concerns and aspirations from the start, and throughout the project, all participants can find solutions collectively that meet the community's true needs.



CITIZENS



Credit : MUEC, 2015

PROFESSIONALS



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ALLOWS TO :

- Supplement the technical knowledge of urban design professionals by informing them about day-to-day use of an area;
- Prioritize needs and target specific locations;
- Generate innovative ideas;
- Improve analysis and proposals to ensure that results better reflect real needs;
- Form alliances with community leaders;
- Promote the social acceptability of a project and its adoption by the community;
- Understand the time, budget and technical constraints of the various partners;
- Promote democratic governance and support active citizenship;
- Allow residents to learn about park development and the role of the municipality in park development projects;
- Ensure the spirit of the project is maintained in the long term through the participation of active citizens and partnerships with local organizations

Aim for the appropriate level of participation

Citizen participation does not mean that everyone has to be involved all the time. Each phase in a project's development calls for a specific form of participation to take into account the ideas of each stakeholder and ensure the process is effective.

In a participatory planning process, proposed activities should allow citizens to have a real influence on the ideas developed and decisions to be made. Promoting citizen participation means more than providing information and collecting feedback.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the difference between consultation and co-decision, for example. The participation scale below illustrates the levels of participation and influence that stakeholders can have in various forms of participation.



Credit : Health Canada, 2000

Here are some examples of application of the levels of participation presented above:

- 1) Information session : an elected representative presents the plans for a new public square to the citizens, and lays out the schedule for carrying out the work and the calendar of activities planned for the square.
- 2) Online consultation: a website allows citizens to contribute feedback on the infrastructure or design they would like to see on a new street.
- 3) Workshops: professionals (urban planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers) come together to develop various models or design ideas for a public space, sharing their expertise.
- 4) Citizen Advisory Committee: An ad hoc consultation committee is created to provide advice and recommendations on decisions affecting the neighborhood.
- 5) Co-management of a facility: Vacant land is developed by citizens and co-managed and developed with the municipality. Decisions are made together.

Pitfalls to avoid :

The challenges of citizen participation are well known:

mobilizing citizens and stakeholders, dealing with opposition to the project, reconciling divergent positions, reflecting proposed ideas in the final decisions. These challenges can be overcome through a well-planned process. Here are some tips to navigate challenges:

- It's necessary to be very clear about what we ask participants: what do we want from their participation?
- It is important to provide responses to people with opposing points of view;
- It is essential that the right people decide on the right questions at the right time;
- It's necessary to establish a framework for public participation: define the guidelines and the topics that we want to discuss with the participants;
- It is wise to break participants out into small groups to have guided discussions with experienced facilitators;
- It is wise to plan different opportunities and times of day for people to participate.



Credit : Ville de Châteauguay, 2016



Credit : Sustainable Calgary Society, 2015

How to undertake a participatory urban planning project

MUEC projects, and similar work done in Canada and elsewhere in the world, have demonstrated the importance of a roadmap in making a participatory planning exercise a success. Over the years, the six-phase process developed by the MUEC has proved to be effective in transforming public spaces with and for citizens. Its application in many different communities in Canada, supported by the MUEC and its partners, has produced convincing results.



1. LAUNCH

Establish a partnership with local stakeholders and define the action plan.

Jointly established partnership agreement
Stakeholder mapping



2. UNDERSTAND

Create a diagnostic portrait of the use of public space.

Exploratory walk
Consultation kiosk
Survey



3. EXPLORE

Identify design scenarios that will meet the needs and resolve issues.

Professional workshop
Youth workshop



4. DECIDE

With the different stakeholders, validate and improve the solutions developed.

Scenario validation workshop
Work session with municipal professionals



5. ACT

Implement the design solutions and offer public commitments.

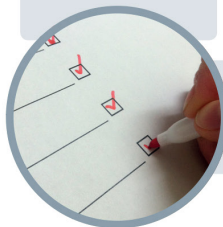
Planting event
Pilot project or temporary measures
Creation of a monitoring committee



6. INAUGURATE

Celebrate the project's accomplishments with a mobilizing event.

Launch party
Press conference
Site visits



CONTINUOUSLY EVALUATE THE PROCESS AND RESULTS

Questionnaire, Participatory evaluation activity, Annual review

Credit : MUEC, 2015

LINK TO TOOLKIT



<http://www.ecologieurbaine.net/en/documentation-en/technical-guides/57-tool-box-transform-your-city-1/file>

LINK TO PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING GUIDE



<http://ecologieurbaine.net/en/documentation-en/technical-guides/79-urbanplanningguide/file>

« Participatory urban planning is urban planning that has no true project or solution before the public debate, but does after the public debate. » Yves Chalas, 2009. (Free translation)