BUILDING TOGETHER: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO CO-CREATE URBAN LIVING

By Ainsleigh Burelle, Emily Rho, and Farah Joy Basha

CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Acknowledgement

The topic we have chosen to discuss relates to the equitable and sustainable development of Canadian land. As we engage in this conversation, we acknowledge the ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of the land on which we stand and create.

Group Thanks

As we wrap-up three years of OCAD University's Strategic Foresight and Innovation (SFI) Master of Design program, we would like to express our immense gratitude to everyone who has helped us reach the finish line. We would like to first thank our primary advisor, Dr. Nabil Harfoush, for his invaluable guidance, mentorship, and care for his students throughout this journey.

We also want to thank all of the SFI professors who have shared their passion, knowledge, and expertise with us, and who helped to foster an environment of rich collaboration among our cohort.

To our fellow SFI program peers, thank you for always being our collective backbone of support. Your unmatched camaraderie, collaboration, and insightful discussions have enriched our minds, and we would like thank you for it.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to our primary interview and workshop participants, who have been generous with their time and insights. Your input has been invaluable in helping us further probe and understand the details of our thesis topic.
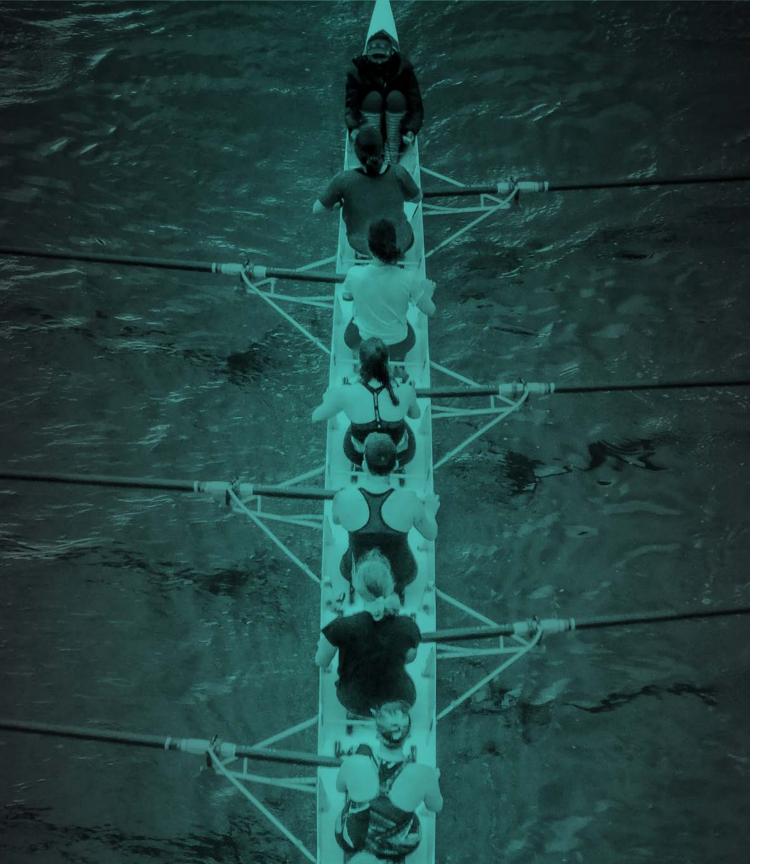
Personal Thanks

Farah Joy Basha
I would like to express my ultimate gratitude to my parents, Khaled Basha and Amira ElFangary, as well as my siblings, Youssef and Saif Basha, for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my learning journey. Thank you for your constant love, support, snacks, and prayers. Your continuous encouragement and belief in me has pushed me to strive for excellence, and I am incredibly grateful for it.

Ainsleigh Burelle
A sincere thank you to the village of supporters in my life. Thank you to my partner Cameron for not only keeping me fed, but also being a constant source of support, play and motivation over these last three years. Thank you to my parents, brothers, and friends who have cheered me on, and to all my peers and colleagues who graciously created the time and space for this journey.

Emily Rho
Thank you to my love Rory for being a constant support and sounding board.

WHO WE ARE

Farah Joy Basha

Education: Bachelor of Design, Industrial Design (OCAD University)
Occupation: Design Research & Service Design Consultant

"Farah" in Arabic means "Joy," and this was the nickname that my parents gave me and continued to address me by. Joy is the name I still use to introduce myself to anyone I meet, up until this day. Little did my family know that this nickname was a great asset to keep and use for the whirlwinds of life that came next.

As a third-culture kid, as coined by the American sociologist Ruth Useem in the 1950s, the name "Farah" was not the easiest to pronounce if said by non-Arabic-speakers, and thus "Joy" was always my alias name.

I grew up in the Middle East, in a country and culture other than that of my parents. My parents enrolled me in international schools where there were other children from various countries around the world in a similar situation as my own. I relocated to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, and later Canada. I may not have been aware of it back when I was young, but relocating multiple times between different cities and countries in my life has given me exposure to diverse cultures, customs, and languages. This has made it less difficult for me to adapt, adopt, and navigate different mindsets and traditions than that of my own as I grew up. More importantly, it taught me how to be empathetic and how to accept things or situations that felt foreign or ambiguous; a privilege I highly regard and I am thankful for.

As a Researcher and Designer working on this project, I recognize the value of diverse perspectives and opinions, and how they can shape the outcomes of our work. Therefore, I approach this project with empathy and an open mindset, to learn and share knowledge. I am grateful to be working alongside my brilliant team members, Ainsleigh Burelle and Emily Rho who bring diverse knowledge and experiences that open up and challenge my thinking. To ensure that we collectively achieve the best possible results, I am committed to engaging with my team members and research participants in a thoughtful, empathetic manner. Together, we can create truly impactful outcomes that draw on the diverse perspectives and insights of all involved.

Emily Rho

Education: Master of Music (University of Toronto)
Occupation: Service Design and Business Strategy Consultant

My name is Emily Rho, and I live in Toronto, Canada. I was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea and lived in various parts of the U.S. during my teenage years before moving to Toronto. Having moved around quite a bit, 'home' is a fluid concept. In each place I've lived, different social and cultural experiences shaped who I am now, and I added to my surroundings. Despite my sense of belonging being fluid and transient at times, I'm lucky to be able to say that I have roots in many different communities and cultures thanks to the kindness of all those I encountered.

With this background, I approach this project. My aspiration is to find ways to help people deepen their relationships with their communities and co-create their mutual living place. I recognize that my experiences also come with their privilege, biases, and blind spots, and I acknowledge that these limitations are also part of who I am.

For that reason, I'm grateful to be working with Ainsleigh and Joy, who bring different life experiences to push and challenge my thinking. I commit to bringing an open-minded learner's mindset and contributing to broadening our collective perspective for the project.

Meanwhile, as I learned more about program and product design at work, I couldn't help but notice how often the very humans these solutions were being created for were often the ones left out of the conversations where decisions were made that affect them, often resulting in negative consequences. I found myself finding ways to bring "users" into the design process, even designing with them to create platforms and tools that would make their experience better. This is how I found the world of design thinking, and OCAD's SFI program, where I was so excited to find the rich field of participatory research and design already underway.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of our SFI experience has been virtual, and has occurred through multiple waves, lockdowns, and confusing health guideline iterations. To deal with the emergent mental health crisis, many took to outdoor walking, running or social distancing in the park to stay sane, including yours truly. On walks through the city, I became extra attuned to the impacts of our built environment on mental health, the questionable decisions being made to prioritize land-use profit over community wellbeing, and the critical role that public spaces play for our collective ability to gather, connect, and practice resilience through tough times.

I found myself wondering: what might truly community-led design look like in urban centers, where those who live in and use civic space are empowered to have their voices and needs heard, and can contribute to shaping public spaces that are more safe, accessible, usable, and equitable?

This is the perspective I bring to our research area, and I am grateful for the time and space to be able to explore this question alongside my wise, empathetic and talented peers, Emily and Joy. As a straight, white, cis-gender woman, I recognize the incredible privilege and bias I bring to this space. I also believe that true diversity of thought and experience is the only way to breed resilience. Through working in community with others I hope to listen, learn, be challenged, and co-create new knowledge to make a positive contribution to the field, and to grow as a researcher and designer.

Ainsleigh Burelle

Education: Honors BA, Media, Information & Technoculture (Western University)
Occupation: Design Research & Strategic Foresight Consultant

My name is Ainsleigh Burelle, and I live in Montréal, Canada. I grew up in and around the Greater Toronto Area. I come from a big family and a home that was always full of music, with neighbours and friends coming and going. I was fortunate to grow up in a loving, diverse community that encouraged me to pursue my goals, whatever that might have looked like.
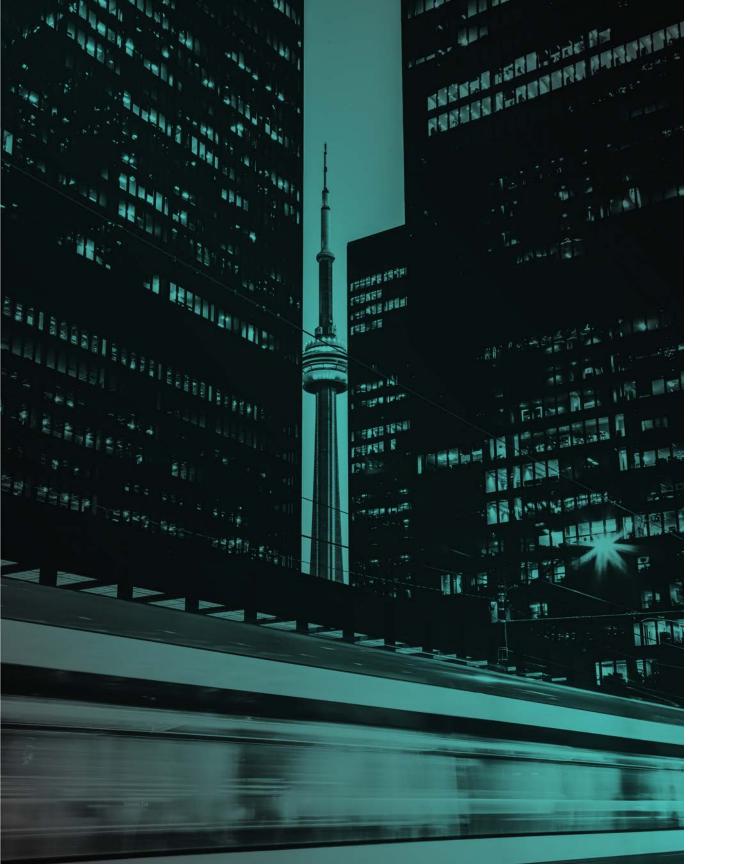
After university, I moved back to Toronto where my first job exposed me to the world of startups, entrepreneurship and innovation. Outside of work, I found myself continually exploring ways of re-creating the sense of community I'd experienced growing up: hosting charity music nights, co-founding a community-focused non-profit, and running city-wide events for the Toronto startup community. The city, once intimidating and closed off, started to feel like home.

5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

ABSTRACT

Co-creation is an opportunity to bring together the government, private sector, and community stakeholders in order to build more enjoyable and inclusive urban spaces in which to live, work and play. There are many cited benefits to inviting citizens and community members into the urban design process: for local government, it can be a way to collect community needs and ideas and manage risks more proactively; for private developers, it can allow them to tap directly into the market for new ideas; and for community members, it can provide them with a sense of belonging, representation and ownership by influencing the decisions that directly affect their health and wellbeing.

Despite these benefits, co-creation of urban living spaces with the community is still widely viewed as a risky, emergent approach that in many cases is being practiced in a performative manner, or not at all. While major cities in Europe and Asia have begun to pave the way for successful approaches to this practice, North American cities have an opportunity to address the systemic barriers that currently limit more inclusive and equitable co-creation.

Through both secondary and primary research, this paper maps out the current models and frameworks of citizen co-creation in the context of urban planning, specifically focusing on the city of Toronto, Canada. We identify the barriers and limitations that may currently prevent equitable and inclusive participation from community stakeholders. Further, we propose a theory of change for how to address these barriers and disrupt negative feedback cycles, while also putting forth five actionable strategic interventions that will ideally help practitioners in the field contribute to enabling a shift towards more equitable and inclusive community participation in the urban planning ecosystem.

PART 1. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

1.1 CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

68% of the world's population is projected to live in urban areas by 2050 (United Nations, 2018). Between growing urban populations and the inevitable effects of climate change, city planners and urban designers are considering best practices in resiliency planning – including social resilience (Mee-row et al., 2019). To build these responsive and adaptable cities of the future, how will we incorporate the needs, desires, and lived experience of the diverse populations who call those cities home? What might it look like to co-create urban spaces with citizens, residents, and community members as key stakeholders?

Involving citizens in the urban design process has gained popularity in recent years, with many benefits being cited. Co-creation is an opportunity to bring together the government, private sector, and commu-nity stakeholders to "build better, more enjoyable, and more inclusive places to live, work, and play" (Citizenlab, n.d.), and in cities worldwide host co-creation projects to bring multiple perspectives and find mutually beneficial solutions (Agusti et al., 2014).

There are many cited benefits to inviting citizens and community members into the urban design process: for local government, it can be a way to collect community needs and ideas and manage risks more proactively; for private developers, it can allow them to tap directly into the market for new ideas; and for community members, it can provide them with a sense of belonging, representation and owner-ship by influencing the decisions that directly affect their health and wellbeing (Agusti et al., 2014).

Our initial scan of the topic area has revealed that while many cities worldwide face significant barriers in reaching a level of co-creation maturity that allows meaningful collaboration, others have begun to find ways to address these barriers, incorporating citizen engagement as a key part of their toolkit. (Menny eet al., 2018) Additionally, it has revealed that community engagement is often practiced in a performative way, leading to degradation of citizen trust and negative future outcomes (Bisschops & Beunen, 2019).

1.2 PURPOSE AND GOALS

The gaps and barriers that have been identified in the literature have prompted us to hone in on the exploratory research question:

*How might we enable a shift towards more inclusive citizen co-creation in urban planning, so that communities are empowered to **participate in and influence** the design of sustainable and equitable cities?*

Secondary questions to help us answer the research question are:

- What is the state of the community participation landscape today?
- What are the barriers preventing more equitable community participation and co-creation?
- What trends and patterns point to a more equitable future?
- What levers will be the most effective ways to shift power in favor of citizens so that they are repre-sented in key urban planning, design, and land use decisions that affect them.

Our stated purpose is to examine, understand, and ultimately reveal the nature of the system of community engagement in urban planning today. Further, our goal is to propose a theory of change that shows how we might transform those system dynamics to reach a desirable future in which citizen power is increased to the level of true co-creation with other municipal and private stakeholders, and community members are empowered as part of a more equitable and resilient urban planning ecosystem.

We will do this in the following ways:

- **Understand the key players in the system:** Identify key actors and stakeholders, their roles and responsibilities, and the influential relationships between them;

- **Explore existing and emerging governance models:** Look at different models for how communities are engaged in urban planning decision-making today, from the status quo to emerging trends;

- **Uncover key barriers and challenges:** Reveal the barriers and challenges that must be overcome in order to transition the system;

- **Propose intervention strategies:** Explore systemic solutions that address key barriers and contribute to a theory of change for how we might transition to a more just and desirable future of community-engaged urban planning;

- **Create a north star vision:** Extrapolate on the outcomes of the intervention strategies to illustrate a preferred future of urban planning co-creation.

1.3 BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS

We have scoped this project to look specifically at the context of the city of Toronto, Canada. Our secondary research pulls from examples in cities that may vary in terms of urban population and density, but many of the lessons learned can still be applied. Our primary research comes from experts and community members based in Toronto. By generating research insights relevant to this context, it is our hope that these findings and intervention strategies can be applied in cities of a similar density or adapted for urban areas with a higher or lower density.

It is, however, important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community engagement and empowerment in urban planning; various urban contexts are shaped by different politics, cultures, historical contexts. The main principles and findings from our research can be used as guideposts for stakeholders acting in this space, but we recognize that every urban center comes with its own unique set of needs.

This paper will not specifically explore topics of engaging Indigenous or other marginalized communities, the role of equitable digital literacy and access, or policy and legal matters in detail. We do acknowledge however, that responsible engagement must account for the diverse needs of the community within which it operates and acknowledge other researchers who are contributing to collective understanding of these areas. These and additional areas of further research are noted at the end of this paper, and it is our hope that this work inspires other research to use, adapt, and build on our findings and recommendations.

1.4 KEY CONCEPTS

There are a number of key concepts we will refer to in this paper. Below, we have explained how these terms and concepts will be used for clarity:

Citizens and community members will be used interchangeably, also using terms like residents and community stakeholders. These terms refer to any and all people living within an urban area who are key constituents of the decision making that happens about the built environment in which they live, work, and play. These terms can be used to refer to legal citizens, immigrants and newcomers, temporary workers, and those who are unhoused.

Community engagement and co-creation will be used interchangeably to refer to initiatives in the context of urban planning, placemaking and city design that involve any level of feedback, engagement, or collaboration with the citizens and community members that the project in question affects.

We recognize that there are various levels of engagement that are either practiced or appropriate to practice in various contexts. For example, Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Arnstein, 1969), pictured in Figure 1 is a foundational framework in the field of community engagement that outlines increasing levels of community participation in democratic decision making. The ladder is organized into eight "rungs" that characterize three levels: 1) Non-participation, 2) Degrees of tokenism, and 3) Degrees of citizen power.

Similarly, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has published a spectrum of public participation that show a continuum of citizen power, ranging from scenarios in which citizens are informed of issues that may impact them, to scenarios in which community members are empowered to make decisions, with the local government playing the role of supporter and implementor (IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, 2018).

Urban planning is a professional field that relates to the ordering of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to secure physical, economic and social efficiency, and the health and well-being of communities (The Canadian Institute of Planners, 2022). For the purposes of this paper, we will use the term 'urban planning' to include any activities relating to land use planning, land development or re-development, social or transportation planning that significantly affect spaces that will be used primarily by the community members.
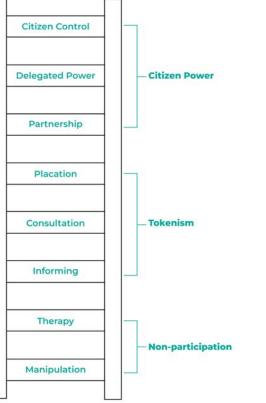

Figure 1: Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'

10

PART 2. EXAMINING THE STATUS QUO: TODAY'S LANDSCAPE OF CO-CREATION IN URBAN PLANNING

2.1 THE POWER-KNOWLEDGE AXES

Community engagement in urban planning is a complex process that is intended to foster collaboration, build trust, and empower community members to feel heard while sharing ownership in the decision-making process (Konsti-Laakso & Rantala, 2018). Because of this, it also creates a complex system within which the needs, motivations, and desired outcomes of multiple stakeholder groups must be balanced.

Our early research findings were showing that the current state of community engagement in urban planning was rife with challenges and barriers to overcome, and attempts at solutions that came with their own caveats and context-specific considerations (Mahmoud et al., 2021). We sought to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns at play, the current system landscape, and to define what an ideal future system landscape might look like.

To achieve this, we conducted both primary and secondary research with a diverse group of participants across government, private, and public sectors in order to reveal the complex multi-stakeholder relation-ships and dynamics at play. Based on our findings, we created a series of systems-level interventions that were validated and refined alongside experts. To read more about the specific research methods and approach used, please refer to the Methodology section in the Appendix.

Stakeholder Power and Knowledge

Urban planning initiatives are inherently multi-stakeholder activities, and yet not all stakeholders are equal – each holds a different level of knowledge and power in the system that, in turn, allows (or disallows) them to exercise various levels of influence within the decision-making process (Fabusuyi & Johnson, 2021). Our research focuses on four distinct stakeholder groups: community members, municipal government, private developers, and engagement facilitators.

The Power and Knowledge map in Figure 2 demonstrates the level of knowledge and power that each stakeholder has, which allows them to exercise influence within the system. Here is how we define these two axes in the context of community engagement in urban planning:

Knowledge: The expertise and lived experience that provides an awareness and understanding of community needs and perspectives, as it relates to the built environment.

Power: The level of ability that a stakeholder has to influence or control the behaviour of another, whether through political, economic, social, or psychological means.
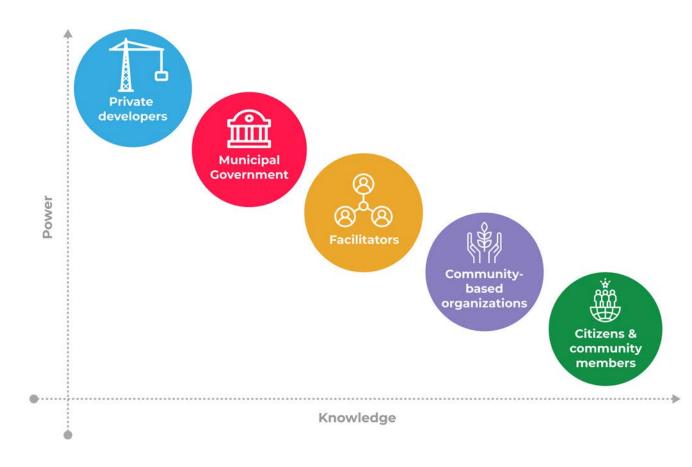
Figure 2: Power and Knowledge map

2.2 KEY PLAYERS AND INFLUENCES
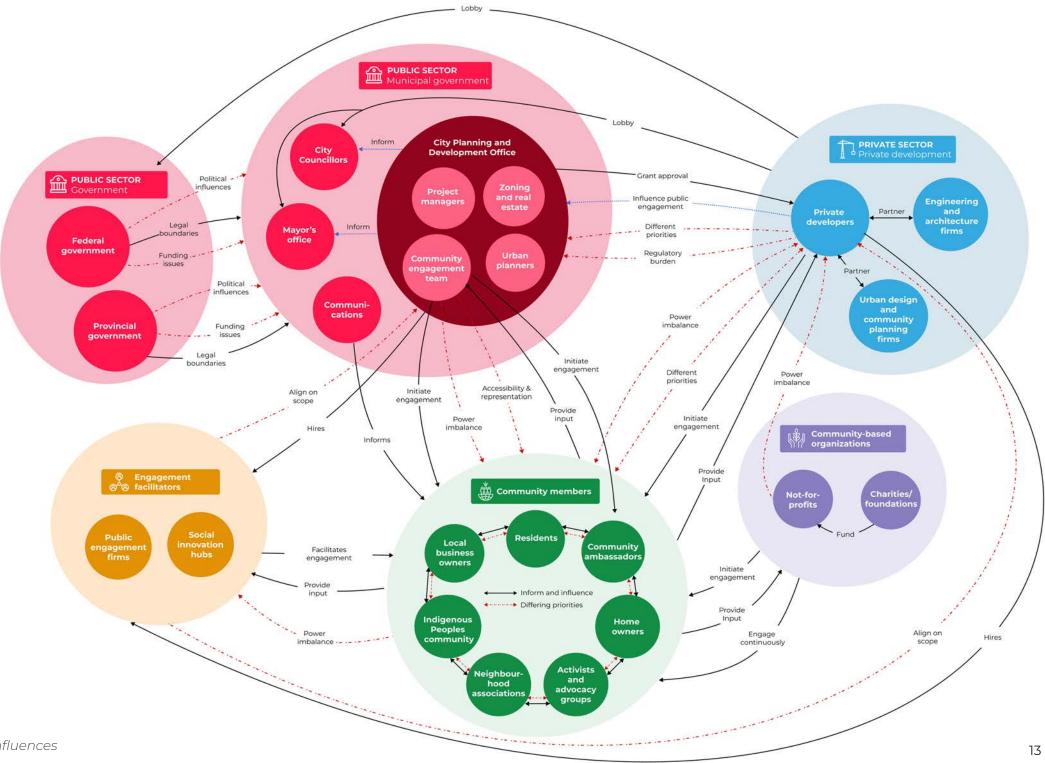
Building on the Power and Knowledge map (Figure 2), we use the Systemigram (Figure 3) to provide a comprehensive view of the system dynamics—Stakeholder relationships and influences.

In the following section, we delve into each stakeholder's role in the landscape, motivation to participate, and key points of tension they experience or contribute to with an excerpt from this diagram.

Appendix Part B provides additional context of each of the relationships in detail.

Figure 3: Systemigram - Stakeholder relationships and influences

Community members

Community members comprise the people who live, work, and play in urban areas and are most affected by urban planning decisions. They often have the highest level of knowledge regarding their needs but the lowest level of power to influence urban planning decisions and outcomes.
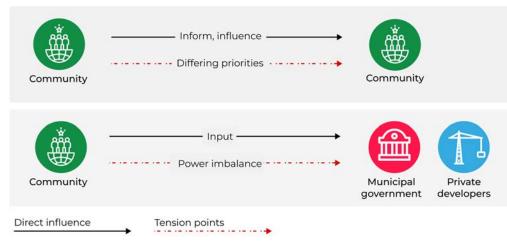
Figure 4: Key relationships - Community

Role in the landscape

Communities are multi-faceted, not monoliths; they comprise various sub-groups that include homeowners, renters, activists and advocacy groups, local business owners, and Indigenous Peoples communities, to name a few. This diversity of views can play an essential role in the co-creation process as they bring their backgrounds, values, and social dynamics within their communities to strengthen the final outcome (Fabusuyi & Johnson, 2021). Without community involvement, standardized solutions have sometimes been found to be notoriously unreliable because they reduce the reliance on local knowledge and skill and limit the flexibility of people at the front lines to solve the problems they encounter (Augusti et al., 2014).

Motivation to participate

As the end-users of the development, community members are motivated to participate to:

• **Make a difference:** Community engagements are an opportunity to express their ideas and concerns. They are different from voting in elections in that community members get a chance to influence how their neighborhood gets developed directly (Aboelata et al., 2011).

• **Hear others' opinions:** Many are curious about how others think about the development and participate to exchange ideas and opinions with others (Aboelata et al., 2011).

System tension points

• **Community members may be skeptical** about the effectiveness of engagements. In almost all urban planning projects, community members are engaged for input rather than being the project's initiators. They may provide a perspective on specific aspects of the development, but they often don't have visibility into how the decisions are made beyond the engagement. This creates tension as even though they are the ultimate users of the development, their opinions may not be fully considered or incorporated into the project outcome.

• **Participating community members bring different opinions** to the conversations, and a certain amount of disagreements and conflicts are natural and indicative of a healthy democracy. However, one thing to be mindful of is how the members build a consensus and make decisions to ensure that a small group of voices does not overpower the process.

Municipal government

The municipal government's urban planning and development offices are the actors who directly oversee the development of the City's real estate. They often have the highest level of power as the executive authority in urban planning projects, are connected to other key influential stakeholders, and hold demographic data of the residents.
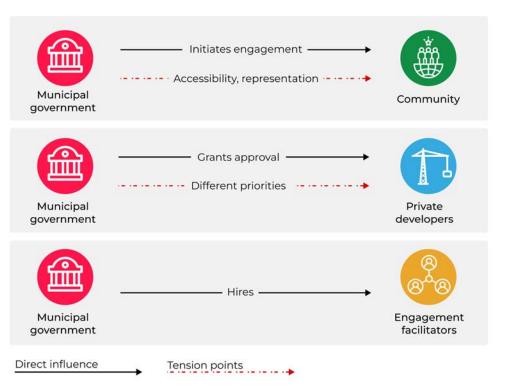

Figure 5: Key relationships - Municipal government

Role in the landscape

For this research, we will hone in on the municipal government and the Urban Planning and Development Office (CPDO). The CPDO is directly connected with all other key sakeholders, indicating its position as one of the most powerful stakeholders in the system. The planning and development office oversees the municipal urban planning projects, and engagements are designed to collect community input and provide information about community needs, identify attitudes and opinions, generate new ideas, allow for smoother implementation, and build constituency support (Augusti et al., 2014).

Motivation to participate

By mandate, community engagement is integral to responsible urban planning to gather input to inform and shape the planning process (City of Toronto, 2021). In addition to this foundational reason, the government may be motivated to conduct community engagement to:

- **Build trust and improve relationships:** Interviewees highlighted this as the first and foremost reason for conducting community engagements. They see this as a big part of their duty as civic servants, as the overarching purpose of their work is to help improve municipal services and public spaces to benefit the city's inhabitants (City of Toronto, 2021).

- **Identify and address potential issues:** Engaging with the community early and often can help flag potential issues that wouldn't have surfaced otherwise. This can mitigate pushback later in development and improve community satisfaction (Why Community Engagement Matters, n.d.).

- **Foster community ownership:** By involving residents in the planning process, they are more likely to feel invested in the outcome and to work to ensure that the plans are successfully implemented. Positive engagement experience can also increase future participation (Why Community Engagement Matters, n.d.).

System tension points

- **Intricate layers of power dynamics** are at play between the municipal offices and provincial and federal governments. The regulations, funding priorities, and goals related to regional development may look different at the different levels of the government, creating tension and resource allocation challenges for municipalities trying to secure enough budget for projects.

- **Tension with private developers** may stem from differences in priorities. For example, the municipality's overall mandate may be to promote sustainable development and may require extensive negotiations to balance a private developer's desire to please potential buyers and investors. Additionally, the regulatory process for approval may be a source of tension. The process for new developments can be complex and time-consuming, with the potential for delays and increased costs for developers, which could lead to tension between the two groups.

- **The government's position as the oversight stakeholder** and initiator of most urban planning projects can be a source of friction with the community members. Lack of transparency and communication are mentioned repeatedly as pain points for many community members. This can manifest as community members feeling like their values are not aligned with the government's mandate, leading to them feeling that their concerns are not being considered in the planning process. Conversely, the municipal office may perceive a lack of participation as apathy or resistance to change.

Private Sector

Private developers comprise the firms who conceive of, design, and create the blueprints that direct how the urban environment is shaped. As for-profit entities, they typically hold the most power due to their ability to influence key decisions – either through capital or planning expertise. They are not required to oblige citizen well-being or the public good, and therefore often have the lowest level of knowledge when it comes to community needs.
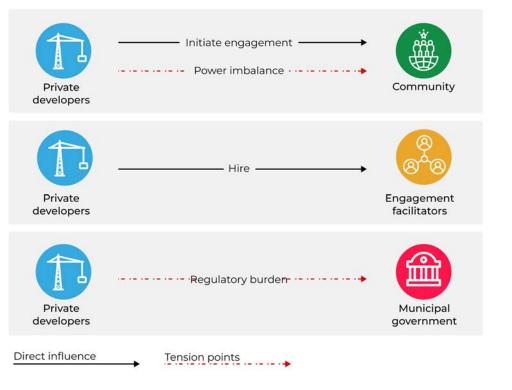

Figure 6: Key relationships - Private sector

Role in the landscape

Private developers may be involved in any type of development from infill redevelopment to transit, social housing, or public spaces, and they typically employ individuals a range of expertise including civil and structural engineering, architecture and sustainable urban design. They also provide a range of urban planning services both within the private sector, and to key government stakeholders in the public sector. These services can include research, analysis, policy planning and advisory, and design consulting. In this way, they can act as a strategic partner to the public sector by leveraging their expertise to recommend best practices and approaches for urban planning and land use.

Some firms may have in-house community development capabilities they either practice internally or offer as a service. In some cases, these engagements take the form of informing the public of an upcoming project to gain buy-in and build social acceptance. In other more progressive cases, community engagement is more consultative and involves the developer hosting workshops or community listening sessions before or during the design process to ensure that public concerns are addressed proactively (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014).

Motivation to participate

Private developers may be motivated to include or enhance citizen engagement as part of urban planning projects to:

- **Boost their brand and reputation:** Being viewed by the wider public as a company that works with the public, not against them, is in favour of private developers. This generally positions them as a company that values social good and is in line with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, helping them to stand out from their competition.

- **Reduce costs and delays:** Engaging community members early and often as part of the bid application process can help to surface potential community needs earlier on. This ensures that the applications are more aligned and therefore are approved faster, with fewer downstream costly delays due to higher levels of citizen approval.

- **Uphold compliance and City relationships:** Developers need to uphold the basic legal requirements for community engagement on urban development projects that affect the public. Staying compliant with these legal requirements, or even going above and beyond, helps them to maintain a positive relationship with the City, who approves their applications.

System tension points

- **Regulatory compliance** can be a sticking point. While private developers hold significant power through capital and influence in the system, they still require application permission from the City Planning and Development Office in order to ensure that projects can be implemented. Project applications are evaluated by members of the CPDO as well as community members in City Hall consultation meetings. Currently, the CPDO also requires private developers to abide by municipal laws like Bill 109, which mandate at least one community consultation effort to be carried out in order for their application to be approved.

- **There is a great difference in power** between the private developers and the community members. When engaging the community, developers are almost always the initiators of the development with more resources and influence than community members. This imbalance in power can create tensions if the community feels unheard or perceive the engagement to be superficial (Wainwright, 2014).

Engagement facilitators

Engagement facilitators are the individuals who act as the convener of various key stakeholders across private, public, and citizen groups as part of a community co-creation initiative. They have the second-most knowledge about community needs (besides citizens themselves), and a moderate amount of power to influence decision making.
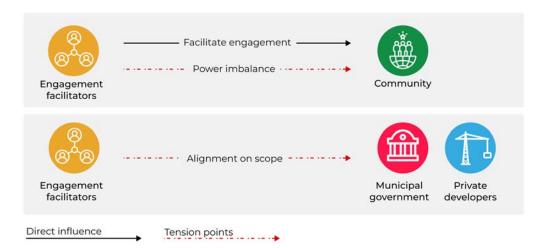

Figure 7: Key relationships - Engagement facilitators

Role in the landscape

Typically hired by the municipal government or private developers, facilitators are individuals who design and lead the citizen engagement process as a neutral third party – they are most often trained in guiding conversation, unearthing needs, and building group consensus by asking specific questions, fostering discussion, and encouraging self-directed inquiry. Their role is to gather the needs, desires, and possible mixed or negative sentiment from the community, reporting back to their main client so that they can then take those insights and decide how to incorporate them into the outcome.

While it is not the role of facilitators to lobby or influence the urban planning project outcome, they can advocate for certain community engagement methods to improve the likelihood of positive outcomes – for example, they could recommend a simple survey, but could also recommend more engaging and innovative methods like interactive workshops, site walks, or prototyping activities.

A key part of the facilitator's role is to create clarity around the community's scope of influence on a project outcome, and to collect and present data back to key decision makers with as much clarity as possible. When facilitators carry out a successful community engagement initiative, it can help to build bridges between and across the public, private, and community stakeholder groups, ultimately fostering collaboration and building a foundation of trust for future projects.

Motivation to participate
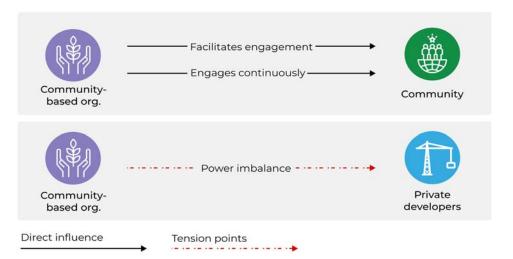
Facilitators may be driven to participate in citizen co-creation projects for the following reasons:

- **Create positive social change and impact:** Many engagement facilitators are driven to create positive change through their chosen profession by acting as a bridge between community, local government, and private developers in order to promote equitable city building, ensure community needs are clearly represented.

- **Build their brand and reputation:** Developing a diverse portfolio of work that showcases their ability to successfully facilitate community engagements helps to position them as a strong ecosystem partner for local government or private developer actors.

- **Grow their business relationships:** Additionally, facilitators are driven to participate in additional community engagement initiatives in order to grow their book of business and create positive business relationships with local government or private developers who could hire them in the future.

System tension points

- **Negotiating the right timeline** can be a sticking point. Hiring a third-party engagement firm can be a significant financial commitment for the government or private developer. We've heard from the facilitator interviews that this financial undertaking can sometimes mean that there is pressure from the hirer to expect more work than ideal. Aligning on the right timeline for the scope of the project is a potential tension point, which can affect the integrity and depth of community engagement.

- **Their position as a contractor to the most powerful** stakeholders can make it difficult for some communities to trust them. This lack of trust can manifest as reduced community participation or superficial engagements where community members feel that the engagement is not being conducted in good faith.

Community-based organizations (CBOs)

Community-based organizations (CBOs) refers to any non-profit, not-for-profit, non-government organization (NGO), or other organization type with the intention to further the well-being and empowerment of its members. These organizations are typically started in a grassroots manner, which means their embeddedness affords them the highest level of knowledge around community needs, but their variable funding and support means they often hold the lowest amount of power in influencing key decisions about the built environment.

Figure 8: Key relationships - Community-based organizations (CBO)

Role in the landscape

Community-based organizations may form out of the need to advocate for various social or cultural causes like affordable housing, religious practices, healthcare and wellbeing, food sovereignty, justice, human rights, or equitable access. They may also form in opposition to urban development initiatives in order to advance neighbourhoods, conserve natural areas, or protect historically or culturally significant buildings.

Due to their independent governance structures, community-based organizations typically have a high level of local community trust, and in the context of urban planning and development, can act as key channels through which to engage and partner with community members, especially those who are underrepresented, marginalized, or have a lower level of trust in local government. Community-based organizations also have the ability to leverage local assets, skills, aspirations, talents and resources from a wide range of actors to effectively mobilize action (The Connected Community Approach, n.d.).

Motivation to participate

Community-based organizations or the individual members associated with them may be motivated to participate in citizen co-creation in order to:

- **Ensure that diverse community needs and voices are represented:** Because CBOs are embedded the community, they are in a unique position of being experts on the community-wide needs, and can not only help to make patterns and themes clear, but can advocate on behalf of their communities as a formalized organization.

- **Partner with decision-makers to further equitable and sustainable development:** CBOs also hold a wealth of local knowledge which can act as a strong asset for municipal government or local developers who are seeking to ensure that their project plans align with community needs and context.

System tension points

- **Their relatively low resource and power status** may disadvantage them as they advocate for and negotiate on behalf of the community with the private developers.
  For example, in neighborhoods where private development was allowed to create accelerated gentrification, community-based organizations may not be able to act as equal partners in the development process.
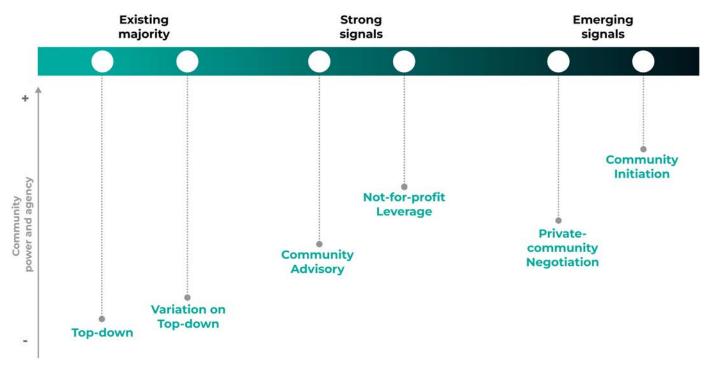
2.3 GOVERNANCE MODEL SPECTRUM

A significant component of our research was to understand the governance models that are being applied in the current landscape of urban planning projects. According to the United Nations, governance refers to "all processes of governing, the institutions, processes and practices through which issues of common concern are decided upon and regulated" (About Good Governance, n.d.), and governance models can be an essential indicator of the power dynamics in the decision-making process (About Good Governance, n.d.). To examine the different governance models identified, we used the following lens (What Is Governance, n.d.):

1. How are decisions made?

2. Who has a voice in making these decisions?

3. Ultimately, who is accountable?

Through our primary research with subject matter experts, we observed six key governance models for citizen co-creation in urban planning, which are organized onto a spectrum in Figure 8 Spectrum of co-creation governance models. The spectrum indicates how widely prevalent the models are in the current landscape—from existing majority, to strong signals, and to emerging signals.

The signals captured indicate the emergence of some new practices and the potential for more innovative models developing in the future. However, the large majority of the examples fall under the top-down model where the project is initiated and controlled mainly by the government or private

Figure 9: Spectrum of co-creation governance models

developer firms. Having examined the models through the lens of decision making power and ultimate accountability, we also indicate the relative power and agency the community members hold in each of the models. However, the large majority of the examples fall under the top-down model where the project is initiated and controlled mainly by the government or private developer firms. Having examined the models through the lens of decision making power and ultimate accountability, we also indicate the relative power and agency the community members hold in each of the models.

1. TOP-DOWN MODEL

The government or private developer initiates, designs, and facilitates the project and the community engagement.

The most commonly found model in our research is where a powerful stakeholder–a government or private developer–initiates the overall project, including the community engagement portion. The initiating stakeholder typically has an in-house engagement team that designs, recruits, and facilitates the engagement.

In our observation, because the initiating stakeholder controls the project and engagement within, the decision-making and accountability ultimately sit with the same stakeholder. Community members may be solicited at various parts of an urban planning project, but their influence on the overall project outcome appears to be limited, particularly when engagement is a siloed phase of the overall project.

2. VARIATION ON TOP-DOWN

The government or private developer initiates the project, but the initiating stakeholder hires an external firm to design and facilitate the engagement plans and activities.

This model is similar to the first one, with the difference being that the engagement is designed and facilitated by a third-party firm specializing in community engagement. Engagement specialists are hired by the initiating stakeholder -- either the government or private sector stakeholder—to bring their expertise in community engagement and to work as partners in the overall urban planning project. The reason for hiring an external firm to handle community engagement varies. For example, a government may outsource engagement because of the capacity and specialties required to conduct the engagement.

The decision-making patterns and who has the ultimate accountability for the final outcome are similar to the first model, as the project is initiated and controlled by a powerful stakeholder, either the government or private developer.

A couple of factors may set this model apart from the first one. First, we speculate that having expert facilitators design and carry out the engagement session might create an environment where the participating community members feel more comfortable exchanging ideas during a session. Second, for projects initiated by a private developer company, hiring an external firm to handle the engagement shows a deep commitment to go above and beyond what is required by law, signaling more in-depth collaboration with the community members.

3. COMMUNITY ADVISORY MODEL

Community advisory group is assembled by local government to act as thought partners during the urban planning project.

In this model, the government initiates the project and the community engagement, but it embeds a community advisory group to be part of the governance throughout the project. The community advisory group works as the liaison representing the community's voice to the government. In the case examples we have examined, these groups are assembled for large-scale projects (e.g., building a new community recreation centre) where there is a great need to ensure the outcome is well-integrated into local residents' lives. In addition to having the advisory group, this type of project may still incorporate other broader engagement measures such as surveys and workshop sessions.

According to expert interviews, the government or government agency typically recruits and assembles the community advisory group. An ideal makeup of the group is determined by using demographic data about the community. The government sends out a survey invitation where the public can respond to express interest in becoming a community ambassador. Using the survey results, the government then contacts the interested residents and assembles the group, ensuring the group represents the community's makeup. The advisory group and the government work together as thought partners for the project, while the advisory group members receive monetary compensation for their time.

This model is innovative in that it creates room for community members to be part of the decision-making process throughout the entire project using a small focus group. Although the government is still the initiating stakeholder, this model allows for decision-making and accountability to be shared between the government and the community. However, being part of an advisory group requires a significant amount of time, travel, and commitment, and there is also a potential to bias participation to those of higher socioeconomic means. Additionally, a small community advisory group may be more susceptible to influence from private stakeholders trying to heavily influence the project direction and outcomes.

4. NOT-FOR-PROFIT CONNECTOR MODEL

A not-for-profit organization acts as a convener and connector between the community and the government.

Stemming from the first model where the government is the initiating stakeholder, this model includes a community not-for-profit organization to liaise between the government and the community. In the examples we've seen, this is combined with the third model, where a community advisory group works with the government. Because the not-for-profit can bring the community trust and relationships it has cultivated to the project, this model can help alleviate potential tension between the community and initiating stakeholder.

It is not unusual for the government and local-not-profits to have ongoing working relationships. However, it appears that officially including a local not-for-profit as part of the governance for an urban planning project is still an emerging trend. Our interpretation of this model is that it has the most potential to be valuable in complex projects requiring extensive community relationship building.

By leveraging the not-for-profit's ability to reach the community members that a typical engagement approach may not be able to reach, it has the potential to let in the voices of those who would not have participated otherwise. While the initiating stakeholder is accountable for the final outcome, this model aims to increase the room for greater diversity and consensus building throughout the project.

CASE STUDY

Toronto Envisioning Neighbourhood Together (TENT), an urban planning literacy initiative

In 2013, the City of Toronto's Planning and Growth Committee passed a motion that proposed the establishment of a pilot Community Planning Table in Scarborough's Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park neighbourhood. Putting this motion into practice, the Centre for City Ecology (CCE) launched the TENT initiative in East Scarborough, an area going through densification and renewal at the time (Past Project: TENT, n.d.).

The TENT initiative had several vital purposes. It launched to demystify the urban planning and design process for the community members and close the knowledge gap between the residents and the planners in the city. To accomplish this, the project ran sessions where urban planning and community design skills and strategies were shared with the community members. The initiative also brought community members together to reimagine what their neighbourhood could look like. Through workshops, community members explored possible futures and created 3D renderings of the visions of their neighbourhood while using their knowledge of urban planning and design. Through the initiative, the community members developed new directions for local community design, and they presented the findings at an urban planning forum that political representatives and urban planners were invited to attend (Past Project: TENT, n.d.).

East Scarborough Storefront, a neighbourhood not-for-profit working to support the community from within, was acting as the major community-based organization (CBO) for the initiative. The organization convened and connected in the community, weaving all the pieces that required community trust and participation. The East Scarborough Storefront's position as a long-time community insider was key to its success as convener and connector. By sitting within the community, the organization was able to build relationships with the community, understand what the community cares about, and enable community members to advocate for themselves during the initiative.

The organization also worked directly with the Community Planning Board, which was integral to the initiative's overall governance model. For example, in forming the Planning Table, East Scarborough Storefront let the community members choose their level of participation before the initiative kicked off so that people could be involved as they wanted.

Throughout the initiative, the collaboration between CCE, East Scarborough Storefront, and the participating community members was grounded in relationship and trust building. The initiative created a robust engagement by leveraging the relationships in each stakeholder's network to grow people's interest in the initiative organically. This approach meant that the relationship building and community engagement efforts continued beyond this initiative, allowing each new initiative to inform and compound on the one before it.

5. COMMUNITY INITIATION MODEL

A coalition of community members putting forward a development proposal and working together with the government.

This model describes when a group of community members create their own proposal for a community site and work with local government to develop it. The community members who submit the proposal can be transitioned to be part of the governance for the project, embedding themselves as active collaborators throughout the project. We interpret this model as a bottom-up approach to starting a project; the initiating stakeholder is the community residents, demonstrating the potential of this model to empower the community more than others discussed previously in this section.

However, the interviewed subject matter experts raised some considerations about this model. Many highlighted that it is critical to examine who from the community are raising the proposal and why they feel compelled to do so. Historically speaking, participation in urban planning engagements has been higher in the white-identifying communities that are also homeowners. (From Community Engagement to Ownership, 2019) Once the coalition of community members becomes part of the official project, the decision-making process appears similar to the model with a community advisory group.

6. PRIVATE-COMMUNITY NEGOTIATION MODEL

A developer company and local groups work together to negotiate and create consensus.

In some instances, we have seen cases where a developer company works closely with a local community land trust to negotiate the detailed conditions of the site development. This model is different from a developer company soliciting information from the broad community, as the need to work together often stems from holding opposing or other interests. The power dynamic shift occurs as the community group engages with the developer as land owners.

A community group that engages through this model is considered a powerful stakeholder representing the interest of the broader community and creates a situation where it would benefit both parties if they make the decisions together. While the model lends a significant amount of power and agency to the community group, we suspect it is time and resource intensive for the people on the committee and is not a model that is prevalent in the landscape. Additionally, we believe it is critical to examine who is on the community side to ensure diversity of community voices is included in the process.

Toward participatory and empowering governance in community engagement

Each of the models above has pros and cons regarding how it empowers the community who are the end users of the site development. We also acknowledge that there are many other models that we have not covered in this work. However, there are innovative approaches to push the boundaries of how decisions are made in urban planning projects in all the models described.

Many contextual factors surrounding the urban planning project can affect the success of a governance model. The utility of these models and how they influence the power dynamics in a given project is ultimately tied to the context it sits in. In a government, resource capacity and the maturity of community engagement capability can be a significant factor in what kind of governance model it can implement for projects. For private sector developers, it can depend on the type of engagement legally required and enforced. For the community members, the familiarity and desire towards participatory governance can significantly influence governance approaches (Leino & Puumala, 2021).

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to shifting the power dynamics in urban planning governance, but rather the context around the community should be deeply considered to generate innovative ways to make a model more participatory, collaborative, and empowering (Duivenvoorden et al., 2021). When successfully implemented, the governance model can provide a framework through which "community members are full, equal members of the research and design team from the beginning of the project to the end. There are no design team meetings, communications, and planning apart from community members. They are always there at every step and between steps because they are full and equal design and team members" (Udoewa, 2022).

CASE STUDY

Taiwan's Join.gov.tw: Leveraging crowdsourcing tools and technology to facilitate co-creation

Join.gov.tw is an online platform managed by the Taiwanese government where citizens can submit an idea and launch a petition. Anyone can submit ideas about any social issue; you do not need to be affiliated with any political party. You don't have to be of voting age to use the platform, and many who are too young to vote can submit an idea and start a movement (Innovating Public Service: Citizen-Government Co-Creation in Asia, 2021). Citizens with an account can debate the issues they care about, and people can vote on ideas they would like to support. If the petition receives more than 5,000 signatures, the government provides a "point-by-point response explaining why it agreed to or rejected the proposal" (Tang, 2022).

Twice a month, the executive departments in the Taiwanese government arrange an open conversation meeting with the people who submitted selected ideas. As the citizen who proposed the idea, you are invited to collaborative meetings with stakeholders from related ministries. During the meeting, the stakeholders explore ways to advance the idea into a policy or a motion to further its development. A wide range of ideas get submitted—from where to build a new park or hospital, how to redesign the tax payment system, to participatory budgeting—and citizens can directly engage with the government to collaboratively work on a wide range of urban and social challenges (Tang, 2019).

Driven by data, the platform can also provide information about the public's opinion about critical issues at a macro level. It displays where people have a consensus and where the divisions are so that people can understand others' points of view and have a platform to share ideas. As of 2018, nearly 5 million of the country's 23 million people had joined the platform. Through Join, the Taiwanese government has seen successful project examples taking a crowd-sourced idea to co-creation and implementation, while leveraging technology to drive people-public-private partnerships (Tang, 2022).

2.4 CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

The barriers to elevating community power in the context of urban planning have been well-document-ed in literature –Our primary research not only validated these barriers, but provided a richer understanding of the relationships between them in the context of the wider system.

It's important to note that the multi-stakeholder nature of community engagement in urban planning results in systemic barriers that have the following characteristics:

1. **Varying complexity:** Barriers range in complexity from those that affect a single stakeholder group, to those that affect the environment in which stakeholders are acting.

2. **Overlap across stakeholders:** Stakeholders face many of the same barriers, although the effects and manifestations of those barriers may change due to their context.

3. **Connected and relational:** Barriers are not isolated, nor do they exist in a vacuum – they feed into and either perpetuate or exacerbate one another in ways that create either positive or negative feedback loops.
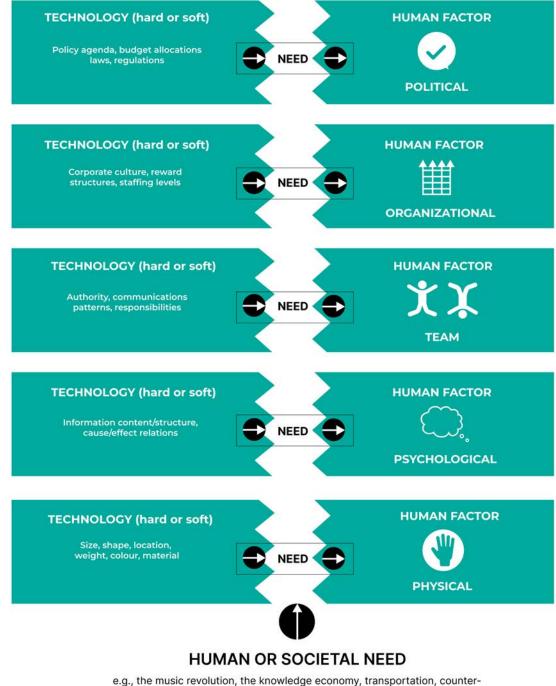
Ten Barriers to Equitable Citizen Co-Creation

We have identified ten major barriers that present significant challenges to shifting the nature of the system. In order to illustrate both the variance in complexity as well as the overlap across stakeholders, we have used the Human-Tech ladder – an approach to human-centric design introduced by industri-al designer Kim Vicente (Vicente, 2004). Vicente proposes that human needs (or factors) for successful interaction with technology can be roughly organized into five categories: Physical, Psychological, Team, Organizational, and Political.

As shown in Figure 9, the Human-Tech ladder is designed to showcase the human needs present at each (progressively more complex) level in the system, and to showcase how technology or solutions must account for those needs to be useful and successful. For this reason, the ladder provides a valuable framework through which we might better understand needs and pain points, so that we can then consider how to develop human-centric solutions or interventions.

Interestingly, our findings indicate that there is indeed a correlation between the complexity of the human factor or need, and the level of stakeholder power required to address it. The more complex that barriers and needs become, the more they concern stakeholders with relatively more power in the system as shown in the Power and Knowledge map in Figure 2. This points to the conclusion that in or-der to begin addressing systemic barriers with increasing levels of complexity, compelling incentives and genuine buy-in from stakeholders with the most power becomes critical.

Below are the ten major barriers we have identified to increasing community power in urban planning decision making organized by these five categories, with Figure 10 illustrating the overlap between stakeholders.

Figure 10: Vicente's Human-Tech Ladder

Physical Barriers

1. Low accessibility for participation: Community engagement sessions are often time and effort intensive. Sessions typically rely on volunteer (uncompensated) participation during the evenings and weekends, which sometimes make participation a barrier to those who might be parents, low-middle income, traveling for work, working shift hours, or multiple jobs.

Psychological Barriers

2. Lack of representation and diversity: Participation from representative and diverse community members is often low due to low awareness, community ties / sense of belonging, and/or lack of accessibility

3. Lack of shared language: Excessive use of jargon by urban planning experts and lack of capacity building with the public can lead to a gap in understanding and lower participation quality or rates

4. Meaningful engagement is effortful and resource-intensive: Maintaining continuity of communication with participants to progress is a challenge for facilitators, as well as finding ways to retain community members' engagement throughout an entire process. Additionally, engagement fatigue on the part of community members can cause them to leave the process before completing, potentially compromising integrity of outputs.

Team Barriers

5. Lack of clarity around community scope of influence: Unclear definitions about what decisions are "on the table" for community members and the scope of their influence on the outcome can lead to poorly executed engagements that waste time and exacerbate distrust between community members and local government.

6. Lack of transparency into engagement process: Community members often don't know how their feedback will be used or whether it will be acted on, or when it will be incorporated into the outcome, if at all. This can degrade trust and cause a negative participant experience.

Organizational Barriers

7. Low private sector motivation for community engagement: Engaging the community in a meaningful way is often seen as an activity that will add cost to the overall project; either because it opens up the private developer to needing to amend the project plan to account for community feedback, or because it can add costly delays to the process.

8. Municipal governments often lack an institutional process for responsive community engagement: Workstreams often operate in silos with little-to-no cross-departmental communication, which means that community engagement efforts are not operating in sync with urban planning / design timelines, wasting results and time.

9. Proving the value of deep community engagement to decision makers: For projects where a higher level of community engagement is deemed appropriate, participatory methods are still new to institutions, and it requires effort to showcase what the return on such an investment might be.

Political Barriers:

10. Political actors with special private sector interests: can create an environment where developer profit is prioritized over community trust and thoughtful design.
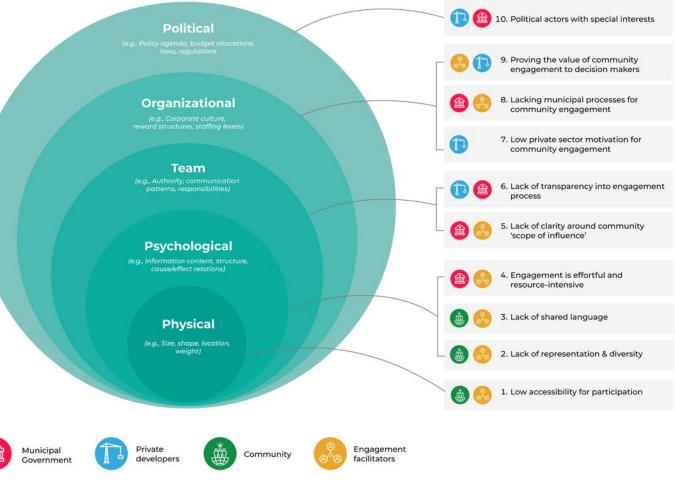

Figure 11: Barriers and challenges in the system

Barrier Relationships: Positive and Negative Feedback Loops

It is important to note that while these barriers not only vary in complexity and overlap across stakehold-ers, they are also relational and connected. The causal loop diagram in Figure 11 shows how challenges do not exist in a vacuum, but in fact impact, exacerbate, or compound on top of one another in order to create either a positive or negative environment for productive community engagement and empowerment.

Loop A on the left-hand side illustrates what typically happens as a result of the status quo scenario, while Loop B on the right-hand side illustrates what we have observed in strong and weak signals, and points the way to a preferable future.
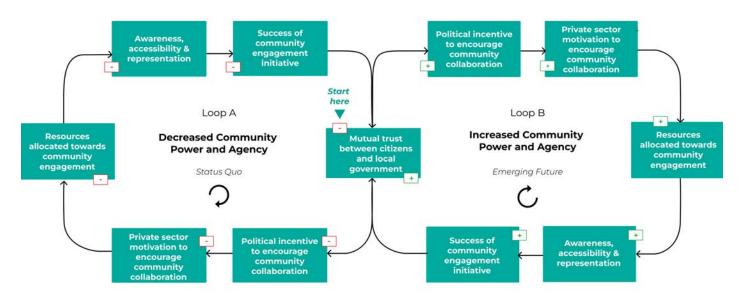

Figure 12: Reinforcing patterns in the system

Feedback Loop A: Decreased Community Power and Agency

In this loop, we see how barriers present in the status quo are interrelated to create a negative cycle:

- **Decreased trust creates friction:** Degrading trust between citizens and local government means that municipal actors are less likely to invest in citizen engagement because the longer that trust goes unrepaired, the longer, harder, and more expensive the uphill battle becomes to regain it;

- **Friction slows incentive and investment:** A decrease in political motivation to meaningfully engage citizens means that private actors are less incentivized to engage in community collaboration because it is less likely to affect their bid to win a project, and it helps them to save short-term cost;

- **Low investment means bare minimum engagement:** Less private sector investment in community collaboration results in less resources allocated, and therefore the community that does occur is lower quality, not representative, often inaccessible, performative, or results in local government caving to the wills of powerful citizen groups (i.e. NIMBYs);

- **Bare minimum engagement kills chances of success:** Poor quality execution of community engagement due to low resources and incentive from private and public actors results in lower success rates of urban planning initiatives, that in turn cause people to lose trust in the government;

- **Finally, low success rates further degrade trust:** Over time, this reinforcing negative feedback loop can result in more urban planning and design projects that are top-down, focused on short-term profit gains rather than long-term community wellbeing, and cause citizens to leave or become disengaged, or take matters into their own hands through protest or tactical urbanism.

Feedback Loop B: Increased Community Power and Agency

In this loop, we see how trends present in the emergent future might compound in order to create a reinforcing, positive cycle:

- **Mutual trust breeds momentum:** Higher trust between the community and local government means that municipal powers are more likely to invest in citizen engagement, because they have a level of certainty that people will meaningfully engage, and mutual trust that the outcome will be positive;

- **Momentum creates political and private incentive:** An increase in political incentive to engage in community collaboration (in order to maintain that trust) means that the private sector motivation might increase, because the government is responsible for approving vendors, and wants to prioritize those that are helping them fulfill their civic duty;

- **Incentive catalyzes investment:** More private sector actors motivated to engage with the community means that more resources flow into the system, and investment in equitable and acces-sible community engagement practices can increase;

- **Investment drives successful engagement and outcomes:** This means that citizen participation initiatives are more likely to be accessible, there is increased capacity to partner with local organiza-tions in order grow awareness and diverse participation, in turn enhancing the potential for success-ful outcomes;

- **Finally, successful engagement and outcomes furthers trust:** Over time, this reinforcing positive feedback loop can pave the way for more community-led, government-supported initiatives due to the buildup of mutual trust, resources, and track record of partnerships and positive outcomes.

In order to disrupt or overcome the barriers present on the right-hand side of the feedback loop, a multi-pronged, systems approach is required. In the next chapter, we propose five intervention strategies designed to address these barriers in different ways.

25

PART 3. CREATING THE EMERGENT FUTURE: STRATEGIES TO TRANSFORM THE LANDSCAPE

3.1 INTRODUCING INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The current landscape of urban planning community engagement is a complex web of systems and dynamic relationships. When examined through the lens of community empowerment, the current landscape exhibits reinforcing patterns that can negatively impact community participation and social trust.

Shifting the system to one that empowers the community members to design their own urban living necessitates breaking away from these patterns. As we look for ways to do so, we applied the leverage points framework and developed five intervention strategies. According to the renowned systems thinker Donella Meadows, leverage points are defined as the "places within a complex system (a corporation, an economy, a living body, a city, an ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything". Using these leverage points, the intervention strategies are designed to create impactful changes with ripple effects across the entire system (Meadows, n.d.).

Figure 12 on the right shows Meadows' twelve systemic leverage points, which, read from left to right, increase in complexity, scale, and potential to impact change at a systemic level. To design intervention that would be most impactful for community empowerment and participation, we considered the leverage points that affect the most acute and prominent barriers. Focusing on these areas, we created five strategies that practitioners in the urban planning and community engagement space can prioritize to shift the status quo of the current landscape.

It should be noted that these five intervention strategies span the leverage points, from low impact and low effort to high impact and high effort. Rather than recommending strategies that are solely high impact and effort, we have designed a range of interventions that can be actioned on according to available resources and timing, with the goal being that they can be applied either as standalone activities or in combination with one another. Our hope is that these intervention strategies will create emergent compounding effects that will, over time, ultimately result in major shifts to the status quo paradigm.

We also recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to how change should be tackled, and successfully activating these strategies is context-dependent. The strategies and detailed tactics should be adapted to fit the context of the organization and stakeholders who are executing them.

Figure 12 illustrates where these intervention strategies fall across the twelve leverage points in terms of systemic effort and impact:

1. Grow the digital toolkit

2. Run pilot program experiments

3. Establish community trust and partnerships
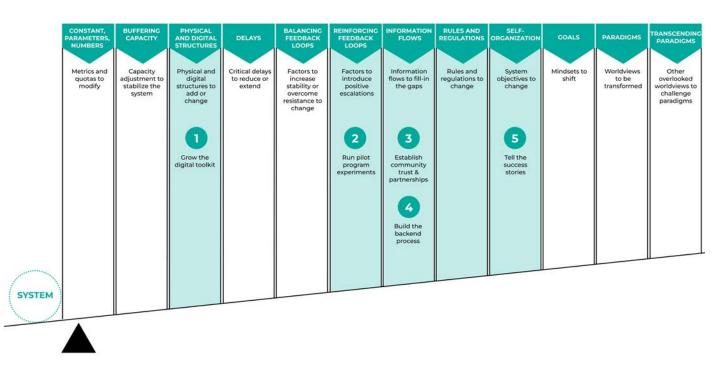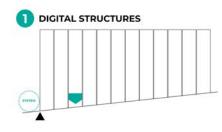
4. Build the backend process

5. Tell the success stories

Figure 13: Leverage points and intervention strategies

3.2 INTERVENTION STRATEGY #1

Grow the digital toolkit

① DIGITAL STRUCTURES

Stakeholders Involved: Who should action this?

Owners: The City Planning and Development Office, and/or private developers who specialize in community engagement should lead this initiative, along with their respective IT department and specialists, and procurement teams.

Supporters: Government officials to sign off the project and provide guidance on policy and legal requirements, design research firms, third-party tech consultants as strategic implementation and oversight partners, and community members and CBOs to provide input for development, implementation, and use of the digital tools.

Rationale: Why does this matter?

Increasing accessibility for community participation is a pressing concern affecting the equity of community engagement. The key stakeholders who initiate and oversee urban planning projects have the responsibility and accountability to increase the channels through which community members can participate.

Using multi-modal digital tools that allow for different methods of participation from community members can increase both participation levels, as well as accessibility. This also allows for rich and effective data collection, which can better support decision-making at all phases of the development process.

Strategy: What does this entail?

Explore or increase the use of digital tools to facilitate an open dialogue between communities, municipalities, and private developers and boost community engagement in urban planning decision-making. Start first by understanding the needs of the community members that need to be engaged to ensure that accessibility is front and center. The choices made about which tools to use, when, and with which demographic groups should make it possible for rich, equal and representative participation to happen, and for diverse ideas and concerns to be captured.

This should allow community members not only to learn more about development projects and how they can contribute, but to interact with one another, creating a more transparent and collaborative approach to urban planning. Over time, using multimodal and accessible digital tools will help build trust and transparency, gain a diverse representation of participants and crowdsourced ideas, and encourage community-led initiatives to form that can be supported by the municipal government.

Example Tactics: What does this look like in practice?

- **Creating an interactive website** that allows for exploring urban planning projects and provides opportunities for feedback to help people engage with the projects when they want. This can also effectively educate the public about the urban planning process, leading to increased interest in participation and transparency.

- **Providing a mapping tool** that allows community members to visualize and provide feedback on urban planning projects. Particularly, for those whose physical distance is a hindering factor to participation, this can significantly alleviate the burden of having to travel to a site to understand the context of the project.

- **Hosting virtual educational sessions** on urban planning topics can help fill the knowledge gap for community members. Many technology platforms are suitable for this; formats such as podcasts, social media, or mobile apps could be practical for sharing knowledge widely while making it fun and interactive. Using tech platforms to help upskill community members can generate more interest in participation.

Risks and Assumptions: What else should be considered?

- Implementation without considering community needs around digital literacy and accessibility is dangerous and can lead to further entrenching the effects of the digital divide. This could lead to wasting money and resources without reaching the intended audiences.

- Data privacy on digital platforms is a serious concern, and the security measures should be implemented. Information about how citizen data and privacy are being managed should be disclosed with transparency.

"The whole point is for everybody to be involved, but to do that, people must be comfortable with the technology. It's also critical to think about which voices are not represented, and how much work it takes to reach people and design processes that work for them – to get into those communities and really reach people where they are."

-A community member

Implementation Roadmap

1. **Project Initiation**

   - Set clear objectives, desired outcomes, scope, and project governance for the project.

   - Work with IT to take an inventory of resources and determine what to leverage and where the gaps are.

   - Conduct an audit of the current digital tools used for community engagement, as well as those already used by community members.

   - Formulate a project plan and socialize to gain buy-in and approval for funding.

   - Engage vendors for research, recommendation, and pilot implementation.

2. **Research and Analysis**

   - Identify the target demographic to increase participation with the relevant community members and groups.

   - Research user needs, accessibility requirements, and preferences to inform the design of the tech platform.

   - Define central design principles and success criteria for usability, accessibility, security, and privacy requirements that can be used across all implementation projects.

3. **Design and Development**

   - Collaborate with IT and external vendors to develop the tech platform, including UI functionalities and features, while meeting design success criteria.

   - Test the product to ensure quality assurance and fix any issues identified.

4. **Launch and Adoption**

   - Promote the platform with the target audience through social media, media, email, and community events, and launch the platform.

   - Track user adoption and engagement with the platform and analyze user feedback to iterate on the product.

5. **Evaluate, Maintain, and Scale**

   - Monitor the use rates, feedback quality, and overall satisfaction rates to analyze the platform's impact ongoingly.

   - Maintain the platform, including providing updates and bug fixes, and customer support.

   - Consider expanding the platform to other regions or other demographic accessibility needs.

Success Signposts

Near-term: There is an increase in the number of citizens engaging with the digital platform, as measured by the platform traffic and registration. Other engagement channels, such as a virtual town hall, may see a spillover effect and increased participation.

Mid-term: Community feedback data is richer and more diverse than before, proving the accessibility and equity the platform provides. Buy-in for new or further development of multimodal digital tools may increase as stakeholders understand the value of the tech tools.

Long-term: The community's diverse representation and engagement have increased. They are more empowered to lead and co-lead initiatives within their communities and have access to multimodal digital tools and channels. This positively impacts public trust, and urban planning engagements are sustainable and continuous.

Run pilot program experiments

② REINFORCING FEEDBACK LOOPS

Stakeholders Involved: Who should action this?

Owners: Local government actors within the City Planning and Development Office should be the key owners of this initiative, helping to create the pilot program infrastructure, and then inviting other key stakeholders to participate in a co-governance model.

Supporters: Community-based organizations should be deeply involved as the channels through which key citizens are recruited, engaged, and partnered with. Private developers can also be involved on lower-scale projects to assist with piloting a co-governance model and incorporating engagement outcomes into urban planning designs.

Rationale: Why does this matter?

This intervention strategy tackles a few system level barriers to building community co-governance. First, the idea of community co-governance within urban planning is still in its infancy, and more tangible proof points are needed in order to demonstrate the benefits so that key stakeholders can become bought in to the idea. Second, involving more stakeholders (local government, private sector, and community organizations) helps to create more network effects in order to share out the results from pilot programs.

Finally, pilot programs can be set up as low-risk experiments that are run with a fixed budget and timeline – this lowers the barrier to implementation and can make it more appealing for various stakeholders to participate.

Strategy: What does this entail?

Leverage existing community infrastructure in order to launch, run, and share results from small, incremental pilot programs where community groups are embedded into the urban planning decision making process. Foster collaboration and partnership between local government and community organizations in order to speed up the recruitment and organization process, and work with private developers who are already exhibiting openness to community engagement in order to build out a set of proof points that can be leveraged to build case studies and storytell within the industry.

Example Tactics: What does this look like in practice?

- **Increase partnerships** between the municipal government and community-based organizations (eg. Community Land Trusts, Non-profits, etc.) that already have established trust with local residents to find more ways to embed community voices throughout the urban planning decision-making process, contributing to building a foundation of trust.

- **Pilot embedded community initiatives** like Neighbourhood Planning Tables for small-scale urban planning projects, where community members can co-develop a set of shared success criteria along-side key stakeholders to de-risk projects, build trust, and increase alignment.

- **Leverage program pilot infrastructure** to introduce a 'pre-proposal pitch' process, where private developers would be encouraged to pitch early-stage ideas to a panel of community members and incorporate feedback to increase desirability.

Risks and Assumptions: What else should be considered?

- This approach should first be applied to problems or projects that are well-scoped and smaller in nature, that still affect the public (e.g. a temporary use for an in-fill lot, a small public park, etc).

Implementation Roadmap

1. **Project Initiation**

   - Set clear objectives, desired outcomes, and success criteria for the project.

   - Create a multi-stakeholder committee that consists of municipal government, developer, and community organization representatives to co-govern the pilot program.

   - Create a project plan to socialize the initiative internally in order to gain buy-in and any additional budget required.

   - Engage vendors as required for consultation, research, and/or facilitation.

2. **Research and Analysis**

   - Establish evaluation criteria for possible pilot projects based on stakeholder needs and capabilities, project size, scope and stage, and community impact.

   - Conduct an audit of existing pilot project opportunities and shortlist according to evaluation criteria, prioritizing opportunities with a high level of short-term feasibility.

   - Conduct research with key stakeholders to inform successful process design.

3. **Design and Development**

   - Collaborate with community organization and designers / developers to prototype a multi-stage, agile community engagement process.

   - Create a temporary 'fast track' approval for pilot programs and relevant outcomes within the municipal government to speed up experimentation learnings.

   - Ensure that through this process, the community 'scope of influence' is clear, and that engagement is sequenced to match up with design decision making timelines.

   - Test out the engagement process prototype with each stakeholder group before launching in order to ensure quality, identify and fix key issues.

4. **Launch and Adoption**

   - Execute the community engagement process, leveraging community-based organizations and promoting developer and government involvement at all stages.

   - Leverage community-based organizations' trust infrastructure to promote equitable recruitment and engagement.

   - Incorporate community engagement outcomes into final development outcome, ensuring clear communication with all stakeholders throughout.

5. **Evaluate, Maintain, and Scale**

   - Conduct a post-mortem of the pilot program initiative to uncover successes, failures, and key changes to make for the next iteration.

   - Repeat this process again, incorporating changes and fixes from the first pilot program.

   - Share success stories widely in order to gain public support and momentum for future pilot projects, and to ensure likelihood of converting pilots into permanent infrastructure.

Success Signposts
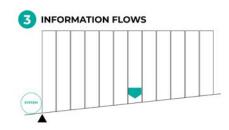
Near-term: Increase in the number of municipal government-led pilot programs for community-involved urban planning projects.

Mid-term: Increase in the number of stories and example of private developers partnering with community organizations earlier on in the urban planning process through pilot or permanent infrastructure.

Long-term: Strong foundation of community trust and positive past urban planning outcomes have enabled evergreen, embedded municipal infrastructure that means community voices are a part of shaping urban development projects in their respective neighborhoods.

3.4 INTERVENTION STRATEGY #3

Establish community trust and partnerships

3 INFORMATION FLOWS

Stakeholders Involved: Who should action this?

Owners: The City Planning and Development Office should own this initiative, coordinating with other municipal agencies and departments who are overseeing community engagement initiatives.

Supporters: Community-based organizations should work alongside municipal government to act as channels and touchpoints to citizens.

Rationale: Why does this matter?

Community members often feel left out of the urban planning process, despite being key constituents and stakeholders in the outcomes. Reasons include: lack of awareness about various planning initiatives; not knowing whether or how they're able to get involved to voice their opinion; little to no awareness of the impacts of outcomes on their neighborhood. As a result, many community members have a growing sense of distrust in private development companies as well as municipal government because they feel disregarded and unheard in these outcomes that affect them, which contributes to a negative feedback loop for future development.

"There needs to be a multi-layered approach to community engagement. It's the only way to make sure that a diversity of voices are actually at the table."

- Community member

Strategy: What does this entail?

Increase the quantity of touchpoints for community members to learn about urban planning initiatives that affect them to build awareness about the project itself (see Intervention Strategy #1), as well as the ways in which they are being encouraged to participate. Throughout the project, increase the quality and quantity of touchpoints & channels through which community members can engage and provide feedback, as well as stay up to date on project progress and decision making.

This will ensure that more community members can be directed into the "top of the funnel" as well as retained throughout the process of community engagement. Provided the engagement process is run fairly and equitably this strategy should aim to build credibility and trust with community members over time, contributing to a positive feedback loop around trust between the public, municipal government, and private developers.

Example Tactics: What does this look like in practice?

- **Partnerships with local community networks** and infrastructure (e.g. community organizations, centres, volunteer groups, local businesses, events, etc.) to socialize upcoming projects and opportunities for community members to engage.

- **Omnichannel campaigns** active during the lifecycle of an urban planning initiative that indicate how community members should get involved, key dates, project timeline and decision-making framework, and easy ways to share information with others.

- **Incorporation of digital tools** that allow community members to gain visibility on the status of a project, transparency into how community feedback is being received and acted on, and other ways to participate.

Risks and Assumptions: What else should be considered?

- This strategy must address the level of trust that is present in the community or communities it is attempting to engage with. If trust is low, pairing this approach with Intervention Strategy #2 to establish trust on a smaller scale may be the best approach.

Implementation Roadmap

1. **Project Initiation**

   - Work with the multi-stakeholder committee formed as part of Intervention Strategy #2, as well as those who are responsible for Intervention Strategy #1.

   - Assign a community outreach lead who can own this strategy.

   - Create a project plan to socialize the initiative internally in order to gain buy-in and any additional budget required.

   - Establish project scope that aligns with Intervention Strategy #2, along with success criteria and metrics.

2. **Research and Analysis**

   - Audit of existing communication channels (digital, physical, on-site, etc).

   - Identify opportunities to set up new channels & touchpoints, leveraging digital tools in Intervention #1.

   - Identify opportunities to leverage existing community-based organizations' channels and infra-structure.

3. **Design and Development**

   - Design an omnichannel community outreach campaign leveraging identified channels above.

   - Ensure that campaign is designed to sync up with the feedback and design cycles in Intervention Strategy #2, so that this strategy acts as a layer within the pilot program process.

4. **Launch and Adoption**

   - Work with CBOs, Intervention Strategy #1 and #2 teams to launch the omnichannel campaign effort as part of the pilot program.

5. **Evaluate, Maintain, and Scale**

   - Conduct a post-mortem of the pilot program initiative to uncover successes, failures, and key changes to make for the next iteration.

   - Repeat this process again, incorporating changes and fixes from the first pilot program.

Success Signposts
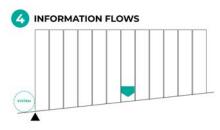
Near-term: Increase in public awareness to higher number of community participation in urban planning engagements.

Mid-term: Increase in awareness and meaningful participation from underserved and diverse communities, displayed by representation data across all municipal planning engagements. Community feedback is collected, with measurements of trust established.

Long-term: Greater number of projects with a participatory governance model as a result of proven success examples. Continuous monitoring of community feedback shows growing levels of trust from citizens who participate as well as affected communities.

Build the backend process

4 INFORMATION FLOWS

Stakeholders Involved: Who should action this?

Owners: Government urban planning offices and officials to sign off the project and oversee the project development, and private developers with a strong capability in community engagement.

Supporters: All internal teams who are part of a typical urban planning project, third party engagement facilitators who may be part of the engagement phase(s), Human Resources and IT, and business process design consultants.

Rationale: Why does this matter?

Initiating stakeholders in urban planning projects may run projects through multiple key phases (e.g., planning and conceptualization, design, construction, etc.). The issue is that teams operating as part of different workstreams work in silos without cross-functional communication, meaning that community engagements often occur as an isolated initiative, disconnected from the design decisions that they should be helping to guide.

In practice, this may look like community engagements where the wrong questions are being asked, community members are being asked for their input without being able to see how it will impact the outcome, or the 'scope of influence' is unclear. This limits the community's ability to influence a project, which erodes public trust and harms the possibility of engagement in future projects.

"We separate the engagement process from other processes that the engagement process is supposed to influence. It's really all one process. When we conceptualize these things as separate processes that often inadvertently lead to ineffective or what can be seen as insincere public engagement."

- A community engagement SME

Strategy: What does this entail?

The stakeholder implementing this strategy can start by examining the current workflow for urban planning projects and then developing a process that removes silos and enables cross-functional collaboration. At the same time, anchor the overarching process by engagement-related goals and metrics so that the project outcome for every team and every project phase is better aligned with community-centred goals and metrics. Doing so creates a project process that integrates a wide range of specialized professionals and layers of government. At the same time, the overarching goals for community benefits are visible to all project teams.

Example Tactics: What does this look like in practice?

- **Embed community engagement goals into the overall project** goals at the outset of the project. Project teams from different phases of a development project can come together and align on what kind of community input benefits the project's success and when engagements should be conducted. By embedding community engagement goals in all project phases, teams create direct links between different stages of the project and community benefit.

- **Redefine roles and responsibilities** and develop a communication plan. Streamlining the backend workflow may mean that the roles and responsibilities may shift. Redefine and align the tasks and their distribution so everyone knows what is expected of them. Additionally, develop a communication plan outlining how the different teams will communicate throughout the project, including reassessing regular status updates and their purpose.

- **Incorporate community engagement channels** and tools into the project workflow. Leverage the tools and techniques the engagement teams use to be embedded throughout the project to connect with the community continuously. (See interventions 1 and 2 for details about technological tools)

Risks and Assumptions: What else should be considered?

- Large scale urban planning projects often take several years from start to finish. The variability in project timeline, scope, and staff change must be considered to ensure adaptability of a solution. This may also add an additional element of resistance to the changes as streamlining often creates shifts in power dynamics.

- The relationship between the project workflow and the public's perception of community engagement may be context dependent and requires further examination to validate.

Implementation Roadmap

1. **Project Initiation**

   - Establish the need for a cross-functional project team with a working group.

   - Identify the key departments and individuals that will be involved in the project.

   - Develop a project plan that outlines goals, objectives, timeline, milestones, and outputs and socialize to gain buy-in and approval.

   - Engage process design vendors as necessary.

2. **Research and Analysis**

   - Assess the current workflow—the roles and responsibilities of the team members over the course of a urban planning project, the communication methods and tools.

   - Conduct a cause-and-effect analysis of how the gaps relate to community satisfaction.

   - Engage with all the teams involved to identify what works well, what needs to be better leveraged, and what needs to be removed from the current workflow.

3. **Design and Development**

   - Establish metrics that all teams can use and clearly defined who they relate to community engagement and satisfaction.

   - Develop a communication plan that outlines how the teams will communicate with each other.

   - Clarify and align team roles and responsibilities and define decision-making processes across teams.

   - Continue to work with HR and IT to ensure the proposed changes can be implemented.

   - Test the new workflow with a small group and improve based on the feedback.

4. **Launch and Adoption**

   - Socialize the new workflow and pilot with a small scale project.

   - Provide training and support to help teams adapt to the changes.

5. **Evaluate, Maintain, and Scale**

   - Solicit feedback from team members to evaluate the new workflow and address them on a regular basis.

   - Celebrate successes and apply the workflow to larger projects.

Success Signposts
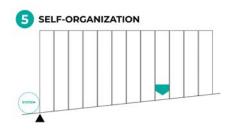
Near-term: Community engagement of different levels and methods occurs throughout an urban development project, building towards public satisfaction. Teams start to see the benefits of the new workflow with metrics such as decreased workflow cycle time and positive responses through employee engagement.

Mid-term: The cross-functional workflow to urban development projects becomes repeatable and ever-green.

Long-term: Having experienced how engagements directly influence the outcome of a project, community participation in engagements increases. This increase positively impacts social trust and cohesion.

Tell the success stories

⑤ SELF-ORGANIZATION

Stakeholders Involved: Who should action this?

Owners: Organizations such as professional associations in the developer community, or community-based organizations with a deep interest in influencing the urban planning development processes to be more community-centric.

Supporters: Municipal planning and development offices, community-based organizations who are invested in participatory engagements, or private developers who are leading the way in community engagement.

(?) Rationale: Why does this matter?

There is a dominant mindset in the private sector that community engagement is a costly, time-consuming process with little to no impact on the final project outcome. With municipal laws mandating very little community engagement on urban planning projects, and a lack of industry understanding about the potential opportunities and practical benefits that citizen collaboration offers, the industry incentive to practice it remains low. To reverse this trend and shift mindsets, storytelling can be leveraged to showcase the benefits of community engagement – both financial and social – to developers and encourage them to implement this as a best practice.   .

Success examples coming from the industry can provide relatable metrics and know-how with a proof of concept. Through these positive examples and reinforcements, progress can happen organically, with deep community engagement and accountability being a natural part of a development project.

Strategy: What does this entail?

Organizations implementing this strategy can demonstrate the tangible benefits of deep community engagements within the developer ecosystem. Notably, the endorsement and rationale for community engagement from within the industry can help build confidence in relevant and practical ways.
An important prerequisite is the completion of some or all of the prior interventions to build the success cases. Over time, this might lead to more developer companies seeing the value of early and deep community engagement and changing their development practices.

Example Tactics: What does this look like in practice?

• **Codify the benefits of community engagement** with measurable outcomes. Actors amplifying the benefits of community engagement can communicate how early and in-depth community engagements benefit the project outcome through risk mitigation, reducing costly delays, and achieving stronger overall constituent satisfaction.

• **Show what a community engagement process looks like.** The amplifying actor can disseminate practical know-how on how an organization might increase community engagement through formal and informal industry knowledge-sharing platforms. For example, organizations with less experience in community engagement might benefit from knowing what financial and human resources are necessary to equip themselves and what the project phases and timeline might look like with additional engagement efforts.

• **Showcase success stories widely** through mutual platforms within the industry ecosystem. Conducting deep community engagement is still an emerging signal in the overall developer ecosystem, and convincing more organizations to follow suit will require storytelling the benefits and pitfalls widely. Actioning this might involve leveraging social media platforms, industry conferences, and   other journalism media channels to tell the story of success examples.

⚠ Risks and Assumptions: What else should be considered?

• Impacting system-wide change will take time, so organizations implementing this strategy should consider lean and agile approaches in the short term, and sustainable efforts that can be more heavily resourced over the long term as success signposts are realized.

• The details of what the benefits exist may be context-specific, so stories should hone in on universal benefits that matter most as they relate to sustainable urban and community development best practices.

PART 4. LOOKING FORWARD

4.1 HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Through this work, we've encountered many people—expert practitioners in the urban planning field, academics, and community members—who all want to spur change around urban planning community engagement and reimagine what co-creating urban living could look like.

When we asked interview participants what their ideal future of urban planning community engagement might look like as part of our primary research, we found that there is a strong universal desire to explore new models and tools in order to enable easy, accessible, and frequent community participation by everyone.

There is also a desire to build capacity in the community by sharing knowledge on urban planning and co-creation. Doing so can help demystify the complexity of the subject matter and foster interest, particularly in under-represented populations. Many expressed the need to continue building buy-in for deep engagements -- building support and capacity for deep engagement will take time, and the value of this approach will ultimately be demonstrated through telling stories about successful examples. More stories of successful examples will also naturally lead to better resourcing for community engagement initiatives for government, private developers, and community not-for-profits.

"People are realizing what power lies within communities and how they can shape public spaces. We don't know what the perfect model looks like. And ambiguity is not something to be like scared of in that sense. It's something to be embraced."

– A workshop participant SME

Most importantly, there is a desire to practice an authentic shift of power by introducing new channels and models that enable community members to self-organize and initiate projects, forming true symbiotic partnerships with the government and private developers. .

"The future should be inclusive. Everyone should be able to speak, express. We need to be advocates of people as designers."

– A workshop participant SME

Extrapolating on what we heard and the desired outcomes of the intervention strategies, we illustrate what the transition from the current status quo to a preferred future might look like using a causal layered analysis as a framework (Inayatullah, 1998). This future is what we consider the North Star vision for community engagement in urban planning, which provides the purpose and orientation when activating the intervention strategies.

38

FROM THE STATUS QUO...

- Low participation for community engagements
- Unfair demographic representation
- Inaccessible engagements
- Delays in project development
- Unsatisfactory final outcome
- Divisive conversations leading to protests and counter movements

TO THE NORTH STAR VISION

- Regular, continuous participation in community engagements
- Built sites that reflect community needs and bring people together
- Youth, children, and senior participation
- Community-initiated and run projects
- Just representation

Day-to-day Manifestations
What are the visible events and patterns?

- Ineffective and siloed urban planning workflow
- Low familiarity and maturity of participatory engagement approaches
- Political attitudes hindering progress for community engagement
- The digital divide
- Social stratification

Systemic Causes
What structures and trends are causing events?

- Participatory governance
- Rigorous engagement requirements and accountability measures
- Clear incentives for deep collaboration with the community
- Multi-modal tools and methods

- Financial-profit-centered
- Experts know best mindset
- Low trust toward authority
- Land ownership equals power

Worldview and Values
What values shape the system?

- Pluralism
- Acknowledgment of interdependence across people and sectors
- Diversity breeds resilience
- Life-centered design
- Trust

Power is finite and should be maintained.

Myth and Metaphor
What deeply held beliefs exist?

Power is fluid and abundant.

Figure 14: Transition toward North Star vision

The table below describes the transition to the North Star vision by contextualizing each level of the causal layered analysis with more details.

	Instead of the Status Quo…	The North Star vision looks like…
Myth and Metaphor	Power is finite and moves from top to bottom; something that should be maintained.	Power is understood as fluid and abundant; something that can be shared to empower each other.
Worldviews and Values	The dominant worldviews driving the system are those held by political and private actors in that land ownership equates to power. Therefore, the system skews in property owners' favor, and land is seen as a financial asset that should be extracted and sold to the highest bidder. The mindset of 'experts know best' is deeply ingrained, and trained experts alone carry the relevant knowledge. The misalignment of values among the actors at all levels of society creates polarization and low social trust.	Diversity is seen and leveraged as an integral asset to co-create a resilient urban living that centers the community's cultures, values, and realities. Stakeholders' values are based on pluralism, acknowledging that each person's lived experiences are equally valid. The true purpose of urban planning co-creation is to build trust and relationships, regardless of who the initiating party is. The urban planning landscape is a multistakeholder one by nature and exists to foster collaboration between groups.
Systemic Causes	Political interests favor private development of urban real estate, which negatively impacts community engagements. Urban planning project teams work under declining budgets and silos, leading to low awareness of participatory engagement. Social stratification adds to the worsening pattern of low participation and unfair demographic representation in engagements. The growing chasm of the digital divide also creates two very different pictures of civic literacy, awareness, and democratic participation.	Systems are in place to enable and grow participatory governance in urban planning. Innovative tools and methods allow for diverse and representative participation in engagements. Driven by social and political pressure, the municipal and private sector actors increase the public engagement requirements and incentives, so that co-creating with community members is viewed as a leading best practice and business as usual.
Day-to-day Manifestations	The citizen participation rate is low, and demographic representation is unfair due to inaccessible and often performative engagements. Delays due to resistance from concerned community members are common, and outcomes are often unsatisfactory for the community.	Collaboration among the community, urban planning practitioners, regulators, and facilitators across sectors is continuous and transparent, leading to accumulative results from one project to the next. Built sites strengthen the health and wellbeing of community members, and build trust back into the social fabric.

Table 1. Deep dive into the transition to North Star vision

4.2 ACTIVATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Our team will continue to validate and socialize this work post-submission to OCAD University. This research paper was accepted to the AMPS Conference (Architecture, Media, Politics, Society), and the team will present the work at the conference's New York City chapter—Livable Cities—in June 2023. Through the presentation, we will share the key findings, case examples of signals that point towards the preferred future, and the intervention strategies. We also plan to share the work with academics and practitioners from around the world to validate our work and learn about other community enagement models to spark cross-pollination of ideas.

Propelling intervention strategies in the field

We are keen to continue propelling progress in the urban planning field by activating the five intervention strategies. We recognize that the application of the proposed intervention strategies depends on the context that an organization sits within. For this reason, we will validate our work with practitioners across sectors to better understand the nuances of the organizations for which our work may apply. From this, we hope to gain a clearer picture of their most pressing needs and goals and modify the proposed strategies to frame them according to this context.

Below, Table 2 outlines our proposed approach for activating the intervention strategies with proposed partners, anchoring questions, and potential outputs.

	OUR KEY PARTNERS	QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE	POTENTIAL OUTPUTS
INTERVENTION STRATEGY #1 Grow the digital toolkit	**Municipal, provincial, and/or federal government** looking to widen community participation **Private developers** with a desire to scale up their engagement efforts	How might we leverage digital tools to transform the community's access to urban planning engagements? What does the engagement journey look like for those who participate and those who don't? What are the pain points and moments of truth where the most drop-offs happen? How is the 'digital divide' affecting participation in a given area? How might digital tools impact the future of urban planning community engagements? What are the potential risks of the tools, and how can we mitigate them?	Synthesized research of factors that contribute to inaction, drop-off, and full participation in a focus population. Design principles that ensure the solutions track the needs of the focus population. Environmental scanning of digital tools, trends, and signals, and implications of these on the future of urban planning community engagements. Concept prototypes of digital tools that target key moments. Service blueprint of a community member's journey and inter-action using the new concepts and what resources, process, and systems are required to enable the journey.
INTERVENTION STRATEGY #2 Run pilot program experiments	**Municipal, provincial, and/or federal government** looking to find innovative ways to collaborate with the community members **Private developers** looking to deepen their community engagement capabilities **Community-based organizations** looking to strengthen relationships with the community through co-creation	How might we create a project collaboration model that allows community members to be equal-power decision-makers? What does community co-governance look like in the future, and what implications do they bear for the present day? What community co-governance models exist in the landscape, and how would that apply to a specific organizational context? What possibilities and risks do they imply? What are the innovative ways to improve the current governance model, and what solutions are feasible, desirable, and viable to pilot? What metrics indicate successful collaboration and distribution of power?	Assessment of an existing governance model with its strengths and gaps. Three horizons of community co-governance to define the desired future state and identify the levers that help shift towards the desired future state. Prioritized direction and tactics that can be applied to shift the power dynamics in a given governance model.

	OUR KEY PARTNERS	QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE	POTENTIAL OUTPUTS
INTERVENTION STRATEGY #3 Establish community trust and partnerships	**Municipal, provincial, and/or federal government** looking to increase their presence in the community to increase participation in engagements **Private developers and/or community-based organizations** looking to improve the quality of their community engagement efforts	How might we proactively meet the community members where they are so that people have straightforward ways to participate and contribute to the issues they care about? What factors contribute to participation vs. inaction for a focus population? What are the community's expectations around transparency? What do they perceive as transparent, and where do they wish for more transparency?	Research insights on why a focus population chooses to participate or not in a community engagement Concept prototypes of services or products that increases the organization's presence and engagement entry points in the community Service blueprint of the concept, including an experience journey of a community member and what touch points, staff, resources, processes, and systems are needed to bring the experience to life
INTERVENTION STRATEGY #4 Build the backend process	**Municipal, provincial, and/or federal government** looking to improve their urban planning project workflow **Private developers** looking to improve their community engagement process	How might we create an efficient, collaborative, sustainable project workflow while centering community engagement? What are the bottlenecks in the current project workflow? What is working well? How do the inefficiencies in the process manifest for the community members participating in an engagement?	Process map illustrating the desired team workflow and what tools, systems, process, and resources are needed to bring the process to life Toolkit that supports the implementation of the process map Renewed vision, mission, values for uniting the teams that work together for an urban planning project
INTERVENTION-STRATEGY #5 Tell the success stories	**Professional associations** in the developer community **Community-based organizations** with a deep interest in working to influence the urban planning development processes	How might we create a developer ecosystem that prioritizes community engagement in urban planning projects? How does doing more in-depth community engagement translate to cost savings and community satisfaction?	Ecosystem map with key levers of change Ecosystem activation playbook and tactics Implementation roadmap
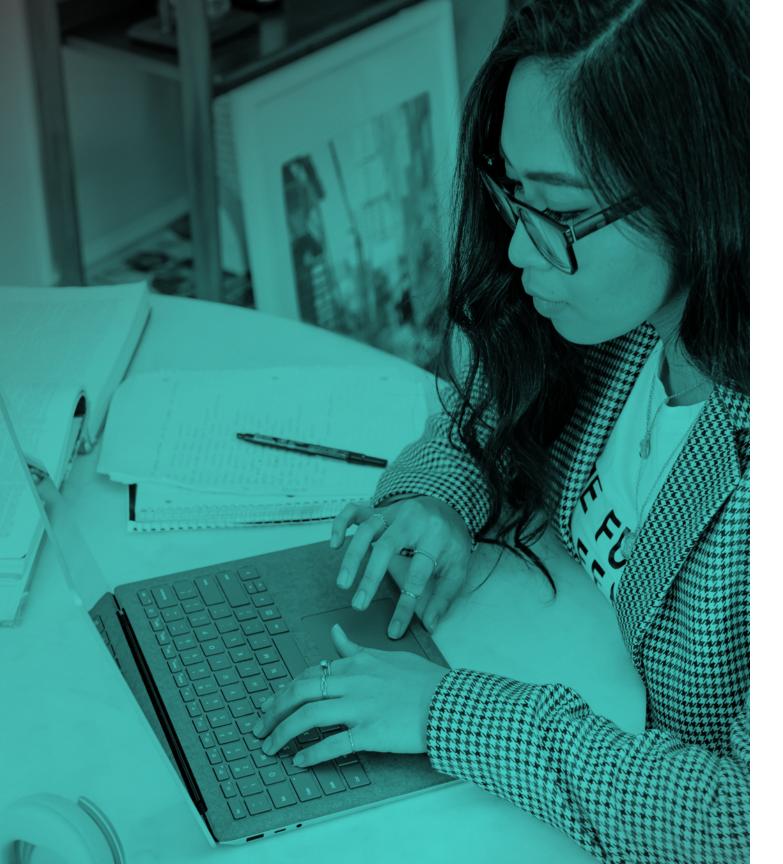
Table 2. Intervention strategy activation

Leveraging team knowledge and expertise

In addition to leveraging this work, the team brings expertise in service and UX design, design research, and strategic foresight. We recognize that urban planning projects' lifespan from first ideas to implementation typically takes years. The world and the community composition and their needs might change significantly between the start point and the completion of the project. Therefore, solving to improve urban planning community engagements requires a thorough consideration of future possibilities while understanding the needs of the stakeholders through deep qualitative research.
By bringing a combination of our capabilities, we can ensure the solutions are resilient under multiple future possibilities.

4.3 FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH

Urban planning community engagement is a dynamic and evolving field that requires ongoing research and innovation. Particularly, ongoing research and development in this field is increasingly important as urbanization trends increase globally. We need more solutions that are grounded in community needs and perspectives.

To do that, we encourage fellow collaborators to build on this paper by pursuing other areas of further research, including:

- The social, private sector, and governmental factors that contribute to the maturity of community engagement practices

- The cultural and social factors that influence and impact community trust and civic participation

- The needs and barriers of historically marginalized communities in participating in urban living co-creations

- The possible futures of community co-creation given increasing urbanization and advancing technology

- Quantitative methods to measure the success and prove the value of deep community engagement in urban planning

Ultimately, ongoing research and development in this field will be crucial for co-creating urban living that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all community members.

PART 5. TEAM REFLECTIONS

CO-CREATING AS A TEAM

In pursuing this MRP topic, part of our collective goal was to be able to reflect on our experience of undergoing the process of co-creation; where we were all actively involved in scoping, shaping, producing, and delivering the final outcome.

It's not typical for Major Research Projects in the SFI program to be completed in a group format, yet typically the challenges being addressed are wicked ones, where having diverse skills and perspectives on the team is beneficial. Our topic was no exception, and we found that working together gave us the opportunity to explore a complex topic from multiple angles, debate and build on each other's' ideas, and co-develop a wider perspective as a team.

That being said, we did have some early challenges to overcome and the building blocks we put in place helped us to succeed:

- **Getting to know each other:** At the outset of the project, we took time to learn about each other's preferred problem-solving styles using tools like the Basadur profile and the Johari window. This set us up for mindful collaboration and understanding how we could leverage each other's strengths. Over the course of the project, all of us stepped up to fill in the gaps and stretched to build new capabilities beyond our preferred styles

- **Plan for the unexpected:** Undertaking an MRP as a team requires collaboration and synchronization—we all live in different cities and time zones and needed to balance work and life along with school, which meant we had to build a robust project plan but remain flexible as unexpected things happen.

- **Staying open to change:** As we defined our area of exploration, we remained flexible enough to incorporate emergent findings, but also keeping things manageable. Being open to change, being flexible with our perspective, and building on one another's' knowledge allowed us to converge at the right time.

There were also some elements of our process that worked very well (that also echoed some of our findings about co-creation in the context of urban planning):

- **Co-creating a safe space:** The space we built together was one where each of us helped to nurture psychological safety, have healthy creative tension, and empower each other to constantly ask questions.

- **Collective learning experience:** Being able to build on each other's' ideas, sense-make together, and filter information through different lenses and biases to arrive at a shared understanding was a magical experience.

- **Co-creating a team charter:** Working with one another as well as our advisor in order to create the conditions for a successful collaboration allowed us to build a solid foundation that we all felt a sense of ownership over.

- **Connecting as humans first:** Recognizing the messy humanity that we all bring to this process was a grounding force in our working sessions – we used fun activities like "one-word exits" to level set, share our feelings, laugh, and support one another.

Among the many other reflections and takeaways from this project, our main one is this:
To go fast, go alone; to go far, go together.

While our process was slightly slower to get started, we built a strong foundation to take our insights & findings further than we ever would have been able to on a solo project. We are proud of what we have built together, and are excited to be able to activate this knowledge in partnership with experts in the field, and provide a platform for future researchers, designers and changemakers to build upon.

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APPENDIX

PART A: METHODOLOGY

Our research for this Major Research Project consisted of four major phases: secondary research via a literature review, primary research via semi-structured interviews, team analysis and synthesis, and an expert workshop. The section below will explain each phase in more detail.

Literature Review

To commence our research, we conducted a scan of existing literature around our primary area of inquiry: citizen co-creation in urban planning. Through reviewing and analyzing a total of 31 academic articles, journal publications, blog posts, news articles, and organizational reports, we refined and scoped our research area, ruling out questions that had already been answered in the existing literature. This process also helped us to establish the research opportunity and a foundational understanding from which to design our primary research.

Qualitative Interviews

To build on this understanding, we conducted a series of qualitative interviews with representatives from four key stakeholder groups: public sector, private sector, facilitators, and citizens. This allowed us to learn more about the nuance and context of their on-the-ground experiences and helped us to form a more robust understanding of our main research question and sub-questions.

These qualitative interviews were semi-structured, and aimed to answer the following research questions:

- *What does a typical citizen collaboration process look like in the context of urban planning projects today?*
- *What are the major roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder?*
- *What are the major motivators and drivers for each stakeholder to engage with citizens?*
- *What are the major barriers and challenges to more equitable citizen co-creation?*
- *What are the major enablers of a successful citizen engagement?*
- *What would an ideal future of citizen co-creation in urban planning look like?*

A total of 20 people participated in interviews, across four main stakeholder groups:

- Public sector: 5
- Private sector: 4
- Engagement facilitators: 8
- Citizens: 3

Our goal was to gather stories and insights that point to not only what's measurable, but also the intangible human aspects that have significant impact on the success of the co-creation project. Therefore, in designing the framework for the interviews, we provided prompts that we believe are launching points for individual storytelling and gave the interviewees as much freedom and agency as we could to ensure they felt comfortable speaking about their experiences. Quotes from the interviews are used throughout the report anonymously with the permission of the interviewees.

Analysis and Synthesis

To analyze the qualitative data collected through stakeholder interviews, we started first by coding the notes and transcripts according to a set of pre-identified keyword tags that tied back our primary areas of investigation. As emergent themes arose, we adjusted the keyword tag list to account for this and continued with the analysis exercise. Once all the interviews were coded, we generated themes and insights by using affinity mapping to identify and cluster similarities between and across stakeholder groups.

With the data analyzed from our primary and secondary research, we then synthesized this information using key artifacts with the goal of understanding the complex system and multistakeholder landscape of citizen collaboration and co-creation in urban planning more readily. These artifacts include:

- **Actors Map:** To demonstrate the level of knowledge and power each actor in the system has relative to each other.
- **Systemigram:** To demonstrate the flows of influence and tension between key stakeholders.
- **Causal Loop Diagram:** To demonstrate the compounding effects of barriers and enablers in the system.
- **Causal Layered Analysis:** To demonstrate the events, patterns, worldviews and deeply held beliefs present in the status quo, as well as those that may be present in the emerging system.

System Interventions Co-Creation Workshop

Using this repository of knowledge gained from our primary and secondary research, we then used Donella Meadow's 'Leverage Points' (Meadows, n.d.) framework to map out and design a series of Intervention Strategies that address our primary research question. Meadows' Leverage Points framework identifies 12 possible levels of intervention, each increasing in complexity and impact in the system. Using our particular findings about challenges and barriers as well as enablers of success to guide us, we refined these strategies to include a description, example tactics, and key stakeholder involved.

To test our theoretical strategies, we then hosted a workshop with four experts who had previously participated in interviews across the public, private, citizen and facilitator stakeholder groups. The workshop allowed us to further refine intervention strategies to account for potential gaps, risks and assumptions, as well as validate the level of viability, feasibility, and desirability of each.

We then incorporated this expert feedback and added in a robust plan of action for each intervention strategy in order to activate this knowledge and begin to affect change at a systemic level.

PART B: SYSTEM RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCES

The descriptions below add additional context to the Systemigram illustrated in Figure 3 in Part 1.

Direct Influences

The Government

Federal to municipal

The federal government sets the policy and funding for urban planning initiatives. This, in turn, affects the municipality by requiring them to comply with and meet federal requirements to secure the financing of their urban planning initiatives. This impacts municipal government in how it prioritizes initiatives to align with the federal government's policies.

Provincial to municipal

The provincial government sets policies, provides funding, and implements legislative actions that shape the region's urban planning direction. In turn, municipalities are obligated to follow and enforce the policies and regulations cascaded to them in their local contexts.

Municipal community engagement office to community

Municipalities' community engagement offices often design, initiate, and recruit for community engagements. Through the engagement, the engagement office collects data on the citizens' needs and concerns to be accounted for during the design, development, and implementation phases. When a smaller community ambassador group represents a community, the engagement office interacts directly with the ambassador group as they work together to solicit the community's opinions on a given project.

Municipal urban planning and development office to external public engagement firms

The municipal planning office often hires an external public engagement firm to design and facilitate engagements. The external firm acts as the government's strategic delivery partner and supports the planning, design, facilitating, and synthesizing of input from the engaged community members. In addition, the external firm reports the collected data and findings to the government to influence the decision-making for the project.

Municipal urban planning and development office to developers

The municipal planning and development office is responsible for granting approvals for development applications submitted by private development companies. The planning and development office has the authority to approve, reject, or provide conditional approvals on development applications based on regulatory laws and the local context. Private development companies must submit formal applications, participate in public consultations, and have their applications reviewed by municipal committees to ensure they meet zoning regulations and comply with by-laws before receiving the final approval.

Private developers

Developers to the federal government

Developers can lobby for access to public land, as it can be potential for a prime location for profit-generating urban development projects. In addition, private development companies tend to petition to change some laws (e.g., environmental laws) to ease their urban development processes. However, the federal government is responsible for regulating and protecting public land and ensuring all development works are carried out in an environmentally sustainable way, which influences the plans private development companies are advocating for.

Developers to the provincial government

Developers can lobby to campaign for changes in regulatory laws regarding land usage and dealing with appeals from citizen groups. One recent example is the Greenbelt land around the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, designated for protecting natural land. Private development companies lobbying for projects promoting housing developments and new job opportunities have enticed the provincial government to grant approvals for development. (Jones, 2022)

Developers to municipal government

Developers can lobby to influence the local planning and design to benefit their interests. These lobbying efforts are carried out in forms of public relations campaigns to display the value of their urban planning initiatives, as well as engaging with decision-makers within the government.

Developers to external community engagement firms

Similar to when the government hires an external firm, developers occasionally hire an external engagement firm to handle the design and facilitation of community engagement. See the Municipal to external public engagement section for details. If conducted early and thoroughly, the data and insights gathered through the engagements can reduce potential delays in approval for development from the municipal government as the community input strengthens the application.

Developers to engineering and architecture firms

Developers often partner with engineering and architecture firms to support the technical aspects of their project's design and development components. Engineering and architecture firms provide technical expertise to ensure that the infrastructure, design plans, and other engineering-related components are correctly conceived and implemented while meeting the regulated building codes and safety standards.

50

Community-based organizations (CBOs)

CBOs to public engagement firms

CBOs sometimes collaborate with public engagement firms to provide community insights. As local CBOs hold expertise and knowledge in community needs and perspectives, engagement firms can leverage their expertise to inform the design decisions for an urban planning project.

CBO to community

In projects where CBOs are directly involved as community facilitators and connectors, CBOs engage directly with the community members to gather the community's perspectives on a given issue.

CBO to Municipal urban planning and development

CBOs help bring their local community context and priorities to the government to inform the decisions for an urban planning project. CBOs may be included in various aspects of city planning, such as affordable housing, public spaces, transportation, and more.

Foundation to local NFP

A large foundation may fund local NFPs to support programs that meet their mission. In this case, a local NFP is an applicant who submits the purpose and descriptions of the planned initiative, hoping to secure funding.

Community

Community to community

In urban planning engagements, participating community members directly influence each other by exchanging ideas. Outside of the engagement session, people can influence others' participation through word-of-mouth or social media.

Community to NFP

When community members are engaged by a local NFP, they provide input on their needs and concerns regarding an urban development project.

Community to Municipal planning and development office

Sometimes community groups interact directly with the municipal government. This relationship may include the methods such as participating in public engagement, lobbying to influence decision-making at the mayoral and councillor level, and signing petitions and sharing them with the government.

Indirect Influences

Municipal Government

Mayor's office to municipal planning and development office

The mayor's office indirectly influences the city planning and development office as they may not be involved in the day-to-day activities. However, the mayor's office is important in providing policy-related guidance, setting priorities, and providing feedback on the CPDO's urban planning initiatives.

Developers to municipal planning and development office

PDCs influence the CPDO in indirect ways during urban planning public engagements. PDCs have their own priorities and interests that do not always align with the greater public (community)'s interests. Large established PDCs also have relationships with city councilors, the mayor's office, and other stakeholders with decision-making power. They utilize the closeness of these relationships to advocate for matters that fulfill their interests and priorities. PDCs are also involved in the design and implementation of new urban projects, and occasionally support CPDO in funding public engagement initiatives that influence the process of how these engagements are implemented.

System Tensions
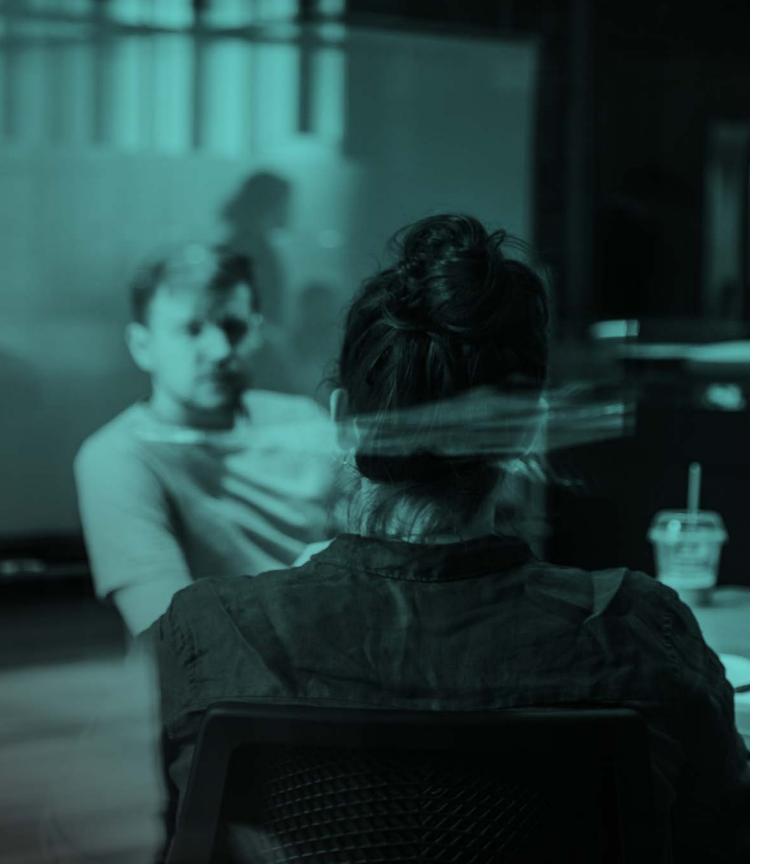
Municipal government

Municipal planning and development office to community

Tensions may arise between the government and the community during community engagement. Contributing factors may include conflicting priorities, lack of inclusion, unmet cultural sensitivity, and inaccessible participation for engagement. Section 2.4 further outlines the challenges and barriers that arise.

Private developers

Developers to public engagement firms / Municipal government to public engagement firms

There may be tension between the two stakeholders concerning the time, scope, and expectations around the depth and nature of the engagements. For example, some developers may perceive community engagement as costly and time-consuming, while engagement firms may consider the time and scope limiting to solicit meaningful input from the community. For the government, it may have other priorities related to the project's scope and budget that limit in-depth engagements.

Developers to municipal planning and development office

Developers, particularly the ones that must prioritize shareholder expectations, may operate with profit as their primary driver. This may manifest as reducing community engagement to meet the bare minimum to save time, money, and resources. This may create value misalignment with the municipal office's effort to reflect the community's perspectives in urban planning more

Developers to community

For developers that see community engagements as barriers to their project plan, tension may arise with the community. Unsatisfied communities may demand negotiations on development decisions or may escalate the matter to bring it up with the government or media. This may lead to the erosion of trust, leaving people to doubt the developer's motives and intentions for future projects.

Community

Community to community

Participating community members bring different opinions to the conversations, and a certain amount of disagreements and conflicts are natural and indicative of a healthy democracy. However, one thing to be mindful of is how the members build a consensus and make decisions to ensure that a small group of voices does not overpower the process.

Building Together: Empowering communities to co-create urban living

By: Ainsleigh Burelle, Emily Rho, and Farah Joy Basha