

**Making our Voices Heard in Planning our Neighbourhoods:
Summary of obstacles, opportunities and future directions in Planning our Neighbourhoods
Forums held in North Toronto, Etobicoke, Scarborough and St Lawrence Centre, April-May, 2008**

Obstacle	Opportunity	Future Directions
Lack of knowledge about the planning process, which is complicated and legalistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify rules (City and Provincial) • Post information about the process on web site, develop other community portals • Learn to speak the language and understand the rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public web site with planning resource materials; increase use of web tools such as blogs. • Expand and strengthen umbrella groups, eg. FoNTRA, PPT
Residents are always in reactive mode, and not being clear what needs to be done, often feel powerless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be proactive, get engaged in initiatives, get in at the beginning. • Recognise that developers have legitimate objectives, that an adversarial approach is not effective, and that a trusting relationship can deliver results • Improve communications between residents' groups to learn from the experiences of others and not reinvent the wheel, e.g. use web sites/ portals etc. as above; umbrella groups and contacts; hold planning forums • City to develop secondary plans so that residents can get ideas and issues resolved as part of process; City to provide earlier notice of development applications • Develop and prioritise goals and focus on these • Have a co-operative attitude and recognise that compromises are often needed • Look for innovative options including partnerships, working committees, recognising the important key players and working with them • Use expertise in our organizations, such as architects and planners • Advocate for and get involved in the development of Avenue studies or secondary plans that future development applications should fit into • Initiate grass roots community planning processes like those being undertaken in Ward 20 by Councillor Vaughan and by the East Scarborough Storefront 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umbrella groups act as information broker and connector • Residents' groups work with and support umbrella groups like FoNTRA, CORRA and PPT • Hold annual events like the Planning Forums

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support events like Jane’s Walks and Doors Open as “simple tools to envisage a collective future” 	
Lack of financial resources compared to developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open to innovative funding sources/ push for funding from others • Look for options that are free – make time commitment on working committees, be prepared for a long term volunteer commitment, develop trust, recognize credible consultants and developers, develop tools like memoranda of understanding etc. • Be strategic as to achieving priorities • Get support from the local Councillor • Recognise when you can’t win and pursue other options or spend time on achievable projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase resident association fees in order to provide more services/more advocacy on a collective basis (reflect current costs of doing business) • Investigate alternative funding sources, e.g. foundations
Quality and integrity of planning consulting studies/information: question of bias when developers pay for and submit studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have consultant studies done by the City but paid for by developers • Support models like Councillor Vaughan’s mapping of communities using local expertise and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for improvements to planning processes
Councillor and council are too powerful in the process – partly the result of amalgamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up local support separate from the councillor (e.g. by working with the media) (but don’t neglect to consult with councillor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for reforms to planning process • Lobby to change the system that effectively makes the ward councillor the decision-maker on development applications
Lack of support from City Staff, who are under-resourced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for more and better resourced planning staff • Make use of residents who have the necessary knowledge 	
Not heard at City Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for better civic engagement and information dissemination • Make use of opportunities such as the recognition by the new Chief Planner that "the big issue is to reconnect and rebuild trust with the neighbourhoods". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate meetings with senior city staff • Continue to update councillors on issues
OMB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fear of going to OMB - costs of going to OMB - fear of being levied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for changes to OMB or get rid of it • Remove the adversarial approach • Lobby for a City appeal body for Committee of Adjustment as permitted by the City of Toronto Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for real reform of OMB Act; • Push for Anti-SLAAP legislation

<p>developers costs by OMB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLAAP legislation 	
<p>Lack of support for community/residents in Provincial planning legislation (recent Planning Act amendments may be insufficient to help much)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for changes to legislation • Work with other organizations across the province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to lobby for reforms to the Planning Act • Hold events like the Planning Forum
<p>Residents' associations do not reflect full diversity of Toronto</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more diverse membership • Partner with tenants' groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other organizations to develop strategy to encourage involvement of diverse constituencies • Partner with tenants' groups