City of Seattle

Evaluation of Geographically Based Citizen Participation

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Why the Study Was Conducted

The City of Seattle has a long tradition of neighborhood activism and participation. The year 1998 marked the ten-year anniversary of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program. During that year, a number of neighborhood plans were completed in fulfillment of the City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan to manage growth within the city over the next twenty years.

These plans represented many hundreds, if not thousands, of hours spent by neighborhood volunteers over four years to develop a vision of their neighborhood and a means to execute that vision. Other citizens have dedicated a considerable amount of time to participate in other City-sponsored groups such as Parks Advisory Boards, Block Watch, Watershed Advisory Boards, and Precinct Advisory Boards.

The City, as a governing entity, recognizes the value and importance of having citizen participate in local government issues as it pertains to their neighborhoods and community as a whole. To better understand citizen participation and identify the best ways to foster and encourage this form of volunteerism, the Seattle Planning Commission was charged with conducting an evaluation of geographically based citizen participation. This evaluation consisted of a survey of tools and techniques used by other municipalities to grow and manage citizen participation, and data collected from Seattle citizens themselves. These data included the ways citizens participate in local government issues that affect their neighborhoods, the practices of local organizations that are involved geographically based government issues, and attitudes about participation in these issues.

The results of this evaluation will be used to identify the best practices for effective citizen participation and develop the tools and programs needed to enhance and improve citizen participation in local government issues.

The report that follows consists of the data collected from interviews, surveys, and focus groups of volunteers, City staff, and consultants.

How the Study Was Conducted

This research behind this study consists of four components:

- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Mail survey
- Telephone survey

Focus Groups. Four focus groups were conducted among four different groups: 1) individuals who participated in neighborhood planning; 2) Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO) staff; 3) consultants who worked with neighborhood planning groups; and 4) members of the CNC.

Participants were recruited from lists provided by the Seattle Planning Commission and recommendations from NPO and Seattle Planning Commission staff. Each focus group lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

In-Depth Interviews. Comprehensive interviews were conducted both in-person and via telephone. Participants were recruited from lists provided by the Seattle Planning Commission and recommendations by the Seattle Planning Commission staff. They included neighborhood activists, community council members, advisory committee members, consultants, and City staff. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours.

Mail Survey. Approximately 4,600 questionnaires were mailed out in July, which yielded a response rate of eight percent. The actual response rate may be somewhat higher as 2,600 surveys were mailed out by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and Department of Construction and Land Use (DCLU) to their own mail databases and screening out duplicates between the two lists was not possible. An additional 2,000 were mailed out to individuals that were randomly selected from several databases of participants in local government activities that were provided by the NPO and the Seattle Planning Commission.

The sampling error for this survey was plus or minus 5.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level – meaning that, if this survey was conducted 100 times, 95 times the data will reflect the same results within a range of plus or minus 5.2 percent.

Telephone Survey. A telephone survey of 101 individuals was conducted in late September. Respondents were randomly chosen from the databases provided by the Seattle Planning Commission and the NPO using an nth select. The survey sample was somewhat skewed towards individuals involved in neighborhood planning because these lists were the most likely to have telephone numbers attached; some of the other databases also included telephone numbers and were also used as sample material. Weighting the

sample lists to compensate for the high incidence of the individuals involved was not possible because it wouldn't have generated enough sample material to complete 100 interviews – generally, depending on the type of survey, 5 to 10 names are needed for each completed interview.

While the questionnaire shared some of the same questions as the mail survey, a number of new questions were added based on the results of the focus groups, in-depth interviews, and two citizen roundtables which were sponsored by the Seattle Planning Commission. Although the survey was supposed to last only 15 minutes, the average length was 25 minutes.

The sampling error for this survey was plus or minus 10 percent at the 95 percent confidence level – meaning that, if this survey was conducted 100 times, 95 times the data will reflect the same results within a range of plus or minus 10 percent.

Conclusions & Recommenda-tions

Conclusions

- Successful efforts in geographically-based citizen participation that are rewarding to both volunteers and the City of Seattle are based on four elements:

  1. <u>Results</u>. Individuals who dedicate one of their most precious re-sources in today's currency – time – to help improve their commu-nity expect to have a visible impact. "Volunteer burnout" appears to result from the frustration and disappointment of working hard and having little or nothing to show for these efforts.

  2. <u>Communication</u>. Communication as a theme recurred throughout the research – communication between the City and the groups; communication within the groups; and communication between groups both within and without the neighborhoods. Areas of com-munication that are particularly important are:

     – Expectations from City. A number of individuals, inclu d-ing consultants and City staff, expressed frustration with the City with respect to Phase II of neighborhood planning and the changing requirements and specifications of the final work product.

     – The ability of organizations to communicate directly with City departments. Volunteers felt that their group's effec-tiveness was directly linked to having a contact person within the City who could make decisions and/or advocate on their behalf.

  3. <u>Accountability</u>. Accountability must be two-way. Because the City supports or sponsors these groups, they have an expectation of ac-countability from these citizens. However, the City must also be accountable to the citizens by following-up and following-through on promises and agreements made to neighborhood groups. Ac-countability builds trust between the City and citizen volunteers and encourages participation.

4. <u>Group Management</u>. Group management includes skills like meeting management and facilitation to make sure that meetings are organized and that everyone has an equal voice, outreach, and recruitment. Lack of group management skills can inhibit citizen participation because participation becomes more difficult – meeting times are not communicated, meetings are held without an apparent purpose, the length of meetings is not controlled, and vocal individuals dominate the meetings.

- Participation in community organizations provides an important social connection for individuals to meet and get to know people within their neighborhood. This social connection is one of the primary benefits of citizen participation.

- Representation remains a difficult and elusive goal for most groups. The majority of those participating in geographically-based government issues are more likely to be white, older, more affluent, and a homeowner than the general population of Seattle. *People of color and renters are especially underrepresented in citizen participation activities*

  Although most individuals acknowledge that their groups lack representation from all segments of their community, many of these groups do not appear to make it priority to recruit members from these other segments. Those groups who did expressed frustration at their inability to increase representativeness.

- Except in areas that are primarily business-oriented – e.g., downtown Seattle, Denny Regrade, etc., businesses tend not to participate in local government issues unless they are directly affected by them. Many business owners do not live in the areas where they operate their business and are reluctant to spend addition time on neighborhood activities that take time away from their business or personal life.

- The increasing number of demands placed on free time lowers the pool of available volunteers for citizen participation. Competition for available time includes work and family activities, participation in school-related issues and activities, and charitable and philanthropic activities.

- Issues are usually the catalyst to raise citizen participation. A perceived threat or change to the community can spur otherwise inactive individuals to become involved in their neighborhood or community. Many of the long-time participants that were interviewed became involved because of a single issue that affected their community.

- Once involved, most participants remain active. Most of those currently involved organizations that deal with local government issues plan to remain involved (70 percent). They remain involved because they want to make a difference in their community.

- Most of those who will not remain involved will drop out because of reasons associated with group dynamics ("groups dominated by a few individuals or special interests", "meeting/times not convenient", and "group no longer represents my interests") and personal/life conflicts ("too many work/family commitments).

- Meetings are the primary tool for both the recruitment of new members and broadcasting information about group activities. The reliance on in-person group meetings will limit the pool of participants to those who the have free time and transportation to attend them, and to those who can adequately communicate in English.

  The reliance on meetings is in part due to funding for neighborhood groups. Lack of adequate funding limits the use of other outreach activities, such as surveys and neighborhood newsletters, that groups can use to relay information and gather input from the community.

  The Internet tools of e-mail and websites represent an opportunity to expand neighborhood organizations' ability to communicate with their constituents. However, too much reliance on the Internet as the primary communication tool for neighborhood organizations will exclude the views and participation among individuals who are low-income, less educated, minority, and/or elderly.

- In general, respondents felt that the City does a pretty good job of listening and providing resources and assistance to citizen groups. Two areas that seemed to frustrate respondents were the lack of responsiveness by some City departments (i.e., Seatran was mentioned most often) and the "squeaky wheel syndrome." Some respondents felt that the City, particularly the City Council, gives too much weight to input from vocal citizen activists who have the time and resources to lobby the City Council over an extended period.

Recommendations

- To continue the success of geographically based citizen participation and avoid exhausting the current roster of participants, the pool of citizen volunteers available to work on projects must be expanded. Possible actions include:

  – Finding new ways for citizens that don't have a lot of free time, to participate such as limited projects or tasks that can be completed in a few hours.

  – Less reliance on in-person meetings and more extensive use of telephone trees and the Internet to exchange information between groups and the neighborhoods. Help neighborhood organizations identify new ways to communicate with individuals who don't regularly participate in local government – for example, small events like block parties which allow people to connect with one another.

  – Investing in future volunteerism by finding ways for youth to become involved – possibly through existing institutions such as schools, Boy/Girl Scouts, and other youth organizations.

- Break larger projects into smaller, easy to manage components that can show demonstrable results in a short time.

- Citizens often seem to perceive local government as a monolithic entity and may not distinguish City government from King County from the Port of Seattle, never mind

differentiating between the various City departments or functions. Make the interface between the various City departments and the citizens more accessible and user-friendly. Train front-line City employees in customer service and help them develop the skills needed to deal with the public.

Increased visibility of City officials within the neighborhoods, particularly the City Council and the Executive, may also boost participation. Perhaps the City Council could occasionally hold one of its regular meetings at a local school or other neighborhood facility.

- Help citizens understand how City processes and procedures work – perhaps a simple guide that explains how to work with departments like DCLU, DON, SPU, and Seatran. It could also list involvement opportunities and provide information about the various neighborhood grants.

- Provide training meeting management and facilitation skills to organizations so that they are able to run their meetings in a timely and efficient manner and ensure that all who participate an equal voice.

- Psychic rewards are important to volunteers. Identify ways to publicly acknowledge and recognize group achievements. Publicizing a group's achievements may also help encourage others to participate.

- Look for ways to enhance the effectiveness of existing communications tools such as City newsletters, the City of Seattle website, Channel 28 etc. One citizen suggested that a program guide to Channel 28 will enable citizens to tune in when an issue of interest is scheduled.

Summary of Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative form of marketing research – meaning that the results cannot be reliably used to project onto a larger population. They are primarily used to surface issues, provide direction for advertising creation, new product development, or further marketing research, and identify red flags.

Participants in three of the four focus groups were heavily involved in Seattle's neighborhood planning efforts. Members of the fourth group, the Council of Neighborhood Committees (CNC), may or may not have had direct involvement in neighborhood planning.

Following is a summary of the focus groups by topic.

Participation

Recruitment. According to group participants, much of the recruitment for neighborhood planning came from existing neighborhood groups like community councils, district councils, chambers of commerce, and other special interest groups.

"...the Chamber went out and got people stirred up and got lots of people to participate."

"...I think initially a lot of people were interested in neighborhood planning and I think that I don't think they had to do a lot outreach to get the people...especially in Phase I. I think they were ready-made and ready to go. I think the Councils and the community clubs just got the word out ... and people showed up."

In some instances, it fell to the paid consultants and Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO) staff to reach out to key leaders and activists to initiate recruitment for the various neighborhood planning activities that were required to complete a neighborhood plan.

Between neighborhood planning Phases I and II, a number of groups experienced a fall-off in membership and had to begin the recruiting process all over again. This fall-off seems to be attributable to one or both of the following:

1. Burnout/fatigue from the number of meetings and activities required during the neighborhood planning process

2. Lack of results – either a plan or a specific action, such as a new park or traffic improvements

In the CNC, members are representatives of the neighborhood district council, which, in turn, is largely comprised of representatives from other neighborhood groups like com-

munity councils and clubs, merchant's associations and other business groups, and special interest groups. Some district councils have requirements as to who can represent any given organizations and for which organization can be represented on the district council. For example, the Queen Anne/Magnolia District Council requires that organization eligible for representation on the council must have at least 25 members, have by-laws, and an annual meeting. These rules were enacted to prevent meetings from "being hijacked by people purporting to be spokesmen for groups that are representing special interests."

Some of district councils that are represented by these participants do not have any special activities for recruiting new members and relied on word-of-mouth or newspaper articles. Most rely on community councils and other well-established neighborhood groups for new members.

"...The admission criteria are pretty lax. Anyone shows up and who declares their interest in being a member. Certainly business organizations. The U-District Chamber of Commerce. The University, a person from the administration, some vice president of community relations to keep us aware of the University."

"...We have recently at the Central Area Festival, Safeco sponsored us with a booth so that we could be out there. Not very many people knew about [it], who the community councils were, let alone that there was a district council. So we chose to make ourselves visible at various festivals to let people know that we're, what the community councils are about."

Both the neighborhood planning and CNC focus group participants noted the difficulty of recruiting and retaining members of the business community, particularly small businesses. The exceptions were areas where businesses are concentrated such as downtown Seattle, the Denny Triangle, and Georgetown. Groups in these areas often had problems recruiting residents.

One group was successful at recruiting both businesses and residents for their neighborhood planning was the Lake City neighborhood, which has a significant number of transportation, land use, and parking issues. Because these issues affect the area so much, both groups wanted to ensure that they had equal voices throughout the neighborhood planning process.

When asked why more people don't participate, the CNC had some interesting comments:

"...The issue of free time is one that drives a lot of non-citizen participation. Whether you're being pushed to be a better parent or being pushed to have two jobs and you're trying to survive... you don't have a lot of free time."

"... The City has too many uncoordinated citizen involvement efforts that aren't going anywhere. The other thing that I'm finding now that in my own neighborhood is that we're being asked to get some greenbelts. But the City has no money to maintain them. We've spent about two years on them...There's a whole range of stuff [that the City's asked us to do] so it's almost like taxation. We have kind of a regressive community involvement system... where too few of us are trying too many things. And we know that it will work...I know that if I work at it, things will happen

"...people don't participate and won't over a long period of time unless they're getting something back, some psychic reward or the group's accomplishing its goal. I belong to two organizations that are much more effective than the Downtown Community Council. One's been around 30-40 years...it's Friends of the Market...The other is a group of people that see an issue that no one else is taking care... that the City was messing on... and took action on. That's rewarding because that's effective use of your time and energy. How does the City get more people participating... well, it's got to sincerely want citizen participation and, except for the Department of Neighborhoods, I don't believe the City executive part want citizens telling high-level, experienced City officials what to do. They could hire all the young coordinators and say we want your input. But you get above those new-hires and they sit on them."

Leadership. Leaders appear to be often chosen by personal invitation or default when no one steps up to fill a leadership vacancy. Rarely are leaders elected by a majority vote with two or more viable candidates.

The role of the leader within these groups is usually that of a facilitator or gatekeeper to keep the meetings on topic and to call for votes.

Decision-making. Most of the groups represented in these focus groups attempt to make decisions by reaching a consensus on an issue. If a consensus cannot be reached after time, a majority-rules vote is usually taken. However, if the issue is especially contentious, the groups may elect to table the issue until a future date or the issue is dropped altogether. Some groups do permit a minority opinion to be included their reports.

The Queen Anne Neighborhood Planning Committee was a notable exception and operated its meetings according to *Robert's Rules of Order*. Every issue was decided by a majority-rules vote.

Education of Group Members. Specific activities to educate new group members varied from group to group. Some groups appeared to spend time and consideration on bringing new members up to speed on the issues and activities while other had very little in terms of formal education.

"...That was frustrating to every group. Every group had problems with that. But it was hard for everyone. We'd start off with a group and then we'd new members who would ask a lot questions and some people got impatient. Each group managed it differently. Basically...I pulled the [NPO] records together. I noticed some groups did actual orientation packages for new members. And they were pretty wonderful actually. And some people just set it aside. Some groups were more patient and some less when new people came in. One group had a buddy system where a new person came in and got a buddy to help them get up to speed."

"...Well...we have it in our hearts. We bring it up every couple of years of so. But we don't do anything."

Knowing how much education to provide could also be a problem for some groups. Although the City provided materials to educate neighborhood-planning groups, even the NPO felt they were less than successful:

"...[Regarding the toolbox] I kinda feel that we just took these things out there and then dropped the ball across the neighborhoods. No real training on how to use that [the toolbox]. And no real training on how to use that. I think it would be interesting to see what all that stuff in the toolbox gets on the web and if people can navigate through and pick and what they want. That would be interesting."

"...We tried to [get them to use it]. It's time. How much time do we expect a volunteer to have in this sort of super-heated environment where we're pretty much expecting consensus decision-making on these public issues."

"...Someone caught me a number of times not to disseminating information to my groups. Did you see the programs, the binder? I was not going to overload them with all that stuff and so I would pick and choose the things that I would give to them so that's the way I worked. I had one chairman quit after he went through all these books and binders. It was so intimidating... he was overwhelmed. It was way too much information so I just as much as they need to keep it manageable."

Representativeness. While most of these groups strove to be representative of the community, they often fell short. For those involved in neighborhood planning, getting members and participation from minority communities, renters, businesses, singles, and low-income individuals was difficult. Even when they reached out to a specific group – like translating a newsletter into one of non-English languages spoken in their neighborhood – the results were less than successful.

However, neighborhood-planning organizations tried to be cognizant of the needs of those that were not represented at meetings or did not actively participate. They sent out surveys and held public workshops to gather opinions from groups who were not active in neighborhood planning. They also incorporated any feedback that they received from non-represented groups into their planning efforts.

The district councils are only as representative as their member organizations. Their membership, which is drawn heavily from community councils, tends to be white and/or property owners. They seem concerned about being representative but haven't formulated any specific plans or activities to broaden the spectrum of individuals participating.

"...No...there are Hispanics in the neighborhood and they're not represented. There are a lot of Asian-Americans that don't have representatives...You know, it's not as representative to my satisfaction."

"...No. In a way, it's sort of interesting that the way we're set up, there's a great deal suspicion or mistrust among the constituent groups. And we were set up as a district council by the City; they hadn't asked us how to configure... so we were kind of left at the switch as far as ... None of groups wanted to...they're all worried about somebody else saying or speaking for them or on their behalf."

Accountability. Except for one focus group, all of the participants felt a sense of accountability existed within their groups. They all agreed that members felt both accountable to one another, to the groups that they represented, and to the neighborhood. Members of the CNC also expressed their feeling of accountability to the City, and the Department of Neighborhoods, specifically.

Interestingly, the NPO staff did not feel that their neighborhood groups exhibited a strong sense of accountability – particularly, in regards to the City. They felt that they only reported back to the City because they were required to, and because payments to their consultants were tied to those progress reports.

Outreach

Mailed surveys, newsletters, and public meetings were the primary tools used by these groups for outreach to the community at large. Because funds for neighborhood-wide survey and newsletter mailings were limited, much of the outreach focused on public meetings.

According to those involved in neighborhood planning, the results of their outreach were mixed. Some groups, like Lake City, had success with their surveys. Others, like Ballard, were more successful at generating a large turnout at their public meeting than they were with their mail surveys.

Other groups used other neighborhood events like festivals and street fairs for providing outreach to the neighborhood at large. They also tapped into existing institutions within the community like community centers and community councils.

None of the groups reached a consensus as to which methods were best at reaching out stakeholders and other members of the community. Some felt that surveys were the best way to gather a representative sample of opinions because turnout at community events was sporadic and, at most, attracted less than 200 people. Others disagreed because they felt that the community meetings provided a forum for everyone to have an opportunity to express their opinions.

Ballard felt that their meetings were successful because they limited them to a single topic so that only those who were interested in that topic had to attend.

The Role of the City

Opinions were strong when participants were asked about the role of the City. The expression "Can't live with them; can't live without them" probably best describes the feelings of these individuals.

Much of the frustration stems from the inefficiency of having to deal with bureaucracy and learning how to work the system. They expressed frustration with the lack of responsiveness from City departments.

"...There's no interaction with the other groups except through the Neighborhood Matching Fund and those projects. I could talk to about how dysfunctional the City is within its various departments towards working with citizens that have neighborhood matching funds. The City Utilities or Parks, or Seatrans. We go there – "Oh look, we have this wonderful project here" And they look at you like you're from Mars. Where are you from? What are you talking about? And they kick you around and then you have to go back and get the Department of Neighborhoods to come and lead you somewhere."

"...What frustrates me is this... a lot times, you sort of think that you've connected all these... and something is put in motion, a resolution is passed ... it's like a soccer

ball…I watched my daughter at soccer one night and the ball landed in a mud pud-dle. And the kids had to get in there and, even though the goal is 30 feet, they get in there and kick it and it goes six inches. And they have to get in there and kick it and kick it and kick it and kick it to get it moving. It's like a City project, if you don't keep kicking it, it doesn't move."

The neighborhood planning consultants were frustrated by the way in which the neighborhood planning process was executed. They felt that not enough direction and structure was provided to the neighborhood planning groups.

"…My take on this was that the whole thing wasn't thought through. We wouldn't have had this shifting agenda…but they hadn't thought it through from the neighbors' point of view, not the planning consultants', not the City's, but from the neighbors' point of view about what a planning process would mean to them. And if they had, it would been quicker and it would have simpler and it would have been very upbeat. I think things would not have bogged down."

"…We put together a scope of work that we thought we could accomplish in the four months that they gave us to do the entire plan. And from day 1, they didn't respect it. It wasn't to them an agenda, a work plan, so immediately we were in trouble with them. I was in trouble with X (NPO staff) and Karma because I wasn't doing what they thought I should be doing. But they hadn't communicated what they wanted."

"…They [NPO] just didn't know where they were going when they started so it changed and changed and changed…To many of the people in the neighborhood that I worked with it began to look like they [the City] had an agenda. I don't believe they intended this but it came out the end it looked like the City knew exactly what they always wanted and it was that little matrix and would they tell that the first day…oh, no. They made you go through this horrible agonizing process and in the end, you would have five action items that they would approve.

Summary of In-Depth Interviews

Like focus groups, in-depth interviews are a qualitative form of marketing research – meaning that the results cannot be reliably used to project onto a larger population. But, they are an excellent tool for exploring a limited number of issues in greater detail than one could achieve through a telephone or mail survey.

In-person or telephone interviews were conducted with 19 neighborhood activists, members of advisory boards, community and district council members, consultants, and City staff. The interview was designed to last approximately 30 minutes; however the actual interview length ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. Citizen participants and staff/consultants were interviewed using different discussion guides. Because of time constraints, not everyone was asked all of the questions.

The first part of the interview asked general questions; about half of the interview was specific to the organization respondents were most involved with. The remainder of the interview focused on the role of the City in citizen participation.

Following is a summary of these interviews by topic.

Participation

Worth of Involvement. Virtually, every citizen participant said that they felt that their involvement in local government issues was very worthwhile:

"...I learned a lot about city government and learned about the impact one person again and I got to know my neighbors and really develop a sense of belonging to the community."

"...Personally I've learned a lot whether or not the projects I've worked on are going to succeed. Personal growth -- I've met a lot people that have the same interests that I do. And it feels like you're doing something even if there's no results yet. I feel like I'm heading towards something, instead of fighting against it."

Effectiveness. Whether or not a respondent felt his or her group's involvement had been effective really varied from individual to individual. Some felt that their group had been extremely effective while others were less enthusiastic.

"...Problems that ... or issues that are raised at this meeting are dealt with more effectively at meetings than you would imagine."

"...It's hard to say because we've gotten a plan but haven't gotten to see it all the way through. We did a complete a plan, however. I think we, in a small sense, built some community cohesiveness -- a small nucleus that knows how to connect within the neighborhood."

"...It's just such as slow moving process it's hard to feel an effect. Well...sometimes, I feel the advice we're asked for is not really heeded. I don't know but I have this underlying feeling that they're [the City] trying to reach a satisfaction level by having a meeting where I don't think they're really listening. So, the city can say we talked to the community about this but they didn't necessarily listen."

"...The ability to select the right agenda (what makes effective) and the ability to communicate effectively with the appropriate City staff and officials. I think I would point to the CNC as being one of the least effective in promoting effective communication with...They seem to load their agenda with tasks from the City Council or the SPO and they're not the tasks I would select. I think their attendance is low, which indicates an ineffective agenda."

Reasons for Getting Involved. Most of the individuals interviewed got involved because of an issue that was affecting their community or was otherwise important to them. They stayed involved because they wanted to make a difference.

"...I didn't go into planning to get involved with government. I planned to get involved with a community group that got dragged into neighborhood planning -- the vortex kinda just dragged me along. I stuck with it because it was interesting."

"...The Maple Leaf school site is right across the street from me. I'm involved with schools because I have children involved. I felt that if I didn't become involved I wouldn't have a say at all and I wanted to have a say... I don't think you can live independently in a community. I think you have to be a part of it for it to be a community. Otherwise it's not a community."

"...Well, like a lot of people, I had a particular land use issue that brought me to the Community Council – once I got there, I could see a way to affect policy in a positive way.

"...I guess I like city living living in the city. I can dream about living in the Skagit Valley. But I think about the things I like to do and they're all in the city...But living in the city has its problems. When you face a problem when you live in an area – you can leave or you fix it. The tradition solution has been to move -- move west, to Alaska, to Tahiti, but there's no place to move to – no frontier, so your only choice is to do something to fix it. It's a fact of life that you have work on fixing it.

Role within the Organization. Most of the citizen participants interviewed held some type of official post such as chairperson, co-chair, or treasurer. And most of these individuals have been involved for a number of years.

Group Organization/Dynamics

Recruitment. Recruitment appears to be somewhat informal for most of these groups. Personal invitation and invitations to meetings are the primary means of recruiting new group members. Meeting notices are generally communicated via flyers, newsletters, and notices in community newspapers. A number of individuals mentioned that concern about a particular issue would also drive people to meetings.

Education and Continuity. Most of the groups do not appear to have a formal education process for indoctrinating new members. Most feel that meeting attendance is sufficient to educate new members and specific questions can be handled on a one-on-one basis.

"…Frankly, [education is] by trial by fire… We're a relatively young organization – about eight years old and it's taken awhile to get organized and recruitment is a relatively unexplored area. And similarly, education is not organized. Most education occurs by attendance and participation."

Representativeness. The majority of the respondents felt that their group was not representative of the diversity of their community. However, they all felt that being representative was important – although their groups may not have any specific activities directed at recruiting persons of color, low income householders, renters, or businesses. Some of them expressed frustration at not being able to recruit members from these groups:

"…We identified the stakeholders and the analysis of who lives in the community and who should be there. Can we find a business owner that wants to come? No!!! But we know who we need to have."

"…It's a complicated issue because the people that are interested tend to be property owners and the occasional business owner and those individuals are likely to pick the issues to come to the fore. Renters and employees tend to have much less time to devote to researching and networking to pick up new issues…But it's bad if these Community Councils don't represent the interest of renters and business employees – so they don't naturally prioritize public transportation issues, for instance."

A staff member from the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) was also interviewed. Although nearly everyone who lives in SHA housing is a person of color, they still have difficulties ensuring a broad representation of all of the ethnic groups living in public housing. One tactic that has achieved some success is having a diverse board of officers, which can in turn reach out to their own ethnic communities to inform them about the issues and recruit them to attend meetings. Because they have a number of non-English speaking individuals in their community, they also provide translators for meetings.

With respect to getting businesses involved activities like neighborhood planning, recruiting will always be difficult. According to a member at one of the agencies that deal with small businesses, meetings are difficult for business owners because their businesses represent a very large time commitment. What time that remains is often given over to family activities.

This individual also commented that, in his opinion, businesses feel that the City is more likely to side with residents than businesses in issues that affect both. He feels that neighborhood groups make an effort to represent business interests but that these are often colored by their perceptions of what the needs of businesses are.

Decision-Making. Consensus and majority-rules votes are the primary decision-making tools for these organizations. For some groups, if they are unable to reach a consensus, they call for a vote to resolve the issue.

If conflicts arise between members and are not resolved via a vote, the issue is dealt with outside of the general meetings.

Accountability. Nearly every group feels some accountability – both to fellow group members and to the community.

> *"...It's really the people in a pure sense – it's the people who are dues-paying members. In a broad sense, we feel we should represent the whole community. For example, we don't have any dues-paying renters, but I think we still should represent them."*

> *"...Each other. Our community."*

Most of the individuals interviewed felt that gathering input from the community was important when important decisions are made – particularly, if members are representing other groups or constituencies.

> *"...I think we're all very aware of why we're there and representing local councils. We rarely vote on anything until we've had a chance to go back to our district council and talk to them."*

> *[Regarding the obligation to solicit opinions from outside the group] "...I'm not sure if obligated is the right term, but it's expected and highly desirable. I think most -- yes the simple answer is yes. I think most people there are representing another group and are the communications link to that group."*

Outreach

Most groups use more than one method of outreach. However, most of this outreach is directed towards building meeting attendance. Meetings are the primary means of both disseminating information and enabling individuals to give input to the group.

> *"...There has not been one that stands out. It's clearly a case of using as many vehicles as possible. Diversity is the key – I have people that don't read the paper and only do electronic. And some who only read newspaper and haven't a clue about electronic, and others who walk back and forth reading a notice on the grocery store door. We have to do it all that's the lesson we learned ..."*

> *"...For the Community Council, promotion of meetings. But they're hampered because they have no funding with which to promote, and they have only one neighborhood newspaper to use as a medium. And that newspaper uses unreliable volunteers to enter the promotion material into the newspaper, so it's often omitted. So you never know if your notice will run or not. I think the Community Council outreach is their meetings."*

Word-of-mouth, notices in community newspapers, flyers, and e-mail are the tools used most often to communicated meeting information.

Getting More People Involved. According to respondents, issues are what get people involved in local government:

> *"...Usually fear, I hate to say... some scare tactic. [For example] I found there's another group – a SHARE group – that was going into a church here. People started sending out letters about how could we let this happen in our neighborhood. And that brought out people on both sides. If they hadn't come on so strong, we probably wouldn't have*

gotten as many to come out. Whenever anything new is introduced, there's usually a few that come out against it so that that fear tactic tends to bring people out.

"...Controversy. For better or worse...that breaks down into a number of subjects that are controversial –change, salmon recovery,... restrictive city ordinances for parks use or usage, long range planning, uses and goals. There's divisive points of views of how that's meted out it. The controversy that gets people to complain or review or become informed about what's going on."

The City

Relationship between the City and Neighborhood Groups. Opinions about the relationship between the City and neighborhood groups were mixed. Most of them felt that the City was sincere in its efforts to seek input from these groups on neighborhood issues but the end results were not always as expected or hoped for.

"...I believe at the precinct captain level and the lieutenant level that there is a sincere and deep-seated desire to get input. I know there's a frustration at not being able to do everything. There is a real partnership through the advisory group with the precinct. I believe that the relationship between that group and the police department senior management is much less direct, but I believe the senior leadership group is sincerely committed to providing that relationship. I know that they are totally committed to building partnerships and this is probably the most effective way of doing that."

"...It's good. They're very helpful and always respond when we ask for things. And I'm specifically talking about the DON. Seatran could be a lot better. They do not respond well for us. I've got one employee that's good about coming to meeting and explaining things. They don't return phone calls; they don't respond to requests and it seems like the projects we fund through them never get done."

The Role of the City. Most of the respondents view the City as a mechanism for implementing changes in the neighborhood and funding neighborhood change.

"...I think they recognize that the city plays an important role in develop and maintaining our neighborhood communities. And along with that, I think we are frustrated by...oh, the bureaucracy... when we see a solution for our neighborhoods that seems pretty simple and it just gets stonewalled or papered with bureaucracy. It's hard because the departments change with every new administration. It's tough to keep up with how the political wind blows. I hear this is the second time we've done neighborhood plans. The first time they just sat on shelf – now everybody's just waiting to see what will happen."

"...Some of the group believes the city is trying to lead us by the nose to their own agenda. Some see this interaction as a necessary evil and we have to live with it. Nobody is particularly happy to have to do all this stuff."

Contact with the City. All of the groups interviewed said that they work with a specific individual at the City. They also felt that having a specific contact person facilitated the efforts of the group and made them more efficient.

> *"...Yes. I think it does. #1 – he gets things done – like when I can't get information from Seatrans, he steps in; he knows who to talk to and gives us access to higher levels. In some ways, he's our voice when we're not there. He gets us invited to meetings where we might not have been invited. He looks out for us.*

> *"...I think it's given us hope. Whether nothing's happened yet."*

City's Role in Getting More People Involved in Local Government Issues. Citizens had a number of suggestions for the City to get more people involved. Most of them dealt with making involvement relevant and not a meaningless exercise in dealing with bureaucracy.

> *"...How do you get more people involved is a challenge. To get volunteer assistance there first and foremost has to be an issue that people think is important enough to get involved with. And the willingness of public officials to let go of their ego and take public input. There has to be a mutual trust between the government entity seeking input and the public group providing the input. And that doesn't happen with a lot issues I've seen. That doesn't happen instantly. And it's something that can't be simulated. It has to be real.*

> *"...Trying to figure out how to make the whole effort relevant to people. They can understand a crisis and see how it could effect them. They can't see the benefit of neighborhood planning and they can't see what's in it for me."*

> *"...A whole series of how to make the city not perceived as bureaucratic and hard to deal with. You can deal with 10 people who are good to work with and you hit that 11th who's a jerk, and that becomes the perception that the city is hard to work with. They have to be sensitive to consistency and incorporate that element in to performance reviews of people. Make them accountable. It's the people."*

> *"...To create neighborhood improvement bond issues in several modest installments over a decade. And involve the neighborhood in prioritizing the issues to be addressed by the bond issue. This where the District Council and CNC and the DON district managers could all function together to make that prioritization process work. The major weakness of neighborhood planning efforts has been the lack of an end game. Of which significant funding is a major issue. There are many Neighborhood Planning elements that involve so many City departments per element that no bond issue related to a specific city department will ever address them."*

> *"...SPU [Seattle Public Utilities] through their billing – they could send things out to educate people. They do that now, but it could be expanded some. I think it could be done with any mailing that already goes to the home ... I think there' needs to be more direct hotlines...And more television ads. I would like to see the government access channel have a directory so that when there's some particular meeting I want to watch, I don't have to call 10 different people and not get the info in time. We have cable and it's never listed on there -- I think it would be nice to have it listed on basic cable. I suppose the newspaper – if there could be more information in the newspaper...*

I think the City Council does a pretty good job of having meetings with the neighbor-hoods. I think that needs to be continued."

"...A clearer pattern of results for efforts given. Invitation. Written -- outlining in detail the scope of the invitation the intended commitment of time so a person can make a free choice and not find out later what they gotten themselves involved in. A more customer service attitude that the city is there to serve the citizenry and not the other way around.

<u>How the City Can Prevent Burnout</u>. The last question respondents were asked what actions the City could take to prevent burnout of volunteers working on local government issues. According to these individuals, results in a reasonable timeframe appear to be the key to preventing burnout. Visible results or progress signals to volunteers, who have otherwise busy lives, that they are not wasting valuable time in efforts that lead to no-where.

"...Processes are so long. I don't know how you shorten those time frames...Better communication, shorter process time. Less of an "us versus them" – however you do that. Not like "we're the power and you're not."

"...Burnout occurs because you worked on an issue and it's obvious nothing's going to budge. Sometimes things don't budge no matter what because there is a physical constraint and someone who beats themselves to death will burnout. When you work hard and you realize nobody's really listening – it'd be better if they told you upfront, or told you where you could be more effective."

"...That's tough 'cause ... to get volunteers to be an effective source of input you have to have the structure to take that input and act on it. If there isn't a full time staff to act on the input, people aren't going to stay involved with that activity. But burnout can also be caused by changes in personal situation and there's no control you can have over that. You get a promotion and you're traveling and you can't stay involved. So external influences on burnout can't be controlled. Burnout comes from frustration of giving input and not having any action taken on."

"...I have people that express frustration – that leads to burnout. All the processes that you have to go through – to get a park, it's a three-year process. Maybe coupling it with that that poor person is one of three people left to do everything. Ease up on the bureaucracy. Don't make us through go 1000 wickets. Working for a big company I understand it necessary – but look at these gates and ask is it necessary to go through this and streamline wherever they could – enhance the cooperation between departments so they can tell people the right place to go to, if they're not the one."

"...If they had some volunteer management skills and recognizing when people are getting burned out and shuttling them to different activities. Giving them more recognition."

Participation in Organizations

Current Participation

A large majority of the mail survey respondents[1] and more than half of the telephone respondents are involved in city-sponsored groups that deal with local government issues.

Respondents are also active in other groups that deal with neighborhood or local government issues. Slightly more than half of the mail survey respondents participates in these groups; two-thirds of the telephone survey do.

Participation in Groups that Deal with Local Government Issues

City-Sponsored: 85% (Mail), 53% (Telephone)
Other Groups: 29% (Mail), 67% (Telephone)

Telephone Survey Participants ▪ Mail Survey Participants
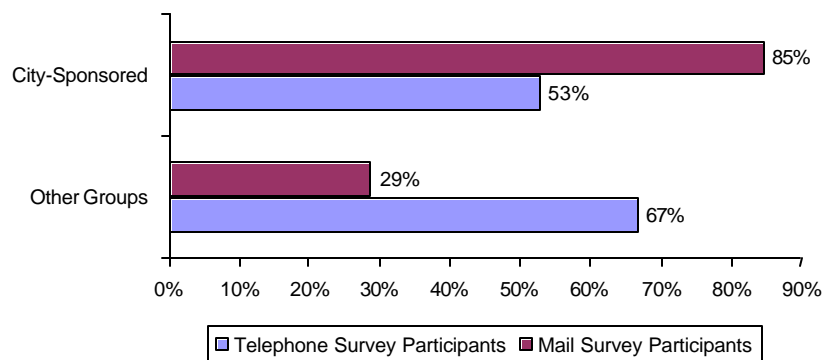
Base =   Mail Survey Respondents (n=367)
Telephone Survey Respondents (n=101)

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[1] Note: Mail surveys tend to have a bias towards individuals that feel strongly about an issue or survey topic. They are much more likely to take the time to respond to a mail survey than individuals that are not as strongly invested.

Telephone surveys have less of this bias because they are selected at random for participation and are a more passive methodology. Mail surveys have self-selected participants and require more action on the behalf of the participant.

In total, respondents were involved in more than 30 different groups that deal with local government issues. Neighborhood planning and/or stewardship drew the highest level of participation from respondents in both the mail and telephone survey. Respondents were also active in community councils, block watches and business groups. Nine percent are active in other volunteer/non-profit groups that are not specific to neighborhood or local government issues. Ten percent of the respondents from the mail survey and 19 percent of those surveyed by telephone are not currently active in any neighborhood or community groups.

In What Groups Are You Currently Involved?

Group	Telephone	Mail
Neighborhood Plnng/Stwdshp	33%	56%
Community Council	21%	39%
Block Watch	4%	30%
Local Business Assoc.	9%	18%
District Council	5%	13%
Other Neigh. Groups	9%	12%
Other Watershed		8%
Precinct Advisory	1%	7%
Other Non-Profits	9%	5%
Rec. Center Advisory/Other Parks	4%	5%
Political	5%	
Arts	4%	
Schools	5%	2%
Other	7%	18%
None	19%	10%
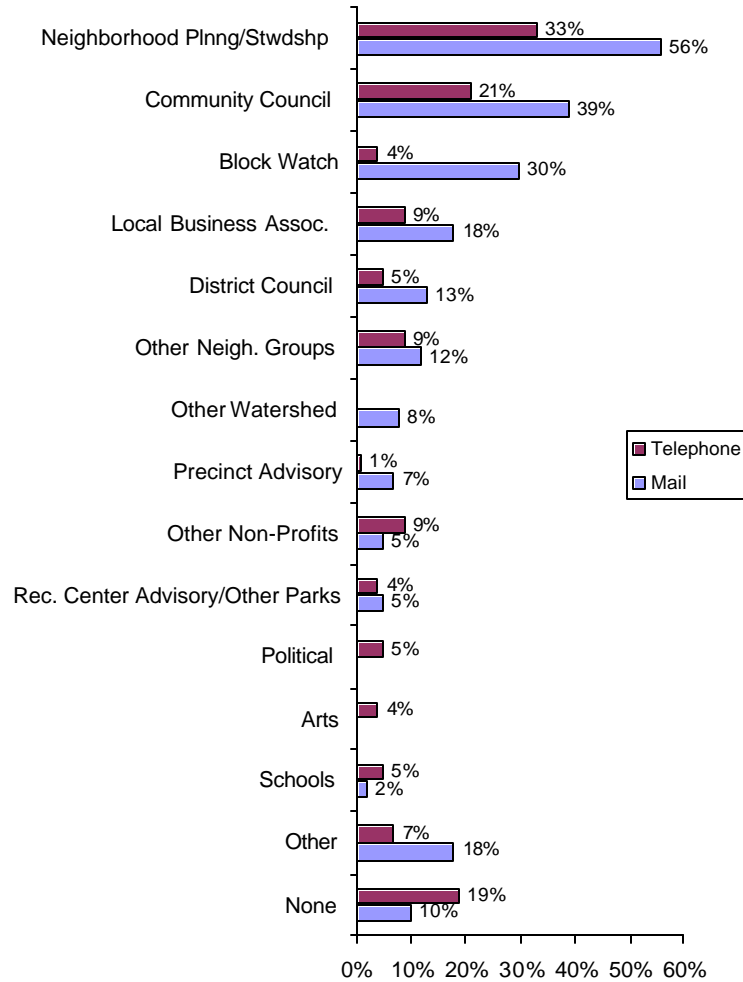
Base =   Mail Survey Respondents (n=367)
Telephone Survey Respondents (n=101)

Most Active

Respondents were asked in which single groups they were most active. Both surveys show that respondents are most active in city-sponsored groups that deal with neighbor-hood or local government issues. This finding can probably be attributed to the lists that were used as sample material. These lists were primarily drawn from City databases that contained participants in neighborhood planning and other local government issues.

In Which Group Are You Most Active?
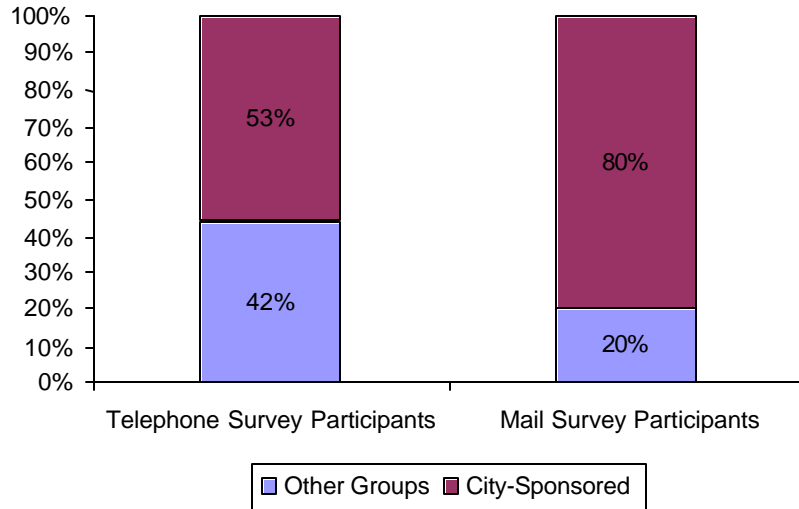
Base = Mail Survey Respondents (n=367)
Telephone Survey Respondents (n=101)

Neighborhood planning and/or stewardship and community councils are the groups in which respondents were most active.

In Which Group Are You Most Active?

Group	Telephone	Mail
Neighborhood Plnng/Stwdshp	32%	31%
Community Council	20%	23%
Local Business Assoc.	11%	11%
Block Watch	2%	8%
Other Neigh. Groups	8%	7%
Watershed Advisory/Other Watershed		5%
Other Non-Profits	7%	3%
District Council	1%	3%
Rec. Center Advisory/Other Parks	3%	2%
Schools	3%	
Precinct Advisory	1%	
Other	9%	5%
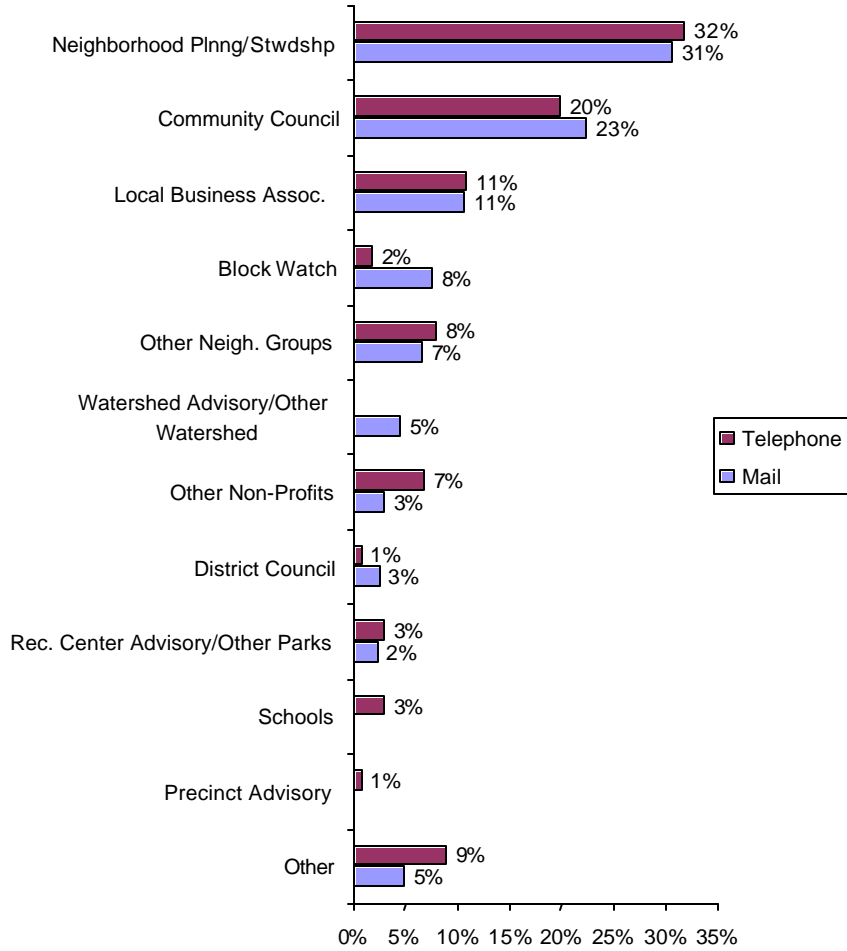
Base = Respondents who Currently Participate

Looking at the share of individuals within a group who said they were most active in this group, local business associations, community council, neighborhood planning, and other neighborhood groups have the highest percentage of individuals who said this was the group in which they were most active. In contrast, less than one-fourth of block watch participants said that this group was the one in which they were most active.

The implication of this finding is that individuals that are involved in organizations like Community Council, Neighborhood Planning, or the Chamber of Commerce tend be more engaged than folks who are involved with block watch.

Most Active as a Share of Total Participation
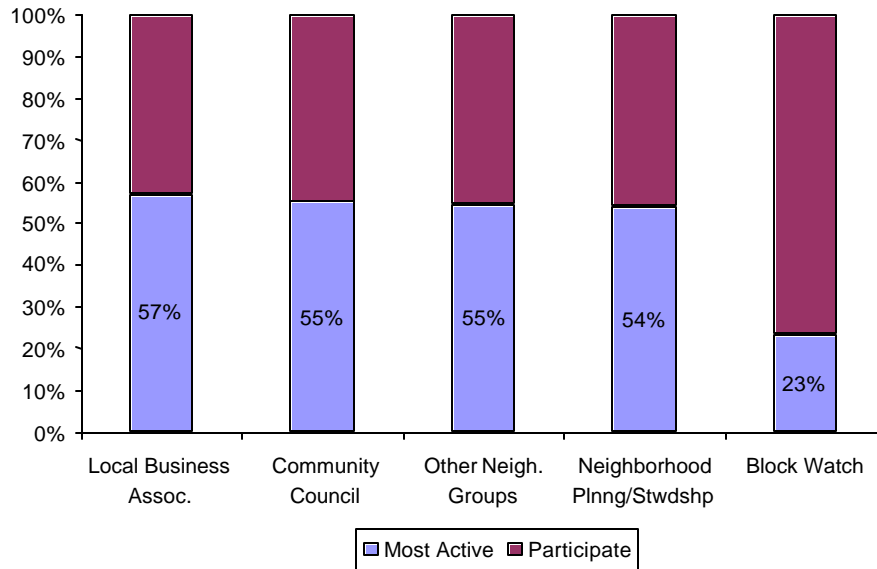
Base = All Participants

Ease/Difficulty of Getting Involved

Almost half of the mail survey respondents believe that participation in local government issues is easier today than in previous years. Only 14 percent thought that getting involved was more difficult.

**Thinking about Participating in Local Gov't Issues
Over the Past Several Years, Is it Easier or More
Difficult to Get Involved?**

Don't Know
12%

Somewhat/Much
More Difficult
14%

Somewhat/Much
Easier
46%

About the Same
28%

| Much Easier | 20% |
| Somewhat Easier | 26% |

| Much More Difficult | 9% |
| Somewhat More Difficult | 5% |
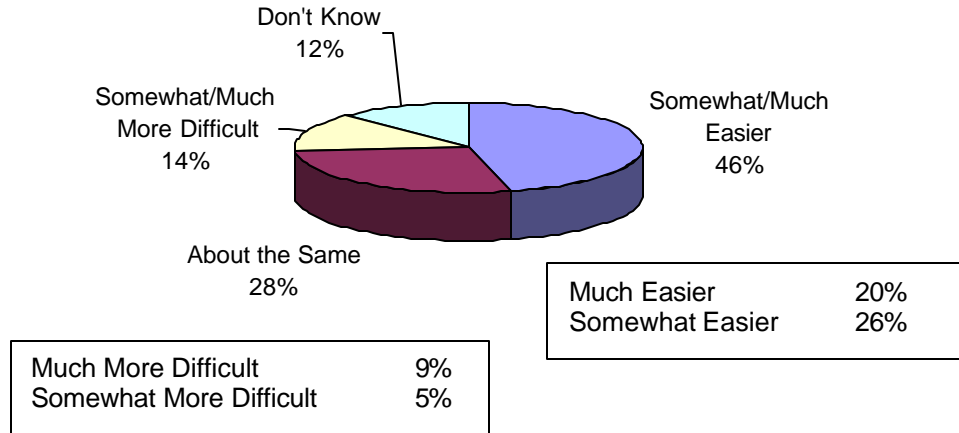
Base = Mail Survey Participants (n=354)

Reasons Why More People Don't Participate in Local Government Issues

Respondents who participated in the telephone survey were asked why more people don't get involved in local government issues[2]. Two reasons stood out – a lack of time or too many other commitments (60 percent) and not being able to have a meaningful impact (42 percent).

**Why Do You Think More People Don't Get Involved
in Local Government Issues?**
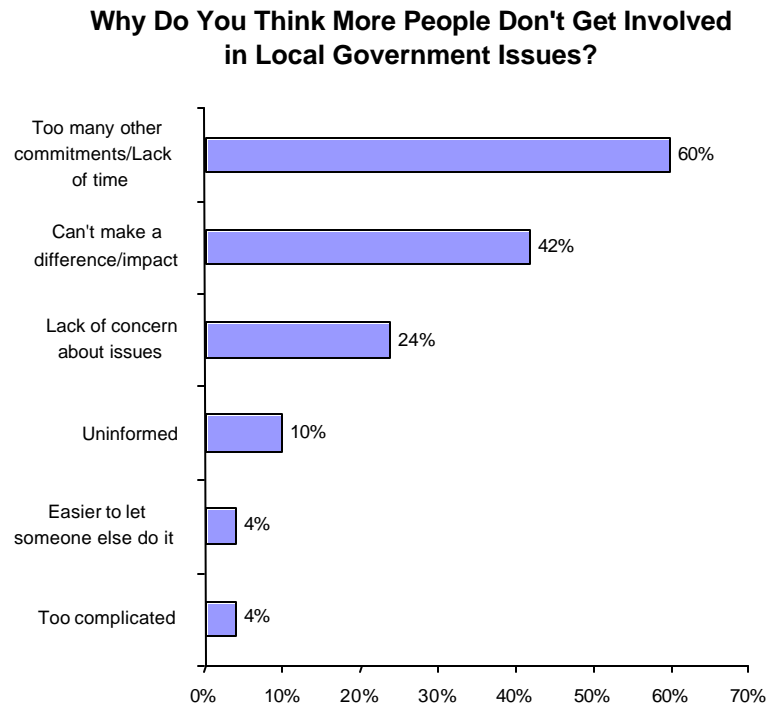
Base = Current Particpants (Telephone Survey - n-90)

"...Because of the pressure of earning a living, a lack of time and dual income family, homes, commuting, etc. If I were to give Seattle a grade on the responsiveness to citizens of Seattle, I would give them a 7. I think they need to be more flexible in making improvement, they need to make the process easier."

"...One of my friends is just too involved and busy and going to work and paying their bills. I think there is a pervasive level of cynicism and most people figure they won't effect the outcome anyway."

"...Many times they are being ignored and the government does what they want to without input.

"...Well, I think most people are sincere and they don't see that there is a good chance to be successful. "

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[2] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning they were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

"...Lack of time and interest. Frustration and feeling things don't get done".

"...Because of the tedium. They think it's too complicated and difficult to follow. They don't think their opinion counts. They're just one person. They might feel the City is too big of an organization to have an affect on. And influencing them. And it's difficult to schedule time out of your lives to do that."

Future Involvement

Thirty-eight percent of the respondents who answered the mail survey said that the definitely plan to stay involved in local government issues. Six percent said that they definitely or probably would not; another 21 percent would become involved if they were interested in a particular issue.

Do You Plan to Stay Involved?

Depends on the Issue
21%

Don't Know
3%

Definitely/Probably NOT
6%

Definitely/Probably
70%

Definitely NOT Remain Involved	4%
Probably NOT Remain Involved	2%

Definitely Remain Involved	32%
Probably Remain Involved	38%
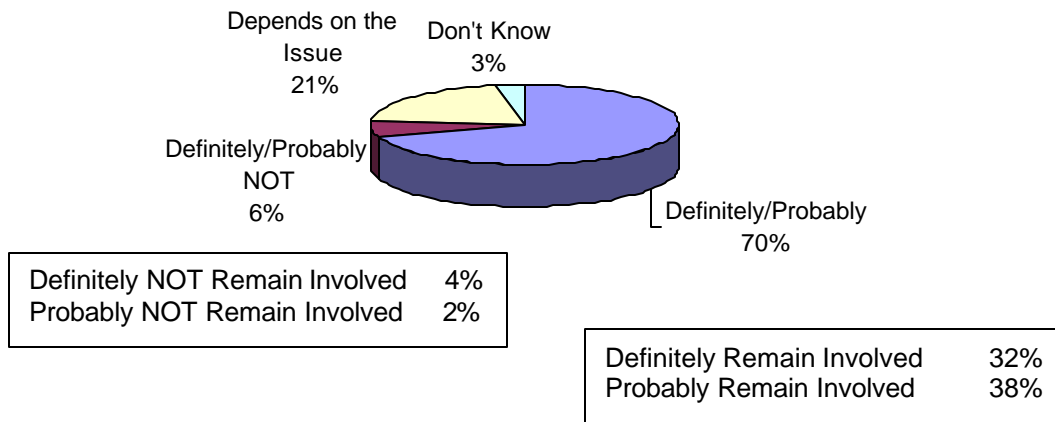
Base = Telephone & Mail Survey Participants (n=425)

- Individuals who were just involved in neighborhood planning were significantly less likely to say that they would remain involved than those involved in other activities or issues (64 percent versus 81 percent). They were also more likely to say that they probably or definitely would not remain involved (19 percent versus 5 percent).

- As might be expected, people who feel their involvement had no impact were much more likely to say that they probably or definitely would not remain involved (26 percent – mail survey). Another 30 percent said that it would depend on the issue (mail survey).

Reasons for Staying Involved

According to respondents to the telephone survey, the #1 reason to remain involved is to make a difference in the community (63 percent).[3]

Why Will You Stay Involved?
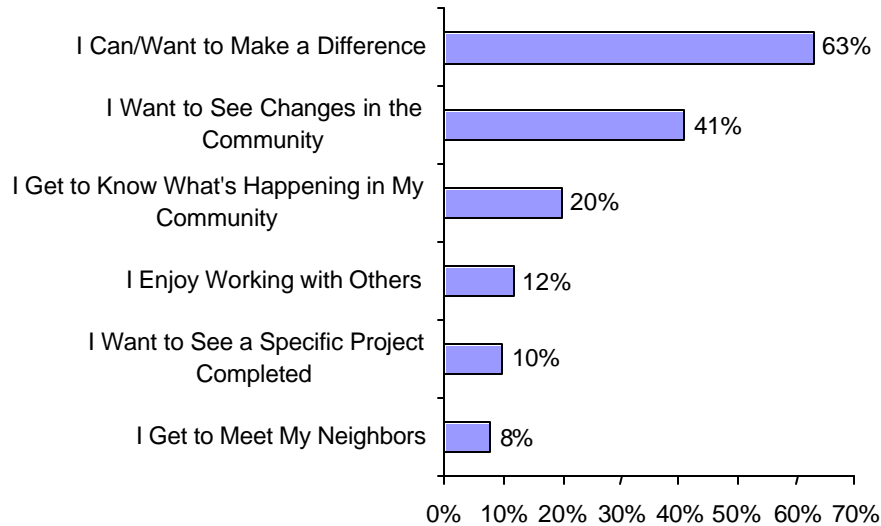
Base = Telephone survey respondents who plan to stay involved

"...I can see there is a lot of work to do and I have a major interest since I live here."

"...To ensure equitable distribution of resources to my community."

"...I am a responsible citizen. I wish to continue to be involved with government."

"...Local government is the most important place to put ones energy."

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[3] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

Reasons for Not Staying Involved

Consistent with the responses given to the previous question "Why do you think more people don't participate in local government issues?", the top reasons for not remaining involved in local government issues clustered into three groups:

- Group Dynamics
- Personal/Life Conflicts
- Burnout/Cynicism

Group Dynamics consisted of reasons relating to groups and their management and organization. Reasons in this category included "group dominated by a few individuals or special interests" (32 percent), "meeting times/locations not convenient" (13 percent), and "group no longer represents my interests" (11 percent).

Personal/Life conflicts included reasons such as "too many work and/or family commitments (38 percent) and "don't like attending meetings" (23 percent).

Reasons under Burnout/Cynicism reflect attitudes like "nothing ever changes (10 percent), "burned out" (8 percent), "too much bureaucracy/interference from the City" (6 percent).

Why Don't You Think You Will Stay Involved?
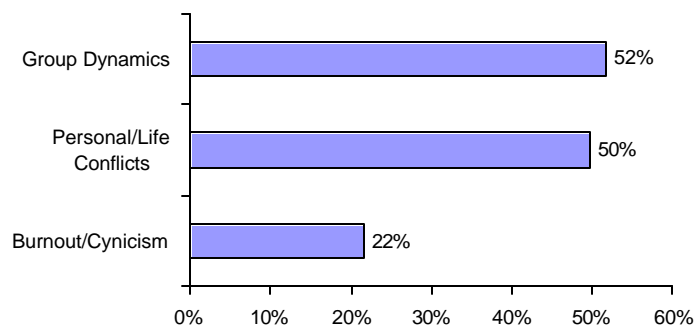
Base = Telephone & Mail Survey Participants Who Do Not Plan to Remain Involved (n=110)

- Reasons did not vary significant between different types of groups.

- Individuals who felt that they did not have an impact on the outcome of issues were more likely to say that they were going to drop out because of "group dominated by a few individuals and special interests" and "don't like attending meetings" than individuals who said they felt they had made an impact.

What Would Be Helpful in Getting & Keeping People Involved in Local Government Issues

Respondents in the telephone survey were asked what action items in a pre-defined list would be most helpful in getting and keeping people involved. The list was developed from the results of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and the mail survey.

Consistent with other findings from this study, results are a major factor in successful citizen participation efforts, according to respondents. Both of the top-two ranked choices imply that results should be visible sooner rather than later. Items associated with outreach and communication ranked slightly lower than those associated with results.

- Smaller projects that are short-term & have a visible impact within the community   76%
- Ability to have more impact on issues earlier in the process   73%
- A well-defined & easy-to-understand process for meeting City guidelines & specifications   69%
- Small, personal events like block parties so neighbors get know to each other & learn about community issues   68%
- More small one-day events that just require a few hours of participation   65%
- More resources to publicize events & achievements   60%
- More involvement & visibility of City officials in the neighborhood   59%
- More use of newer technologies like e-mail & the Web for communicating to minimize the number of meetings   59%
- Special outreach efforts to groups like the elderly or non-English speaking individual that have difficulty participating in events & activities   59%
- Better group organization & management of meetings   50%

Attitudes about Participation

Meaningful Impact of Involvement

Respondents were asked whether their group's involvement has had a meaningful impact on their neighborhood or the community as a whole. Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that their group's involvement had made an impact.

**Has Your Group's Involvement Had a
Meaningful Impact on Your Neighborhood or
the Community as a Whole?**

Don't Know
12%

No
8%

Yes
80%
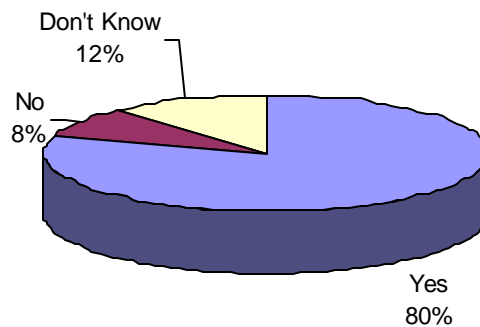
Base = All respondents

- Across different neighborhood organizations, the feeling that their group had a meaningful impact did not vary significantly.

- Individuals whose only involvement was neighborhood planning were somewhat less likely to feel as though their group's involvement made a difference than those who were involved in issues other than neighborhood planning.

- Non-white respondents were also significantly less likely to feel as though their group had made an impact (71 percent versus 82 percent of whites).

Personal Meaningfulness

Respondents who participated in the telephone survey were asked to rate how personally meaningful their involvement had been. A rating of '10' meant that their involvement was extremely meaningful and a rating of '1' meant that it wasn't meaningful at all.

The majority of respondent rated their involvement a '5' or higher. One-fourth of the respondents gave their involvement a rating of '9' or '10'. Only 5 percent rated their involvement as a '1' or '2'.

How Personally Meaningful Has Your Involvement Been?

Rating	Percentage
Extremely Meaningful (10)	16%
(9)	9%
(8)	21%
(7)	15%
(6)	10%
(5)	13%
(4)	7%
(3)	2%
(2)	3%
Not Meaningful at All (1)	2%
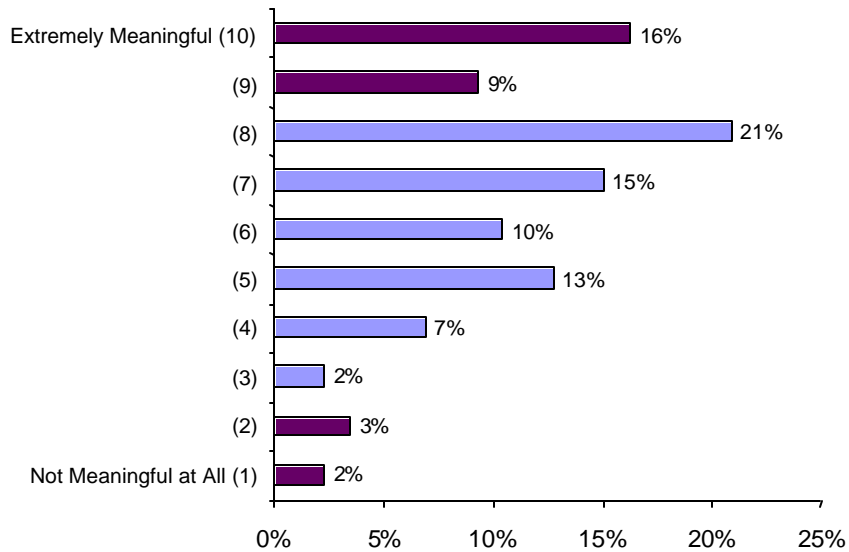
Top 2 Boxes = 25%
Bottom 2 Boxes = 5%

Mean = 6.9

Base = Telephone Survey Respondents (n=90)

What Makes Involvement Meaningful

As a follow-up to their rating of personal involvement, respondents from the telephone survey were asked why they assigned that particular rating. Similarly, respondents to the mail survey were asked what made their involvement meaningful[4].

Clearly, visible results are an important part of creating a satisfactory experience in citi-zen participation – it was mentioned by more than one-fourth of the respondents as con-tributing to meaningful involvement.

The social aspects of involvement were also important. A number of respondents also feel that working together on a project brought a sense of community, which they said made their involvement meaningful (18 percent). Others felt that their involvement was a form of civic responsibility – in other words, just being involved and contributing was important.

Why Involvement Was Meaningful

Category	Percent
Seeing results	28%
Way for people to work together for the community	18%
Being involved/Making a difference	15%
Meeting other people in the community	13%
City listened to us/Interacted w/City depts/officials	10%
Process of identifying problems & developing solutions	8%
Learned about neighborhood issues	5%
City provided resources/funding	2%
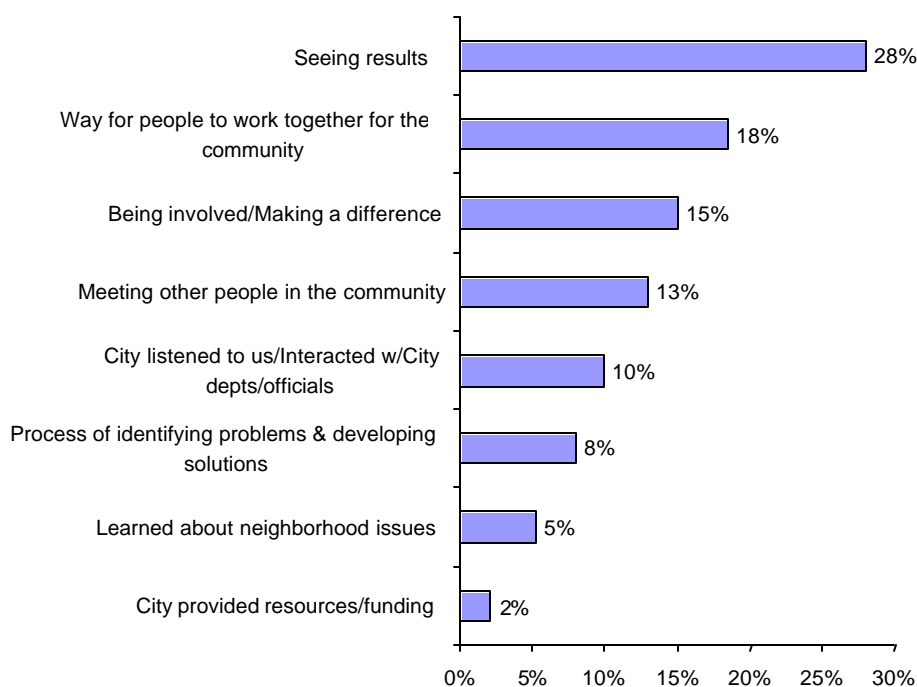
Base = All respondents

"…Involvement in neighborhood planning and district council has been empowering, it has opened my eyes to local resources that individuals can access. And it has given me confidence that neighborhoods can make a difference in their own futures."

"…Seeing direct results. The Small & Simple project was a direct result from a need in our neighborhood that was born from [our] block watch involvement."

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[4] Both mail and telephone survey respondents were asked this question on an "open-ended" basis – mean-ing the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

"...I'm one of the two officers in the agency. You see differences and changes in the neighborhood. Not just physical changes but changes in people's attitudes. People are now ready to step forward on projects where before there ground-swell of support – e.g., there is a large sidewalk improvement project in the main commercial area and the merchants are stepping forward to pay a substantial part of the funding –voluntarily."

Respondents who had a negative response to this question gave answers such as:

"...I didn't realize how frustrating it would be. It is really hard when the city has their own agenda. I also never realized how reluctant people are about getting involved; people don't want to get involved until this stuff starts happening. It is just educational. I am really glad it's over with, because it was just so frustrating. I think it is a good idea to do these things. They took away our neighborhood, even though we didn't want urban villages and they give us a few carrots and then we have to vote on something we don't want."

"...Because Seattle is so process bound that you're lucky that you ever get anything done."

"...Because it would be nice to have more knowledge from the city – not always clear as to the city's position on offering support or not. Neighborhood leadership is a difficult thing, it takes a lot of energy and skill and this can make a difference as to whether the group is effective or not and therefore if your volunteer time is meaningful. "

What Would Makes Involvement More Meaningful

When asked about what would make their involvement more meaningful, respondents to the mail survey gave answers that coalesced around some key themes[5]:

Communication. Respondents voiced several concerns about communication. While a priority was communication between the City and citizens, they similarly felt that communication within in their group and to the neighborhood in general could be improved. They also mentioned needing a means to communicate directly with groups in other neighborhoods. A number of respondents thought that more involvement by the media would be helpful to their efforts.

Communication   27%
- City needs to listen and respond
- Better communication between councils
- Better communication within the neighborhood
- More publicity and/or media involvement
- Better communication between the neighborhoods and city employees
- More mailings and outreach to the neighborhood
- Newsletter/Publicity about the neighborhood and neighborhood events

Results. Respondents seem to view that working with or on behalf of the City constitutes an implied contract[6] – chiefly, that, if they put time and effort into a project, they expect the City to follow-up and follow-through. One of the key drivers of citizen participation, as noted in the previous section, is being able see the payoff for their efforts.

Results   20%
- City acted on identified needs/Followed up
- More implementation funds
- More impact earlier in the process
- Make it so people will know they will be heard/have an impact
- More visible results

Participation. A number of respondents expressed a need to find a way to get more people involved. Getting more businesses, minorities, and working people were explicitly mentioned by several respondents.

Participation   20%
- Get more people involved
- More involvement by businesses
- Find ways for working people to get involved
- More minority involvement

Group and Meeting Management. Respondents asked for help with both running their organization, and organizing and managing meetings. They cited a need for leadership

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[5] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

[6] In the case of neighborhood planning, the neighborhood planning groups had an actual contract.

training and education of group members, as well as way to run meetings so a vocal minority does not dominate them.

> Group & Meeting Management   12%
> - Better cooperation within the group
> - More trained leaders
> - More understanding and less mistrust within the group
> - Better facilitation and meeting management
> - Less cliquishness/more openness in established groups

City Process and Coordination. A number of respondents were frustrated with City bureaucracy and processes:

> City Process & Coordination   9%
> - City departments less disjointed. Need to communicate better with each other
> - Too much process/bureaucracy
> - More cooperation from City departments
> - More and quicker feedback from the City

Attitudes about Organization

Primary Role of the Organization

The majority of the respondents belong to groups that either help with two-way communication between the City and the neighborhood on local government issues (37 percent) or manage and implement neighborhood projects (30 percent).

What is the Primary Role of Your Organization?

None
3%

Make Decisions
about How City
Funds are
Allocated
3%

Don't Know
6%

Manage &
Implement
Neighborhood
Projects
30%

Help 2-way
Communication
between
Neighborhood &
City
37%

Advise City
Depts. or City
Processes
21%
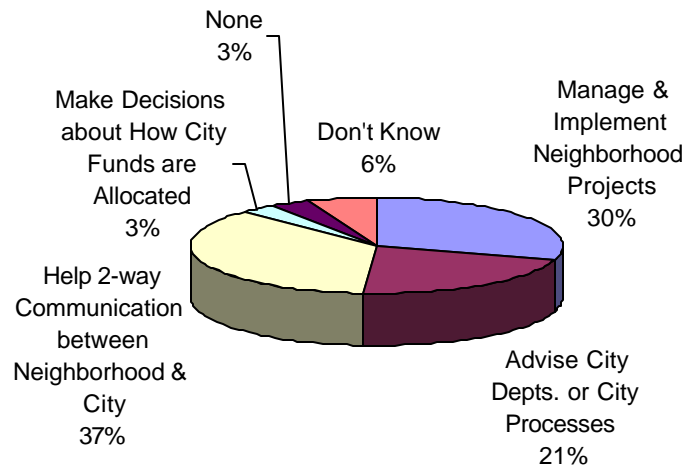
Base = Current Particpants

Function and Purpose

Neighborhood planning was the primary function of the largest share of groups and organizations (24 percent); other groups charters included representing/promoting the community (11 percent), creating awareness of community issues (9 percent), and improving the quality of life within the community (9 percent)[7].

What is the Primary Function/Purpose of Your Group?

Category	Percent
Neighborhood Planning	24%
Represent the community/Promoting the area	11%
Make community aware of what is happening w/in community	9%
Improve quality of life	9%
Park advocacy/preservation	8%
Identify most important urban village issues	4%
Social services to poor and homeless	3%
Other	19%
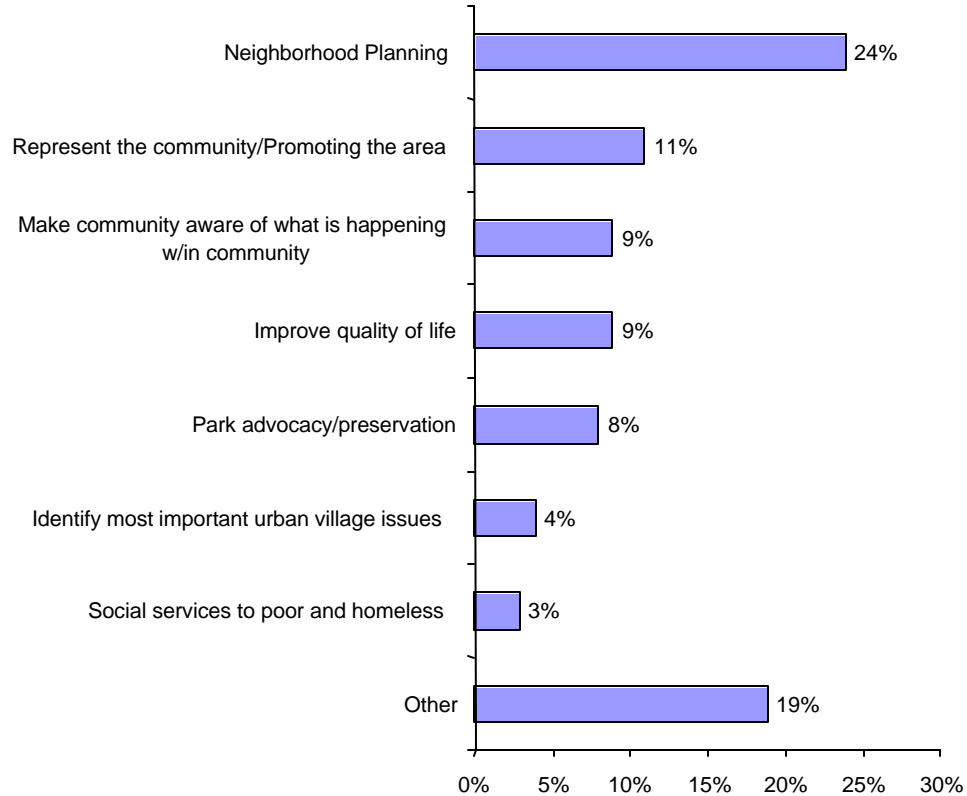
Base = Telephone survey respondents who are current participations

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[7] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

Activities

Neighborhood planning and stewardship projects represented the largest share of group activities (33 percent)[8]. Other activities included community outreach and the dissemination of information (16 percent), and park improvement and advocacy (8 percent).

What Activities Are Undertaken or Sponsored by the Group?

Activity	Percent
Neighborhood planning and stewardship projects	33%
Outreach and communicating information	16%
Charity/Fundraising	11%
Park improvement and advocacy	8%
Working with City Council/Staff	8%
Transportation improvement	7%
Community Events	6%
Other	27%
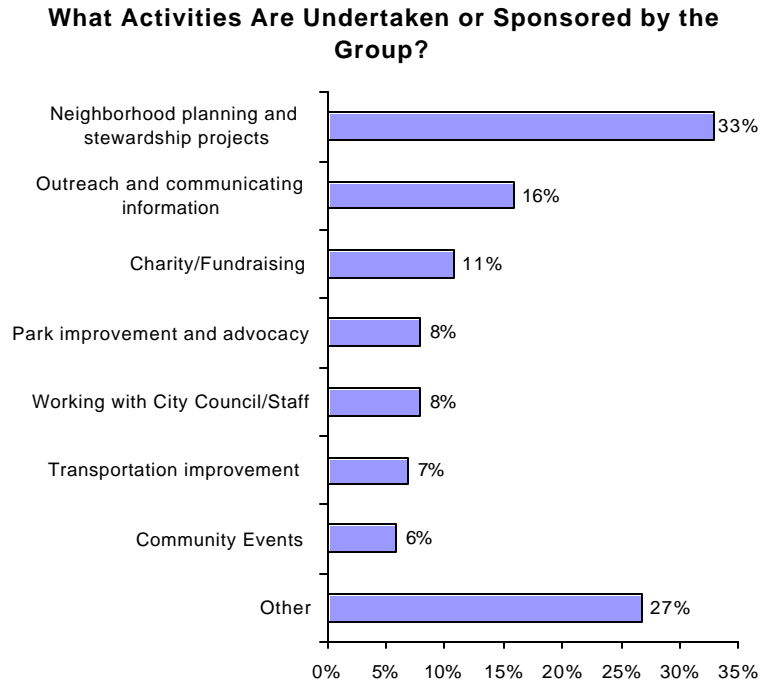
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

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[8] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

Funding

Neighborhood groups receive their funding from three primary sources: grants, which included Neighborhood Matching Funds and Small & Simple grants, (35 percent), City funding (33 percent), and membership dues (32 percent).

How Does Your Group Finance Its Activities?

Category	Percent
Grants	35%
Funding from the City	33%
Membership dues	32%
Fundraising activities	19%
Private funding/donations	17%
Funding from other gov't agencies	14%
Funding from other non-profits	5%
Other	1%
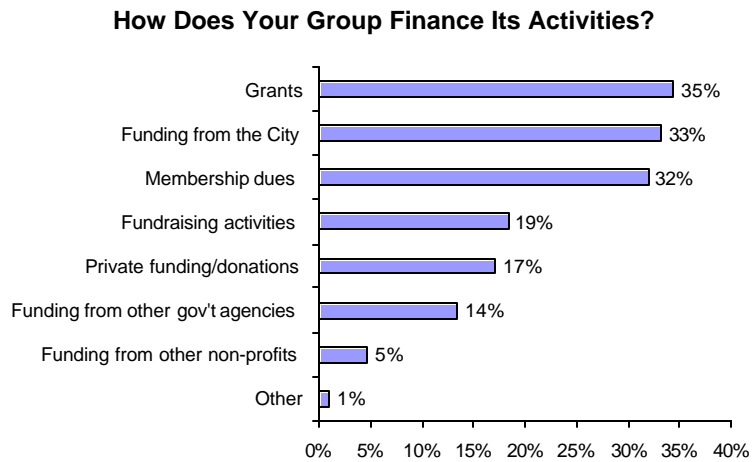
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents (n=81)

How Decisions Are Made

Most of the groups use a combination of consensus and majority (54 percent). According to individuals who participated in focus groups and in-depth interviews, these groups try to reach a consensus on most issues. If a consensus cannot be reached, the group resorts to a majority vote.

About equal numbers of groups use consensus only (19 percent) or majority vote (17 percent) only.

How Are Decisions Made by Your Organization?

Other 4%
Don't Know 6%
Majority Vote 17%
Combination of Majority V Consensus 54%
Consensus 19%
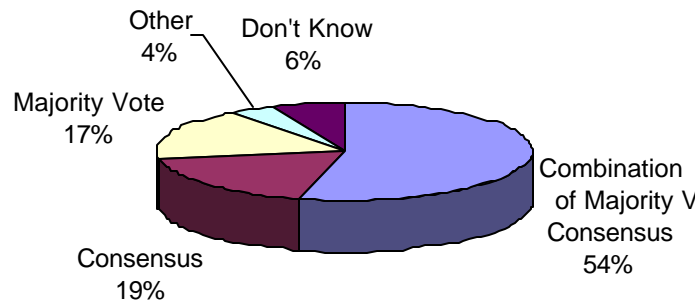
Base = Current Participants (n=419)

What Happens When Conflicting Opinions Cannot Be Resolved

Typically, one of two courses of action is taken when conflicting opinions prevent a consensus: 1) a majority rules vote (45 percent); or 2) the issue is tabled for a future discussion or dropped entirely (33 percent). Some groups acknowledge dissenting opinions in their documentation (8 percent).

What Happens When Conflicting Opinions Cannot Be Resolved

Don't Know 14%
Other 8%
A Majority Vote is Taken 45%
The Issue is Tabled or Dropped 33%
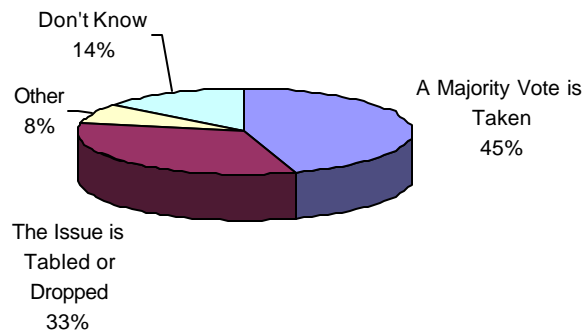
Base = Telephone Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

Effectiveness

In general, group effectiveness rated the equivalent of a C+ or B-. One-fifth of the respondents thought their group had been very effective in rating the outcome of issues. Ten percent rated their group's effectiveness as not very effective.

How Effective Has Your Group Been in Influencing the Issues?

Rating	Percentage
Extremely Effective -10	11%
9	9%
8	17%
7	17%
6	13%
5	11%
4	5%
3	5%
2	5%
Not Effective at All - 1	4%
Don't Know	2%

Top 2 Boxes   20%
Bottom 2 Boxes   9%

Mean = 6.5
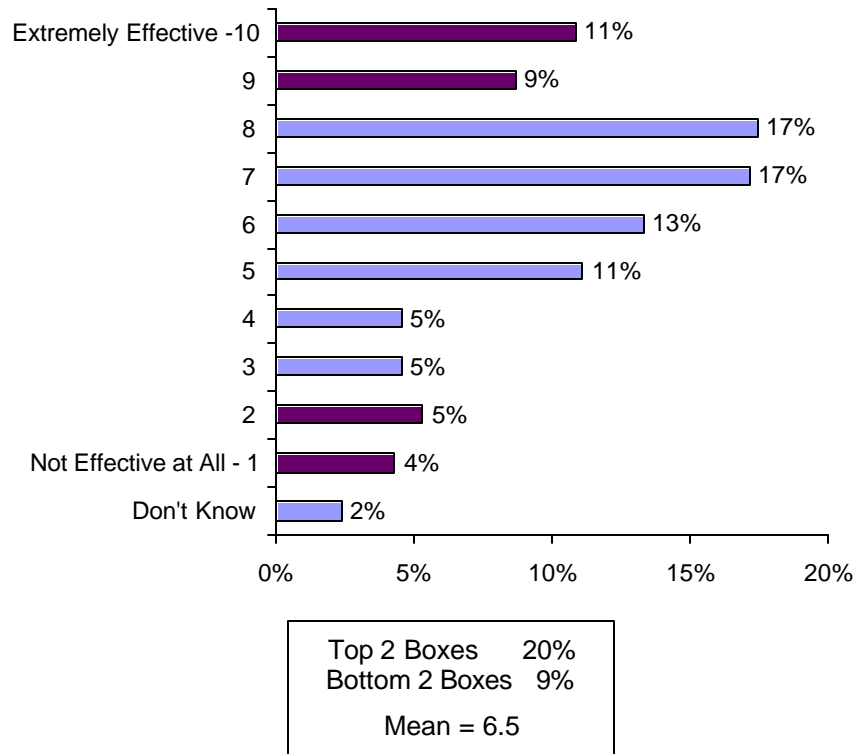
Base = Mail & Telephone Survey Respondents (n=413)

- As might be expected, effectiveness appears to impact how meaningful citizen participation and future involvement.

  Individuals who rated their involvement as "very meaningful" in an earlier question rated their group's effectiveness significantly higher than those respondents who felt their involvement was not very meaningful.

**How Effective Has Your Group Been at
Influencing the Issues?**
Mean Rating

	Mean Rating
Rated Involvement as Very Meaningful	7.0
Rated Involvement as Not Meaningful	5.0

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
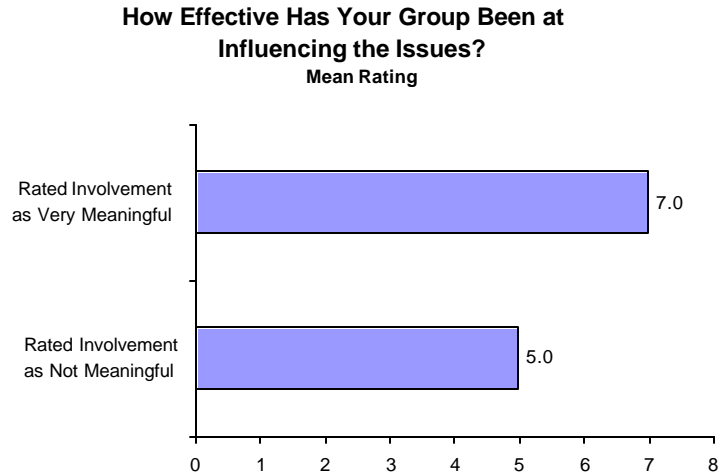
- Similarly, individuals who said that they plan to stay involved rated their group's effectiveness substantially higher than those who will not stay involved.

**How Effective Has Your Group Been at
Influencing the Issues?**
Mean Rating

	Mean Rating
Will Stay Involved	7.9
Will Not Stay Involved	4.0

0 2 4 6 8 10
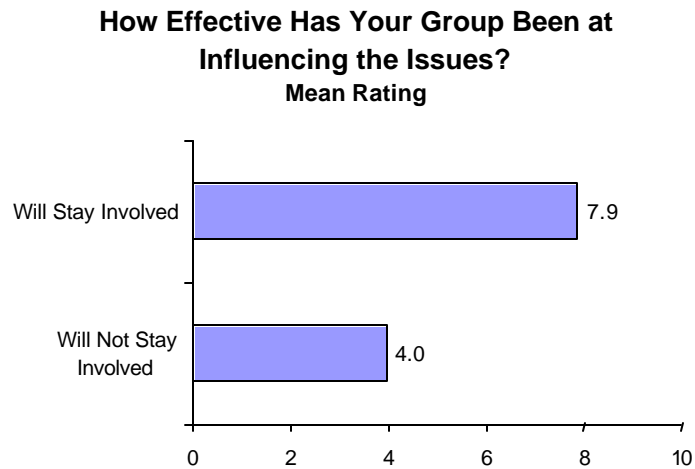
When asked for the reasons behind their ratings, results were the primary reason for a positive response (24 percent)[9,10]

"...Because the city has come into agreement with funding for the neighborhood, 80% of the time."

"...Basically, because over time you establish relationships with key people who can make things happen and being able to get good feedback from people in the neighborhood."

"...With the recent focus on neighborhood planning, the city has opened the door to more cooperative planning between the neighborhood and the city."

A less than positive response did not necessarily mean that respondents felt that their group was ineffective. To some respondents, it means that they are still awaiting the outcome of their efforts (9 percent).

"...It seems like we still have a long way to go, we have managed to get the designation we were after but we still have a long way to go."

"...Because of the long term scope of some of the projects, one is not always able to see the final results and impact because people come and go. Neighborhood planning can be ugly and people tend to back-out."

However, a number of respondents gave a negative rating because their project was not completed or funded, or because the results were less than what they expected.

"...Because we have not gotten everything we wanted."

"...They're working hard on it. You don't accomplish all you want to. You try and try and butt your head against the wall, but they [the City] still do what they want to."

"...Because the development that we were opposed to is being developed as we speak, but we brought an awareness about the value of industrial land. So, there's a benefit from the awareness because it will prevent future development."

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[9] Only telephone survey participants were asked this question.

[10] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

Success

Participation and support by group members and the community at large seem to be the primary ingredients to a successful neighborhood project[11]. Almost one-fourth of the respondents said that having a lot of the community involved was important to the success of their project. Commitment and dedication by group members was mentioned by 14 percent of the respondents and 12 percent felt that awareness and support in the community was important.

What Made a Project Successful

A lot of the community involved	23%
Commitment/dedication of members	14%
Community awareness & support	12%
Project was completed/met goals	9%
Willingness of City officials to listen/support	9%
Reporting back to the community	8%
Strong leadership	6%
No successes	8%
Other	18%
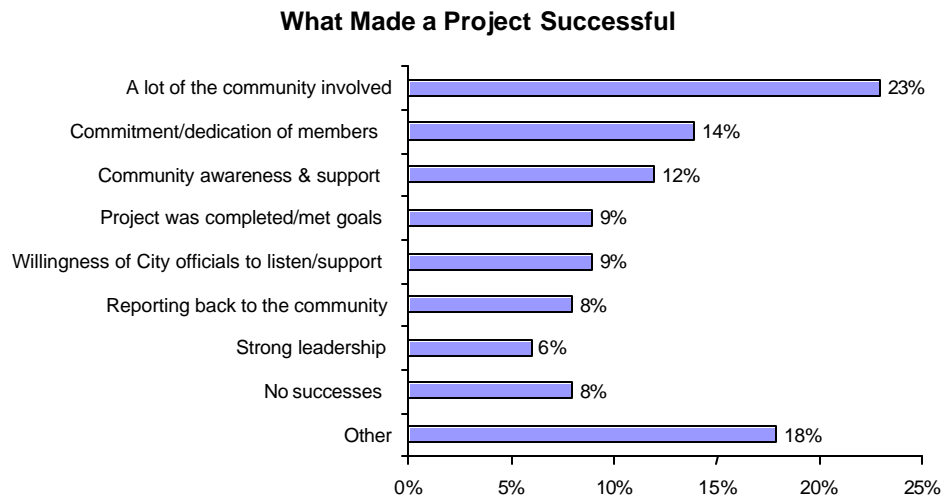
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents (n=90)

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[11] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

Making Groups More Effective

Based on the results of the mail survey and other research conducted concurrently, a list of actions was presented to the telephone survey respondents. The two options which garnered the highest responses were "More and broader involvement by community residents" (69 percent) and "More education about City processes and how to get things done within the City" (57 percent).

Which of These Would Make Your Group More Effective?

Category	Percent
More/broader involvement by community residents	69%
More education about City processes & how to get things done	67%
More publicity about the results the group has achieved	57%
Tools & resources to help in areas like recruiting & retaining volunteers	56%
Having a direct contact person at the City	56%
More involvement by businesses	54%
Clear processes that assure everyone has an equal voice	43%
Training in leadership and meeting management	36%
Other	5%
None	6%

Base = Telephone Survey Respondents (n=90)

- Individuals who rated their involvement as not very meaningful expressed stronger than average preferences for:
    - More and broader involvement by community residents 85%
    - Tools and resources to help recruit and retain volunteers 77%
    - Clear processes to ensure everyone has an equal voice   62%
    - More involvement by businesses   50%

Accountability

Respondents in the telephone survey were asked to whom their groups were accountable. Their answers mirrored the responses of participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews – they are most likely to feel accountable to members within the group and to their neighborhood.

To Whom is the Group Accountable?

Category	Percent
Neighborhood/Community	31%
Other Group Members	31%
City	21%
Other Neighborhood Groups	6%
Other	13%
None	4%
Don't Know	6%
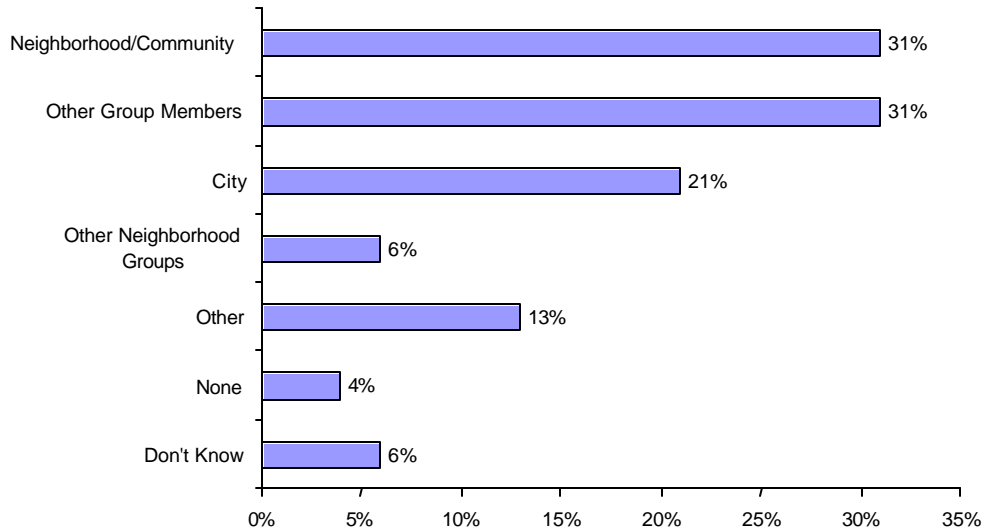
Base = Telephone survey respondents who are current participants (n=90)

- Individuals who are involved in neighborhood planning and stewardship organizations were more likely to say they were accountable to the City (33 percent). However, given that most of these groups have a contractual obligation with the City, this response seems somewhat low.

Giving Everyone a Voice

Seventy-one percent of the telephone respondents said that they feel obligated to solicit opinions from the community and other stakeholders who are not regular participants. This finding was consistent across all of the different neighborhood groups.

When asked how people who do not participate regularly can give input, respondents were most likely to mention "attend meetings" (42 percent), followed by "talking to group members" (29 percent) and "become active"[12]. These responses appear to indicate that respondents feel the responsibility lies with outsiders to reach into the group, rather than the group explicitly reaching out to them.

In What Ways Can People in the Neighborhood that
Don't Regularly Participate Give Input to the Group?
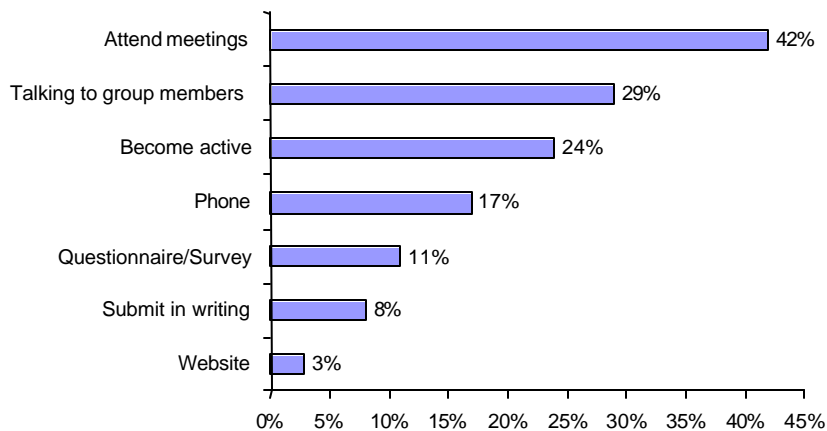
Base = Telephone survey respondents who are current participants (n=90)

When asked if they actually used the information and feedback that they received from individuals who are not regular participants or from the community at-large, more than two-thirds said that they did use it in their decision-making process. Only 11 percent said that they rarely or never used this information.

How Often Is the Information & Feedback Obtained from the
Community Used?
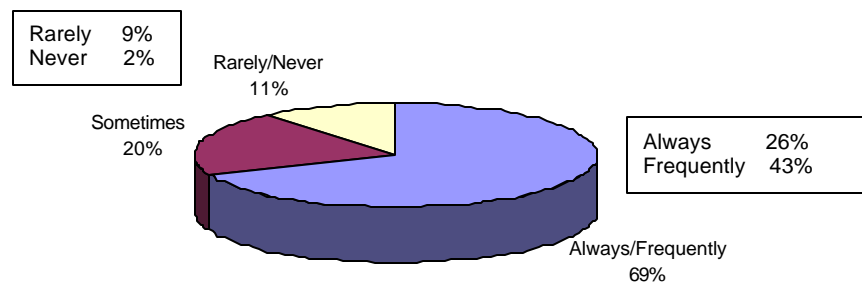
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

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[12] This question was asked on an "open-ended" basis – meaning the respondents were not read a list of pre-coded answers.

Representation

Less than half of the respondents felt that their group is representative of the majority opinion in their neighborhood. Twenty-five percent thought their group represented a minority opinion.

How Representative Is Your Group...?

Don't know
12%

Represent the
Views of
Individual Group
Members
17%

Represent the
Views of the
Majority
46%

Represent the
Views of a
Minority
25%

Represent Views of Almost Everyone	11%
Represent Views of the Majority	35%

Represent Views of a Large Minority	15%
Represent Views of a Small Minority	10%
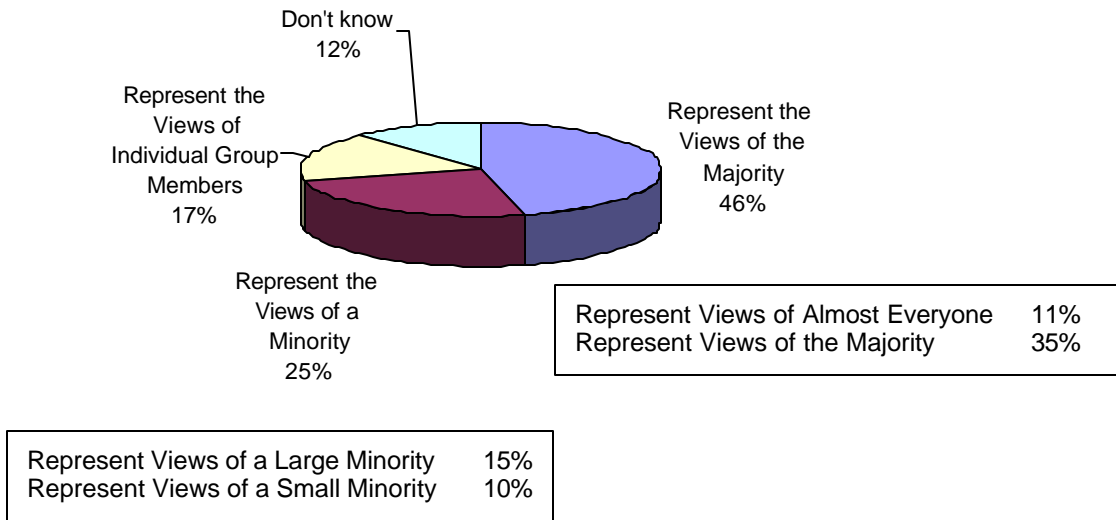
Base = All respondents (n=440)

Activities to Achieve Representation

Respondents from the telephone survey were asked what activities their group undertakes to ensure that it is representative of the neighborhood or community. Nearly all of the respondents said that their group held public meetings (91 percent). Other activities that are undertaken include newsletters (78 percent), personal outreach to neighbors and community members (74 percent), and recruiting new volunteers from all areas of the neighborhood (63 percent).

Which of the Following Activities Does Your Group Do to Insure that It Is Representative of the Neighborhood?

Activity	Percent
Hold public meetings	91%
Send out newsletters	78%
Speak with neighbors & community members personally	74%
Recruit new volunteers from all over the community	63%
Telephone tree to communicate ideas & issues	37%
Neighborhood website	31%
Provide bilingual materials for non-English speakers	21%
Publicize meetings	6%
Other	10%
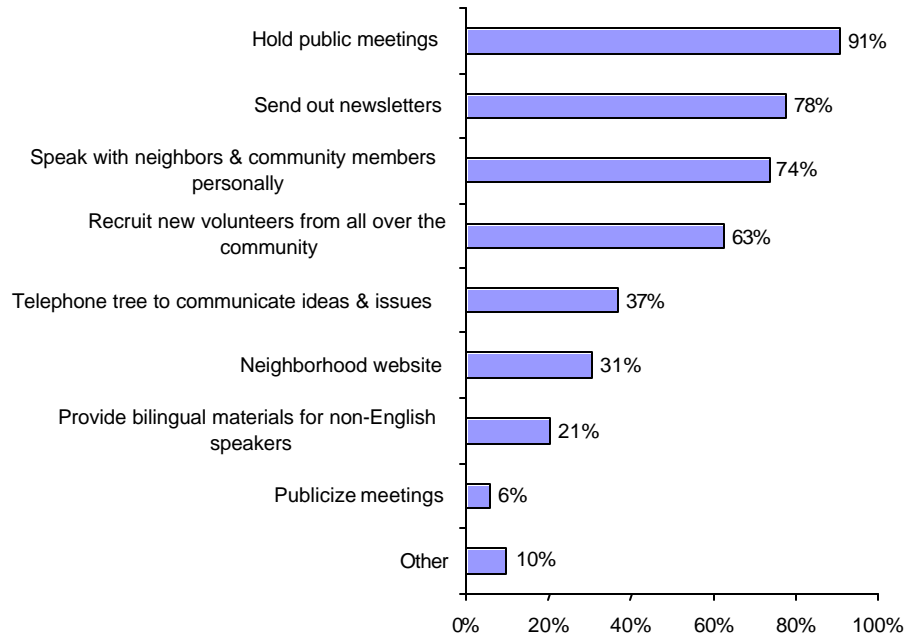
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents (n=90)

Attitudes about Outreach

Recruitment

Three-fourths of the respondents to the mail survey said that the groups to which they belonged actively recruited new members.

Do Your Groups Actively Recruit New Members?
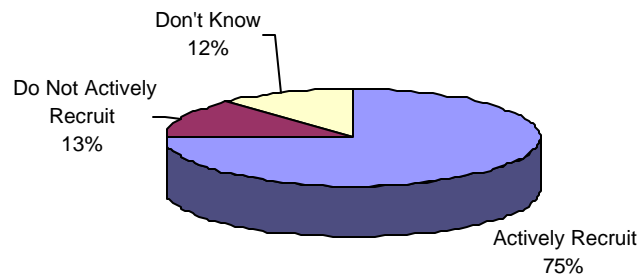
Base = Mail Survey Respondents (n=337)

- Recruitment did not vary significant between the different groups. Members of District Councils and Community Councils (90 percent and 88 percent respectively) were slightly more likely to say their group actively recruited new participants than member of Block Watches (75 percent). Eighty percent of the respondents involved in neighborhood planning said that their groups actively recruit new members.

How New Members Are Recruited

The methods used to recruit new members remain substantially low-tech. Personal invitations were the methodology named most often by respondents (86 percent). Almost two-thirds of the respondents said that their group used public meetings as a recruitment tools.

Only one-fourth of the respondents said that their groups used e-mail to recruit new members; 19 percent said that their neighborhood website was used to attract new members.

How Does Your Group Recruit New Members?

Method	Percent
Personally ask friends & neighbors	86%
Public meetings	65%
Flyers & posters	54%
Newsletter	48%
Notices in neighborhood newspapers	44%
E-mail	28%
Neighborhood website	19%
Telephone tree	19%
Other	3%
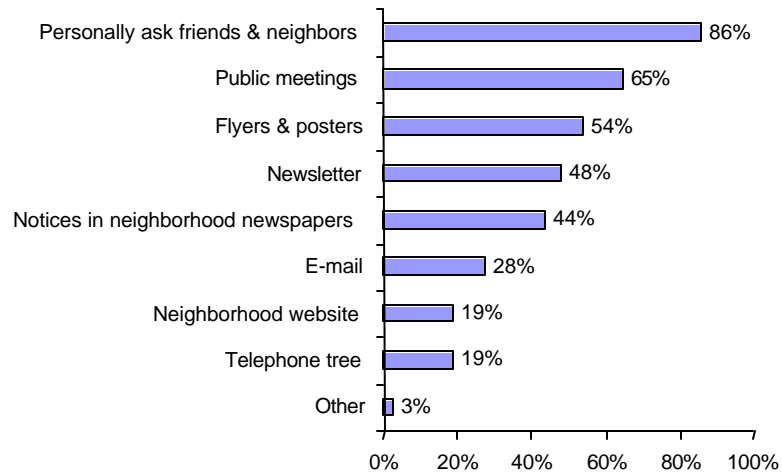
Base = Mail Survey Respondents Whose Groups Actively Recruit New Members (n=272)

- Word of mouth is the most effective recruitment tool, according to respondents. Forty-three percent of the respondents gave this answer when asked which method was the best way to attract new members.

Communicating Information

Respondents find out about upcoming changes, events, and issues that affect their neighborhood from a variety of sources. The most frequently mentioned included: "community-based newsletters (57 percent), "newspaper" (54 percent), and "City newsletters" (49 percent).

**How Do You Find Out About Upcoming Changes,
Events & Issues that Affect Your Neighborhood?**

Source	Percent
Community-based newsletter	57%
The newspaper	54%
City newsletters	49%
Friends, neighbors or co-workers	46%
Other group members	35%
Television/radio	28%
E-mail/Internet	26%
Mail/flyers	6%
City	5%
Neighborhood groups/meetings	4%
Other	6%
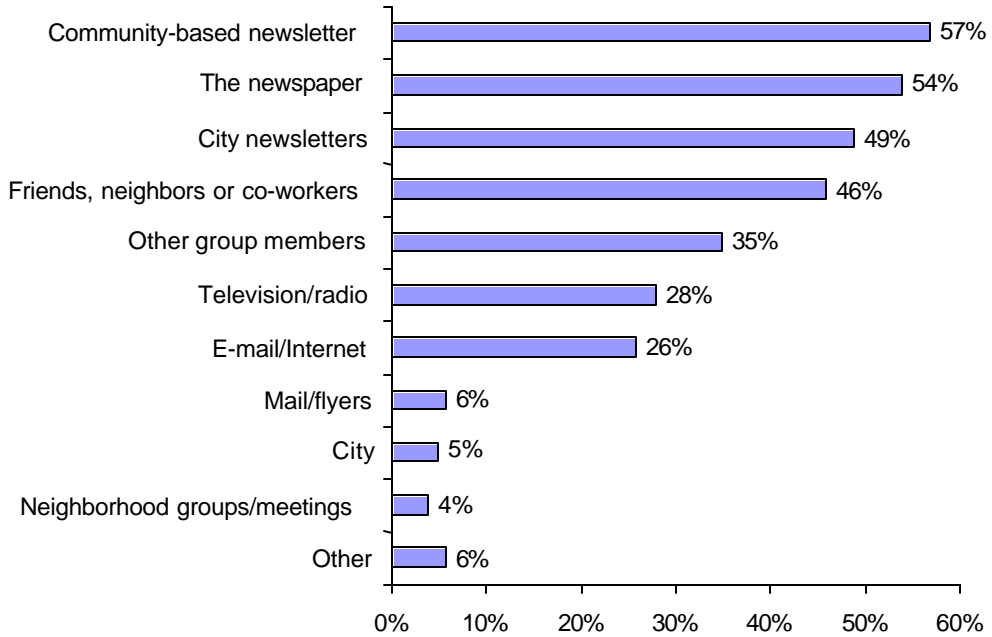
Base = Telephone Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

Attitudes about the City

Working with the City

Three-fourths of the current participants in the telephone survey said that they worked with a specific contact person at the City.

Does Your Group Work with a Specific Contact Person at the City?
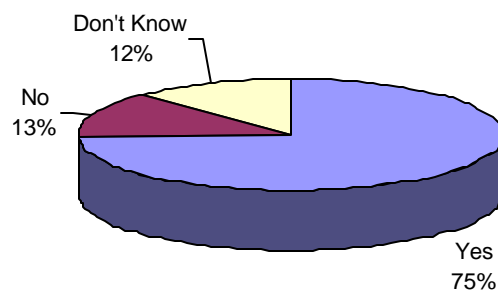
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Respondents (n=90)

When asked if they thought working directly with a specific City person or department made them more effective, almost three-fourths said that they felt it did enhance their group's effectiveness.

Grassroots Groups

According to current participants, groups that are supported by the City are more effective at influencing the outcome of issues than groups that are not. About one-fourth of the respondents said that they were *much more* effective; slightly more than one-fourth said they were *somewhat more* effective.

Only 16 percent felt they were less effective than groups that were not supported by the City.

Are Groups That Are Established or Funded by the City...
More Effective in Influencing the Outcome of Issues than
Grassroots Groups That Are Not?
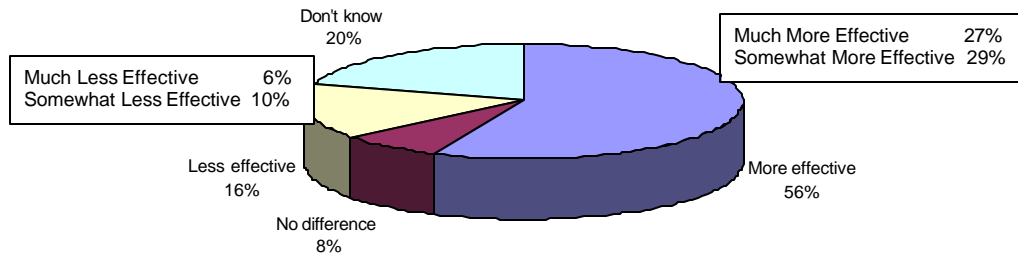
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

City Responsiveness

Respondents gave the City fairly good marks for listening and reacting to issues raised by their group. More than half of the respondents said that the City "always" or "frequently" reacted to their issues (53 percent). None of the respondents chose the "never" response.

Does the City Listen & React to Issues Raised by the Group?

Rarely
9%

Always
9%

Sometimes
38%

Frequently
44%
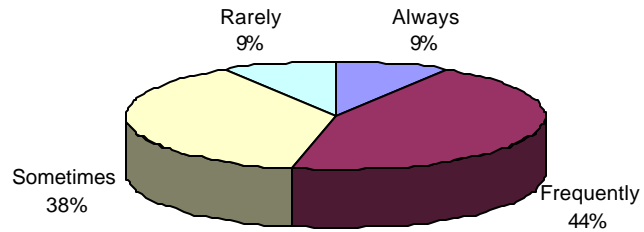
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

Respondents were also asked to rate the City on their responsiveness to requests for information and assistance. The majority of respondents rated the City a '7' or better. None of the respondents gave a rating of '1'.

How Responsive Has the City Been When the Group Requests Information or Assistance?

Rating	Percent
Extremely Responsive (10)	8%
(9)	7%
(8)	27%
(7)	18%
(6)	11%
(5)	14%
(4)	4%
(3)	1%
(2)	3%
Not Responsive at All (1)	

Top 2 Boxes   15%
Bottom 2 Boxes 3%

Mean = 6.9
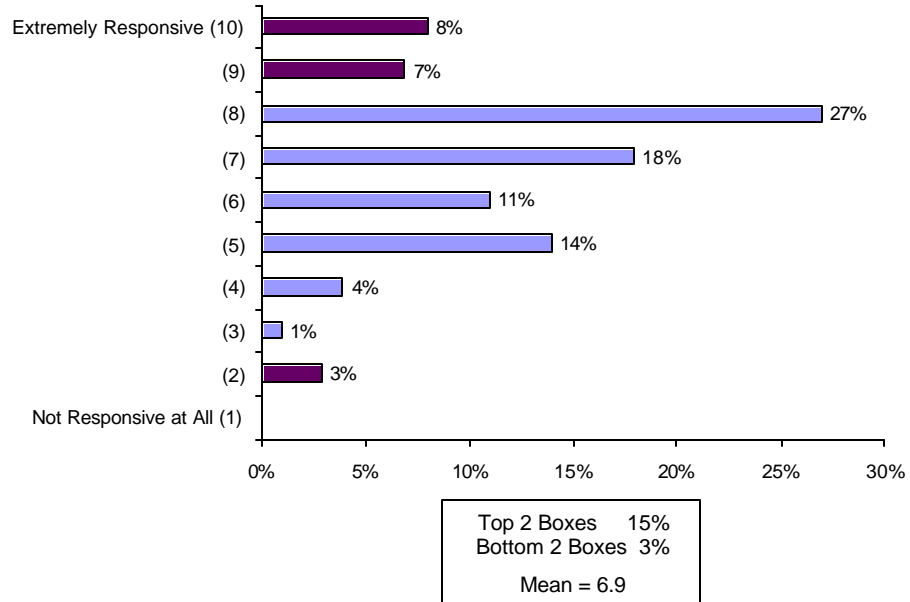
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Participants (n=90)

In the last measure of responsiveness, respondents were asked about the adequacy of the resources and assistance that the provided to their group.

While relatively few individuals felt that the City was overly generous and provided more than what they needed (6 percent), most seemed to feel that the City gave them most or all of what they needed (56 percent).

How Would You Rate the Adequacy of the Resources & Assistance Provided by the City?
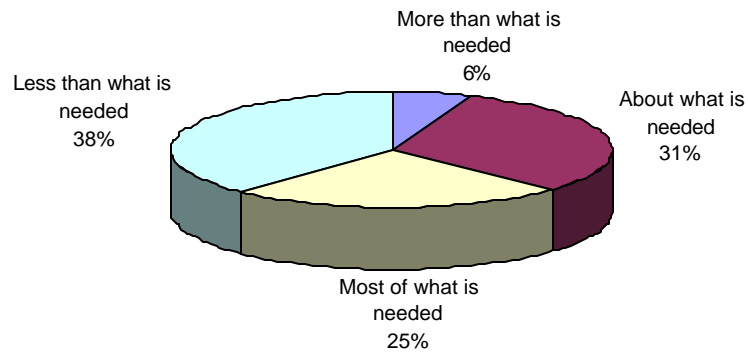
Base = Telephone Survey Respondents Who Are Current Participants & Able to Rate (n=84)

Respondent Profile

Regarding Sample Characteristics

Surveys reflect the characteristics of the sample from which they are drawn. The samples for the mail and telephone surveys were drawn from lists provided by the Department of Neighborhoods, DCLU, Neighborhood Planning Office, and the Seattle Planning Commission. Because these lists draw heavily from current and past participants in neighborhood planning, and other City-sponsored activities, they are not necessarily reflective or representative of the population at large for Seattle. Rather, they reflect demographics of these lists and the activities they represent.

Each table presents the demographic data from the surveys, plus similar demographic cohorts for the City of Seattle from the 1990 US Census, 1998 US Census estimates, or estimates from the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). Updates and current estimates to the 1990 US Census have been used where available. However, the US Census data are nearly ten years old and, because Seattle has experienced substantial population growth in the last decade, the numbers and proportions have probably shifted significantly.

Gender

Although the data appear to suggest that the samples for this study is slightly more male than the Seattle population as whole, no statistically meaningful difference exists between the three samples.

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1998 Census Update
Men	52%	53%	49%
Women	48	47	51

Marital Status

Participants in the telephone survey are more likely to be married than the average Seattleite.

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1990 Census
Married	n.a.	60%	40%
Single/Divorced/Widowed	n.a.	40	60

Age

The individuals who participated in one or the other of these two surveys are significantly older than the general population of Seattle. Past and current participants in local government issues are heavily concentrated in the 45 to 64 age group.

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1990 Census
Under 25 years	1%	1%	11%

25 - 34 years	6	2	22
35 - 44 years	21	21	24
45 - 54	33	34	16
55 - 64	20	24	8
65 & older	18	15	15
Median Age[13]	*51 years*	*52 years*	*41 years*

Children Living at Home

Survey respondents were no more or less likely to have children living at home than the Seattle population at large.

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1990 Census
Kids at home	22%	27%	24%
No kids at home	78	73	76

Household Income

Respondents from both surveys are more affluent than households in the general Seattle population. Using the median household income from the mail survey as a more conservative estimate, the household income of current and past participants in local government activities is about 40 percent higher than that of a typical Seattle household.

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1997 PSRC Estimate
Under $15,000	5%	4%	14%
$15,000 - $30,000	15	10	18
$30,000 - $50,000	28	19	22
$50,000 - $75,000	24	18	20
More than $75,000	33	26	26
Median Income[13]	*$50,833*	*$59,444*	*$38,181*

Home Ownership

In the City of Seattle, less than half of the population owns their home; in contrast, homeowners outnumbered renters by nearly 6 to 1 in these two surveys. This finding might be attributed to a bias in the sample material. Individuals who were involved in Seattle's neighborhood planning projects made up a substantial portion of the sample used for these two surveys. Individual interviews with key activists in neighborhood planning indicated that neighborhood-planning groups had difficulty in recruiting renters as participants in neighborhood planning activities. Others – some consultants and

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[13] The median is the point in the survey where 50 percent of the respondents fall and 50 percent fall below.

NPO staff – attributed the lack of participation by renters to a general bias by Seattle government that favors the involvement of homeowners.

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1990 Census
Own	85%	86%	49%
Rent	15	14	51

Ethnicity

Involvement in local government activities by members of non-white ethnic minorities was significantly less than what would have been expected from the ethnic composition of Seattle's population.

Personal interviews with individuals who are either members of a non-white ethnic group or work closely with them indicate a number of factors that may explain this finding:

- Members of established minority communities may be disenfranchised from the community as a whole because of past discrimination and prejudices

- Members of minority communities may participate in neighborhood institutions that the larger white population does not – such as mosques or churches that target their specific ethnic group

- About 12 percent of Seattle's minority community are not proficient at speaking English. The expense of hiring translators for meetings and translating newsletters and other written neighborhood communications is beyond the means of many neighborhood groups

- Newly arrived immigrants from non-democratic third-world countries may be suspicious of any government activities

	Mail Survey	Telephone Survey	1998 Census Estimate
White/Caucasian	87%	84%	74%
African-American	2	1	10
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	4	1	14
Hispanic	1	2	3
Bi-racial/Multi-racial[14]	4	2	n.a.

Geography

Participant was highest in the Northeast sector of the City. The differences between the other sectors were not statistically meaningful.

	Mail		Telephone	
	%	Count	%	Count
NE	27%	85	27%	24

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[14] The US Census Bureau did not count bi-racial or multi-racial as a separate category in 1990

NW	11%	35	10%	9
E	16%	51	16%	14
W	16%	52	9%	8
SE	12%	38	9%	8
SW	17%	54	28%	25

Appendix I

Mail Survey Questionnaire

City of Seattle Citizen Participation Survey

Seattle Planning Commission

August 2, 1999

Dear Fellow Citizen:

We need your help!

The City of Seattle's Planning Commission is currently evaluating citizen partici-
pation in local government issues and activities such as Neighborhood Planning,
Block Watch, Parks Advisory Councils, District Councils, etc. The results will
help the City identify the best ways to keep citizens like you involved in issues
that directly affect you and your neighborhood.

Your input is very valuable to this evaluation. Please help us out by filling out the
attached questionnaire and mailing it to the following address:

> Seattle Planning Commission
> c/o Marketworks
> 3447 33rd Avenue W.
> Seattle, WA 98199-1601

We look forward to hearing from you. If you are interested in the results of the
survey, please call Geylar West at (206)684-0433. Thank you for your help.

Yours truly,

Marty Curry	Richard Conlin
Director, Seattle Planning Commission	Seattle City Council

Please answer the questions as directed on the survey. After you have completed the survey,
please fold the questionnaire so the return mailing address is visible and mail it to the above ad-
dress. Thank you for participating!

1. Which of these organizations are you **currently**
involved in:
For "other", please list the activities.

☐ 1 Block Watch
☐ 2 Community Council
☐ 3 District Council
☐ 4 Local Business Association (Cham-
ber/BIA/Merchant's Association)
☐ 5 Neighborhood Planning or Stewardship
☐ 6 Precinct Advisory or Crime Prevention Council
☐ 7 Recreation Center Advisory Council
☐ 8 Watershed Advisory Council
Other _____
☐ 0 None

2. Of the organizations that you circled in Question 1, in which **ONE** are you most active?

   Please circle one answer only.

   ! 1   Block Watch
   ! 2   Community Council
   ! 3   District Council
   ! 4   Local Business Association (Chamber/BIA/Merchant's Association)
   ! 5   Neighborhood Planning or Stewardship
   ! 6   Precinct Advisory or Crime Prevention Council
   ! 7   Recreation Center Advisory Council
   ! 8   Watershed Advisory Council
   Other _____
   ! 0   None

3a. If you are or have been involved in one or more of the activities listed in Question 1, do you feel your involvement has had a meaningful impact on your neighborhood or the community as a whole?

   ! 1   Yes
   ! 2   No
   ! 99   Not Sure

  b. What made your involvement **meaningful**? *Please answer as completely and fully as possible.*

   _____
   _____
   _____

  c. What would make your involvement **meaningful** and have **more impact** on your neighborhood and/or community? *Please answer as completely and fully as possible.*

   _____
   _____
   _____

For Questions 4 – 7, please answer just for the organization in which you are most active:

4. In general, has your group been **effective in influencing** the outcome of important issues and projects in your neighborhood?

   Not Effective   Extremely
   At All   Effective
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

5. What is the **primary** role of your organization in working with local government: *Please check one answer only.*

   ! 1   Manage & implement neighborhood projects
   ! 2   Advise City departments or City processes
   ! 3   Make decisions about how City funds are allocated
   ! 4   Help two-way communication between the neighborhood and City on local government issues
   ! 99   Don't know

6. How are decisions made by your organization: *Please check one answer only. For "other", please describe how your group*

   ! 1   Formal vote
   ! 2   Consensus
   ! 3   Combination of vote & consensus

makes decisions.

Other _____

! 99 Don't know

7a. Do the neighborhood groups that you are involved with actively recruit new members and volunteers?

! 1 Yes
! 2 No
! 99 Not Sure

b. If you answered "Yes", how do you and other group members recruit new volunteers or get people involved? *Please check all that apply. For "other", please list the activities.*

! 1 Ask friends & neighbors personally
! 2 Flyers and posters
! 3 Notices in neighborhood newspapers
! 4 Telephone tree
! 5 Public meetings
! 6 Newsletter
! 7 E-mail
! 8 Neighborhood website
Other _____
! 99 Not Sure

c. Which **ONE** of these has been **most effective** in getting people involved and actively participating in issues that affect your neighborhood and the city as a whole? *Please check one answer only.*

! 1 Ask friends & neighbors personally
! 2 Flyers and posters
! 3 Notices in neighborhood newspapers
! 4 Telephone tree
! 5 Public meetings
! 6 Newsletter
! 7 E-mail
! 8 Neighborhood website
Other _____
! 99 Not Sure

8. In your opinion, are the organizations that represent **your neighborhood** in local government activities **representative** of the views and opinions of **all** of the **different** stakeholders in the neighborhood?

Please check one answer only.

! 1 They represent the view of **almost everyone** in our neighborhood
! 2 They represent the **majority** view in our neighborhood
! 3 They represent a **large minority** view in our neighborhood
! 4 They represent a **small minority** view in our neighborhood
! 5 They represent the **views of individual group members**
! 99 Not Sure

9. Thinking about participating in local government activities and issues over the past several years, would you say that: *Please check one answer only.*

! 1 It is much easier to get involved today
! 2 It is somewhat easier to get involved today
! 3 It's about the same
! 4 It is somewhat more difficult to get involved today
! 5 It is much more difficult to get involved today
! 99 Don't know

10a. Thinking about your future involvement in local government activities, would you say that you: *Please check one answer only.*

! 1 Definitely plan to stay involved
! 2 Will probably stay involved
! 3 Will probably not stay involved

! 4   Definitely not be involved

! 5   Depends on the issue

! 6   Not currently involved

! 99   Undecided at this time

10b. If you do not think you will stay in-
volved, why is that? *Please check all
that apply:*

☐ 1 Meeting times & locations not convenient

☐ 2 Too many family/work commitments

☐ 3 Meetings poorly organized/not productive

☐ 4 Group no longer represents my views/interests

☐ 5 Issue resolved/no longer relevant

☐ 6 Group dominated by a few individuals/special interests

Other _____

The next few questions are for classification purposes only:

11. Do you live in a house, apartment or condominium?

☐ 1 House   ☐ 1 Own
☐ 2 Apartment   ☐ 2 Rent
☐ 3 Condominium

12. Which neighborhood do you live in?   _____

13. Are you: ☐ 1 Male   ☐ 2 Female

14. Do you currently have children under 18 living at home?   ☐ 1 Yes   ☐ 2 No

15. Which of these
best describes
your age group:

☐ 1 Under 25   ☐ 5 55 to 64
☐ 2 25 to 34   ☐ 6 65 to 74
☐ 3 35 to 44   ☐ 7 75 or older
☐ 4 45 to 54

16. *(Optional)* What is
your annual household
income?

☐ 1 Under $15,000
☐ 2 $15,000-$29,99
☐ 3 $30,000-$49,99
☐ 4 $50,000-$74,99
☐ 4 $75,000 or mor

17. *(Optional)* What is your ethnicity?

☐ 1 African   ☐ 5 Caucasian
☐ 2 African-American ☐ 6 Hispanic
☐ 3 American Indian ☐ 7 Bi-racial or multi-racial
☐ 4 Asian   Other _____

Please fold here

Seattle Planning Commission
City of Seattle
Municipal Building #300
Seattle, WA 98104

Please affi
stamp
here

Seattle Planning Commission
c/o Marketworks
3447 33rd Avenue W.
Seattle, WA 98199-1601

Appendix II

Mail Survey Questionnaire

Citizen Participation Study
Telephone Survey

Good morning/afternoon/evening, may I speak with _____? [INSERT NAME FROM SAMPLE]

IF NO LONGER AT NUMBER, PLEASE TERMINATE.

Hello, my name is _____ from Pacific Marketing Research. We are conducting a study for the City of Seattle to better understand citizen participation in local government issues. Do you some time now?

IF NOT AVAILABLE BUT WANTS TO PARTICIPATE, ARRANGE CALLBACK:
DAY:_____   TIME: _____

IF ASKED: The survey will take about 15 minutes.

Yes	1	[CONTINUE]
No/Refused	2	[THANK & TERMINATE]

1a.   What groups that deal with local government issues or activities are you <u>currently</u> involved with? These may focus just on your neighborhood or the city as a whole. **DO NOT** READ LIST. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY. PROBE UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Any others?

Block Watch	1
Community Council	2
District Council	3
Local Business Association (Chamber/BIA/Merchant's Association)	4
Neighborhood Planning or Stewardship	5
Precinct Advisory or Crime Prevention Council	6
Recreation Center Advisory Council	7
Watershed Advisory Council	8
Other [SPECIFY]_____	
None	9

 b.   ASK IF Q.1a=9: Have you participated in any of these groups in the past?

Yes	1
No/Refused	2

 c.   ASK IF Q.1b=1: Which groups were these? **DO NOT** READ LIST. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

Block Watch	1

Community Council	2
District Council	3
Local Business Association (Chamber/BIA/Merchant's Association)	4
Neighborhood Planning or Stewardship	5
Precinct Advisory or Crime Prevention Council	6
Recreation Center Advisory Council	7
Watershed Advisory Council	8
Other [SPECIFY]_____	

d.   ASK IF Q.1a=9 and Q.1b=1: Why don't you currently participate in these groups? **DO NOT** READ LIST. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

Meeting times & locations not convenient	1
Too many meetings	2
Too many family/work commitments	3
Meetings poorly organized/not productive	4
Groups don't represents my views/interests	5
No issues/Issues aren't relevant to me or my family	6
Group dominated by a few individuals/special interests	7
Groups can't change anything/not effective	8
The City doesn't listen	9
Other [SPECIFY]_____	

2a.   ASK IF Q.1b≠2: Do you that feel your group's involvement has had a meaningful impact on your neighborhood or the community as a whole?

Yes	1
No	2
Not Sure/Don't Know	99

b.   ASK IF Q.1b≠2: In general, how **personally meaningful** has your involvement been? We'll use a scale from 1 to 10 where a 10 means extremely meaningful and a rating of 1 means not meaningful at all.

Not Meaningful At All									Extremely Meaningful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

c.   ASK IF Q.1b≠2: Why did you say that? CLARIFY AND PROBE UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE.

3a.   How do you find out about upcoming changes, events, or issues that affect your neighborhood? READ LIST & CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

From other group members	1

From City newsletters	2
From the newspaper	3
From friends, neighbors, or co-workers	4
From E-mail or the Internet	5
From television and/or radio	6
From community-based newsletters	7
Or somewhere else (SPECIFY)_____	

b. Of these, which one is your **primary** source of information about upcoming changes, events, or issues that affect your neighborhood? READ LIST OF THOSE NAMED IN Q.3B IF NECESSEARY. CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY.

From other group members	1
From City newsletters	2
From the newspaper	3
From friends, neighbors, or co-workers	4
From E-mail or the Internet	5
From television and/or radio	6
From community-based newsletters	7
Or somewhere else (SPECIFY)_____	

IF Q.1a=9, GOTO Q.18a

4a. For the next several questions, I'd like you to answer the questions with respect to the group or organization that you are **most** involved with at the present time.   Which group are you most involved with?   **DO NOT** READ LIST. CIRCLE **ONE ANSWER** <u>ONLY</u>.

Block Watch	1
Community Council	2
District Council	3
Local Business Association (Chamber/BIA/Merchant's Association)	4
Neighborhood Planning or Stewardship	5
Precinct Advisory or Crime Prevention Council	6
Recreation Center Advisory Council	7
Watershed Advisory Council	8
Other [SPECIFY]_____	

b. What is the **primary** function or purpose of _____ [INSERT FROM Q.4A]. PROBE & CLARIFY ANSWER.

c. What activities are undertaken or sponsored by the group? CLARIFY & PROBE UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Anything else?

d. Is the group sponsored by the City or have an established relationship with them?

Yes	1
No	2

e. How does your group finance its activities? DO NOT READ LIST. CLARIFY & PROBE UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Any other sources? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

Receives funding from the City of Seattle	1
Receives funding from King County	2
Receives funding from the State of Washington	3
Receives funding from other government agency	4
Grants	5
Receives funding from non-profit agencies	6
Fundraising activities	7
Membership dues	8
Private funding	9
Other [SPECIFY_____	

f. Thinking about a project that was successful for your group, can you tell me what made it a success? PROBE & CLARIFY UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Anything else?

5. What is the **primary** role of your organization in working with local government: READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY

Manage & implement neighborhood projects	1
Advise City departments or City processes	2
Make decisions about how City funds are allocated	3
Assure or assist in effective two-way communication between the neighborhood and City on local government or neighborhood issues that affect your neighborhood	4

6a. In general, has your group been **effective in influencing** the outcome of important issues and projects in your neighborhood and the City? We'll use a scale from 1 to 10, where a rating of 10 means that it is extremely effective and a rating of 1 means it's not effective at all.

Not Effective At All									Extremely Effective
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

b. Why did you say that?

c. Which of the following would make groups like yours more **effective in influencing** the outcome of important issues and projects in your neighborhood and the City? READ LIST & CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY:

ROTATE ORDER

Training in leadership and meeting management to make meetings more productive or effective	1
Having a contact person at the City to communicate with directly	2
Clear procedures that assure everyone has an equal voice and expression of all opinions is encouraged and respected	3
More publicity about the results the group has achieved or their impact on the community	4
More involvement by businesses within the community	5
More and broader involvement by residents who live in the community	6
Tools and resources to help in areas such as recruiting and retaining new volunteers, communicating to the community, and working with other neighborhood groups	7
More education about City processes and how to get thing done within the City	8
[DO NOT READ] Other [SPECIFY]_____	

7. In your opinion, how representative is your groups in representing the views and opinions of **all** of the **different** stakeholders in the neighborhood? READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY.

They represent the view of **almost everyone** in our neighborhood	1
They represent the views of the **majority** in our neighborhood	2
They represent the views of a **large minority** in our neighborhood	3
They represent the views of a **small minority** in our neighborhood	4
They represent the **views of individual group members,** not necessarily those of the larger neighborhood	5
Don't know/Not sure	99

8. Which of the following activities does your group do to make sure that it is representative of your neighborhood or community, including those who don't regularly participate. READ LIST. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY. PROBE: Anything else?

ROTATE ORDER

Send out newsletters	1
Speak with neighbors and community members personally	2
Recruit new volunteers from all over the community	3
Telephone tree to communicate ideas and issues	4
Hold public meetings	5
Neighborhood website	6
Provide bilingual flyers and other materials for non-English speaking residents	7
[DO NOT READ] None/Don't do any specific activities	8
Other [SPECIFY]_____	

9a. How does your group make decisions? Is it: READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY.

Formal or democratic vote   1
Consensus   2
Or a combination of the two   3
[DO NOT READ] Other [SPECIFY]_____

b. What **usually** happens when people disagree and no resolution between conflicting opinions can be reached when a decision must be taken? READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY

A majority vote is taken   1
The issue is dropped   2
The issue is tabled to be discussed again in the future   3
A minority opinion is included in the documentation   4
Other [SPECIFY]_____

10. To whom is the group accountable? DO NOT READ LIST. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY. IF THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE QUESTIONS: In other words, to what individuals, group or other entity is your group required or feel obligated to report back to and consult on the issues?

Other group members/To each other   1
The Community/neighborhood   2
The City   3
To other Neighborhood groups   4
Other [SPECIFY]_____

11a. Do members feel obligated to solicit opinions from the community and other stakeholders who are not regular participants?

Yes   1
No   2

b. In what ways can people in the neighborhood that don't regularly participate give input to the group?

c. How often is the information and feedback obtained from community used in decision-making? READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY

Always   1
Frequently   2
Sometimes   3
Rarely   4
Never   5

12a.   Does your group work with a specific contact person at the City or other municipal agency?

Yes   1
No   2

b.   In your opinion, does working directly with a specific person or department at the City make groups more effective in influencing the outcome of issues?

Yes   1
No   2

c.   In your opinion, are groups that are established or funded by the City such as advisory groups or District Councils usually more effective in influencing the outcome of issues than grass-root groups that receive no funds and are not officially recognized by the City? READ LIST AND CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

They are MUCH MORE effective   1
They are SOMEWHAT MORE effective   2
There's no difference   3
They are SOMEWHAT LESS effective   4
They are MUCH LESS effective   5

13.   Does the City listen and react to issues raised by the group? READ LIST AND CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

Always   1
Frequently   2
Sometimes   3
Rarely   4
Never   5

14.   In general, how responsive has the City been when the group requests information or assistance? We'll use a scale from 1 to 10 where a 10 means extremely responsive and a rating of 1 means not responsive at all.

Not
Responsive   Extremely
At All   Responsive
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

15.   How would you rate the adequacy of the resources and assistance that the City provides to neighborhood oriented groups? Would you say they are: READ LIST AND CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

More than what is needed to do our work   1
About what is needed to do our work   2
Most of what is needed to do our work   3
Less than what is needed to do our work   4

16.   Thinking about your future involvement in local government activities, would you say that you: READ LIST AND CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

    Definitely plan to stay involved   1
    Will probably stay involved   2
    Will probably not stay involved   3
    Definitely not be involved   4
    Depends on the issue   5
    [DO NOT READ] Not currently involved   6
    [DO NOT READ]Undecided at this time/Don't Know   99

17a. ASK IF Q.16=1 or 2:   Why will you stay involved? DO NOT READ LIST. CIRCLE AS MANY AS AP-PLY.   PROBE & CLARIFY UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Any other reasons?

    I can/want to make a difference/contribution to the community   1
    I enjoy working with other members in the community   2
    I want to see changes/improvements in the community   3
    I want to see a specific project completed in the community   4
    I get to meet my neighbors/make friends   5
    I get to know what is happening in my neighborhood   6
    Other [SPECIFY]_____

b.   ASK IF Q.16=3 or 4:   Why don't you think you will stay involved? DO NOT READ LIST. CIRCLE AS MANY AS APPLY. PROBE & CLARIFY UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Any other reasons?

    Meeting times & locations not convenient   1
    Too many meetings   2
    Too many family/work commitments   3
    Meetings poorly organized/not productive   4
    Group no longer represents my views/interests   5
    Issue resolved/no longer relevant   6
    Group dominated by a few individuals/special interests   7
    Burned-out   8
    Nothing ever changes   9
    Too much process or bureaucracy   10
    Other [SPECIFY]_____

17.   Why do you think more people don't participate in local government issues? PROBE UNTIL NON-PRODUCTIVE: Any other reasons?

18a.   In your opinion, which of the following would be most helpful in getting and keeping people in-volved in local government issues: READ LIST & CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY

ROTATE ORDER

A well-defined and easy-to-understand process for meeting City guidelines and specifications   1
Smaller projects that are short-term and have a visible impact within the community   2
Ability to have more impact on issues earlier in the process   3
Small, personal events like block parties so neighbors get know to each other and learn
    about community issues   4
More involvement and visibility of City officials in the neighborhood   5
More resources to publicize events and achievements   6
Better group organization and management of meetings   7
More use of newer technologies like e-mail and the Web for communicating to minimize the num-ber of meetings   8
Better advertising of opportunities to get involved   9
Special outreach efforts to groups like the elderly or non-English speaking individual that have dif-ficulty participating in events and activities   10

The next few questions are for classification purposes only:

19   Do you live in a house, apartment or condominium?

                    House   1
                    Apartment   2
                    Condominium   3

20.   Do you own your own home or rent?

                    Own   1
                    Rent   2

21.   Are you married or single?

                    Married   1
                    Single   2

23.   Do you currently have children under 18 living at home?

                    Yes   1
                    No   2

24.   Are you registered to vote?

                    Yes   1
                    No   2

25.   Which of the following best describes your age? READ LIST. CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

Under 25	1
25 to 34	2
35 to 44	3
45 to 54	4
55 to 64	5
65 to 74	6
75 or older	7

26.   In which neighborhood do you live? _____

The next two questions are optional. They are intended to help us make sure that we include a wide range of citizens in this survey. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and not in any way associated with you personally.

27.   Which of the following best describes your total annual household income? READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

Under $15,000	1
$15,000-$29,999	2
$30,000-$49,999	3
$50,000-$74,999	4
$75,000-$99,999	5
$100,000 or more	6

28.   What is your ethnicity? DO NOT READ LIST. CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY:

African	1
African-American	2
American Indian	3
Asian-American	4
Caucasian/European/White	5
Hispanic	6
Bi-racial or multi-racial	7
East Indian	8
Middle-Eastern/Arab	9
Other [SPECIFY_____	

Thank you very much for your time.