

Task Force on Council Representation

VANCOUVER
CITY HALL

CITY OF
Vancouver
WASHINGTON

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Outline

- Introduction of Task Force Members
- Project Background and Task Force Work to Date
 - Problem Statement Development
 - Identification of Barriers and Approaches
- Public Involvement Plan
- Next Steps

Introduction of Task Force Members

- Mary Elkin
- Tanisha Harris
- Pat Jollota
- Aemri Marks
- Michael Martin
- Diana Perez
- Glen Yung



Task Force Charter as Approved by City Council

“...to identify, develop and recommend practical strategies and policies, including council nomination by district, that supports elected representation on the City Council that more closely reflects the Vancouver community.”

Project Background and Task Force Work to Date

- 13 Meetings Conducted; Public Comment Accepted at Each Meeting; Meeting Venues Varied to Encourage Participation
- Presentations on Topics Including:
 - Council-Manager Form of Government
 - Work of 2019 Charter Review Committee on Districting and Presentation by Districting Expert
 - City of Vancouver Demographics/Distribution
 - Ranked-Choice Voting
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Problem Statement

Setting public policy which best serves the public interest requires inclusion of diverse community perspectives. Diversity includes age, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, geography and socioeconomic status.

There is a perceived lack of diverse representation on the Vancouver City Council and its appointed Boards and Commissions. Direct and indirect representation of underserved groups and neighborhoods in the community needs to improve and increase.

Low rates of citizen engagement, civic participation, and voter turnout highlight the need to increase community access to local government.



Barrier Identification

Adequate representation is inhibited by barriers, including, but not limited to:

- Accessibility of City Council and reduced public input/comment opportunities
- Lack of diversity in positions appointed by City Council
- How and when elections are conducted -
 - Voting methods which induce vote-splitting
 - Elections for City Council being held on odd-numbered years with resulting low voter turnout
- Insufficient staffing capacity to effectively liaison at the neighborhood level
- Lack of understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by diverse candidates for office in both running and winning election
- Inadequate connection to diverse communities and individuals, and lacking understanding of the practical and logistical obstacles which impede engagement

Approaches

- Ranked-Choice Voting*
- Nomination by Geographic District*
- *Hybridized Option
- Approaches to:
 - Empowering Neighborhoods and Communities
 - Increasing Access to City Council
 - Enhancing Existing and Implementing New Strategies for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Empowering Neighborhoods and Communities

- Increased Neighborhood Outreach/Coordination
 - Assign Council Members to Neighborhood Associations
 - Creative Campaign Highlighting Neighborhood Associations
- Invest in Neighborhood Association and Community Organization Relationships
 - Low/No Cost Perquisite for Neighborhood Leaders
 - Regular Updates to City Council on Neighborhood Assoc/Community Orgs
 - Online and In-Person Formats for Neighborhood Association Meetings with Archiving

Empowering Neighborhoods and Communities (cont.'d)

- Invest in Neighborhood Association and Community Organization Relationships
 - Childcare for Neighborhood Association Meeting Attendees
 - DEI Training for Neighborhood Association Leaders
 - Neighborhood Police Officers and Other City Department Reps Regularly Attend Neighborhood Association Meetings
 - Tours of City Operations for Neighborhood Association Leaders
 - Periodic Invitation for Neighborhood Associations to Attend City Council Meetings

Increasing Access to City Council

- Expansion of City Council Size
- Financial Assistance/Campaign Voucher Programs for Candidates
- Charter Amendments to Reduce Incumbency Bias
- Advocate for Changing RCWs to Enable Even-Year Elections
- DEI Training for City Council, Boards and Commissions
- Reduce Citizen Participation Barriers Related to City Council Meetings:
 - Provide ASL Interpretation
 - Provide Transportation

Increasing Access to City Council (cont.'d)

- Reduce Citizen Participation Barriers Related to City Council Meetings:
 - Provide Childcare at City Council, Board and Commission Meetings
 - Deploy Free Internet Access Throughout City
 - Provide Access to Audio/Video Recordings of City Council, Board, Commission, and Task Force Meetings
 - Hold Council Meetings at Varied Locations, Including Town Hall Style Meetings
 - Coordinate with Community Orgs to Create Financial Assistance Programs for Candidates, Including for Boards and Commissions
 - Conduct Regular Listening Sessions, Citizen Forums, and Town Hall Meetings

New/Enhanced DEI Strategies

- Encourage Diverse Candidates and Increase Civic Participation
 - Sponsor Leadership Clark County Participants
 - Prioritize by Policy Appointment of Underrepresented Candidates to Boards and Commissions
 - Review Board/Commission Appointment Process with Equity Lens
 - Coordinate with Community Orgs to Create Financial Assistance Programs for Candidates, Including for Boards and Commissions
 - Engage in Actively Recruiting Candidates from Underrepresented Communities to Serve on Boards and Commissions

New/Enhanced DEI Strategies (cont.'d)

- Encourage Diverse Candidates and Increase Civic Participation
 - New Resident Welcome Information (multi-lingual) Introducing City Officials, Boards, Commissions, and City Contact Info
- Stipends/Perquisites for Board Commission Service
- Additional Outreach Staffing
- Develop Community Leadership Capacity
 - Citizen Academy
 - Conduct Culturally-Relevant Community Forums to Introduce City

New/Enhanced DEI Strategies (cont.'d)

- Develop Community Leadership Capacity
 - Conduct Leadership Training for Boards and Commissions
 - Youth Council
 - Internship Programs
 - “Shadow a Councilmember” Program
- Present to High School Government Classrooms and Encourage Voter Registration

Public Involvement Plan

- Be Heard Vancouver Webpage
- Online Survey
- Promotion on Social Media Channels
- Virtual Engagement Sessions

Next Steps

- Conduct Public Outreach (late September to mid-October)
- Review and Synthesize Public Input (late October)
- Develop Final Recommendations (November)
- Present Final Recommendations to City Council (December)

Questions and Discussion

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