

RENOVATE THE PUBLIC HEARING

SURVEY REPORT THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 2022



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Ethelo Decisions Inc.

Illustrations were completed by Anna Fong.

The report layout was designed by Hanna Stefan.

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ABOUT THE RENOVATE THE PUBLIC HEARING SURVEY

From April 27 to May 31, 2022, The SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue held the "Renovate the Public Hearing" survey using the Ethelo Platform. The survey came out of a two-part workshop held on April 7-8, 2022, hosted by the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue's Strengthening Canadian Democracy Initiative and funded by the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation's Housing Supply Challenge.

The province-wide workshop convened British Columbian elected officials, local government staff, community organizations, and policy/industry experts to reflect on current public hearing practices and envision alternatives. Thirty six people from diverse geographic, professional, and personal perspectives participated and offered opinions on local government land-use public hearings.

The survey focused on the British Columbia local government land-use public hearing requirements defined in the Local Government Act. However, some questions also asked participants' opinion on broader aspects of public input for local government land-use decisions, such as:

- The benefits that public hearings might provide
- Aspects of public hearings and land-use related public input processes that are and are not working
- Alternative approaches for land-use decision-making
- General advice for the future of public hearings

The survey shared key themes generated by the workshop discussions in order to get help prioritizing these themes from survey respondents.



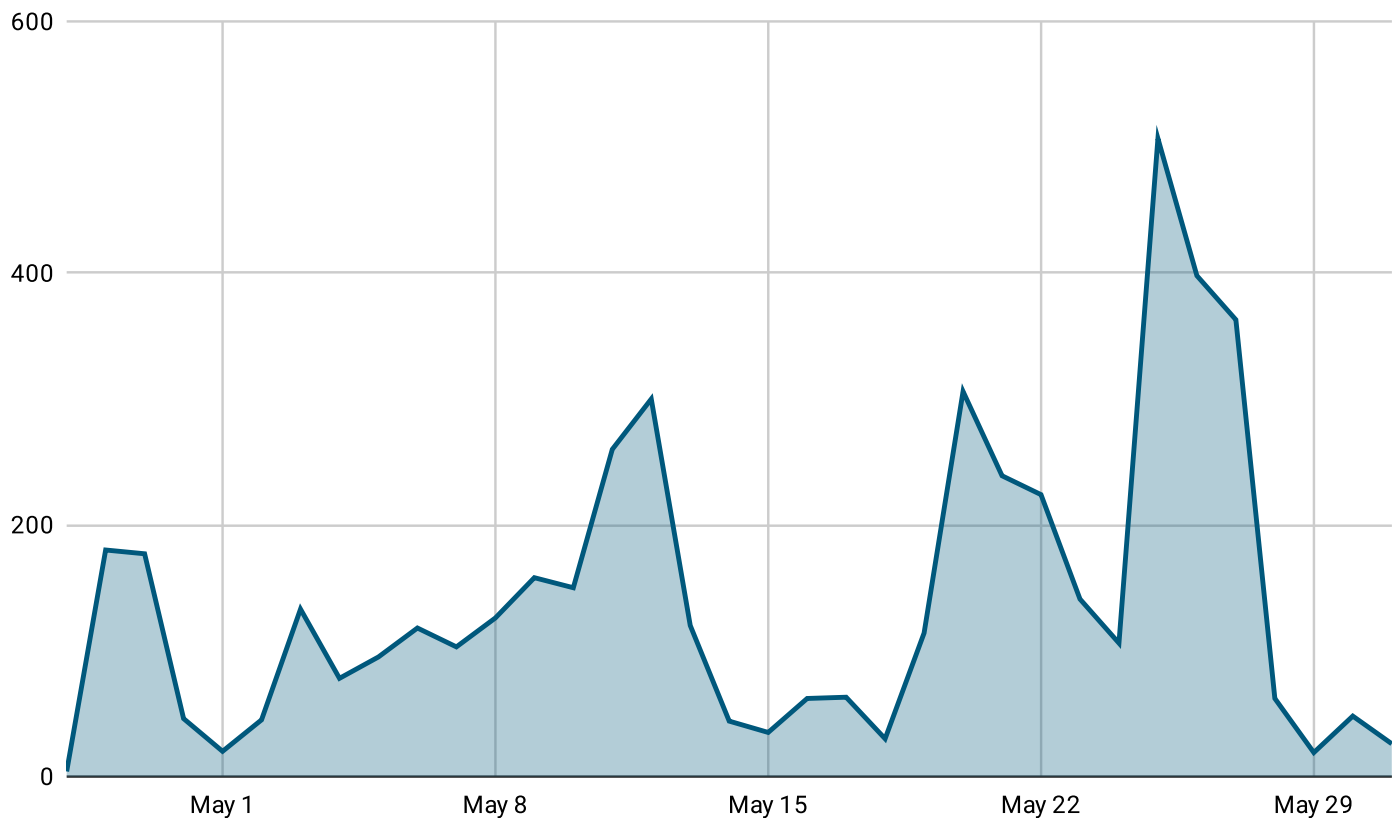
PARTICIPATION

Over the five weeks that the survey was live ...

- 4883 people visited the engagement platform
- 675 people participated in the engagement *
 - 649 people (96%) answered at least 25% of the questions
 - 431 people (64%) answered at least 50% of the questions
 - 261 people (39%) answered at least 75% of the questions

*All participants were authenticated following the closure of the engagement based on their IP address, device ID, and voting patterns, to ensure respondents were local and singular in their votes.

The following graph shows the number of visitors per day during the engagement period.

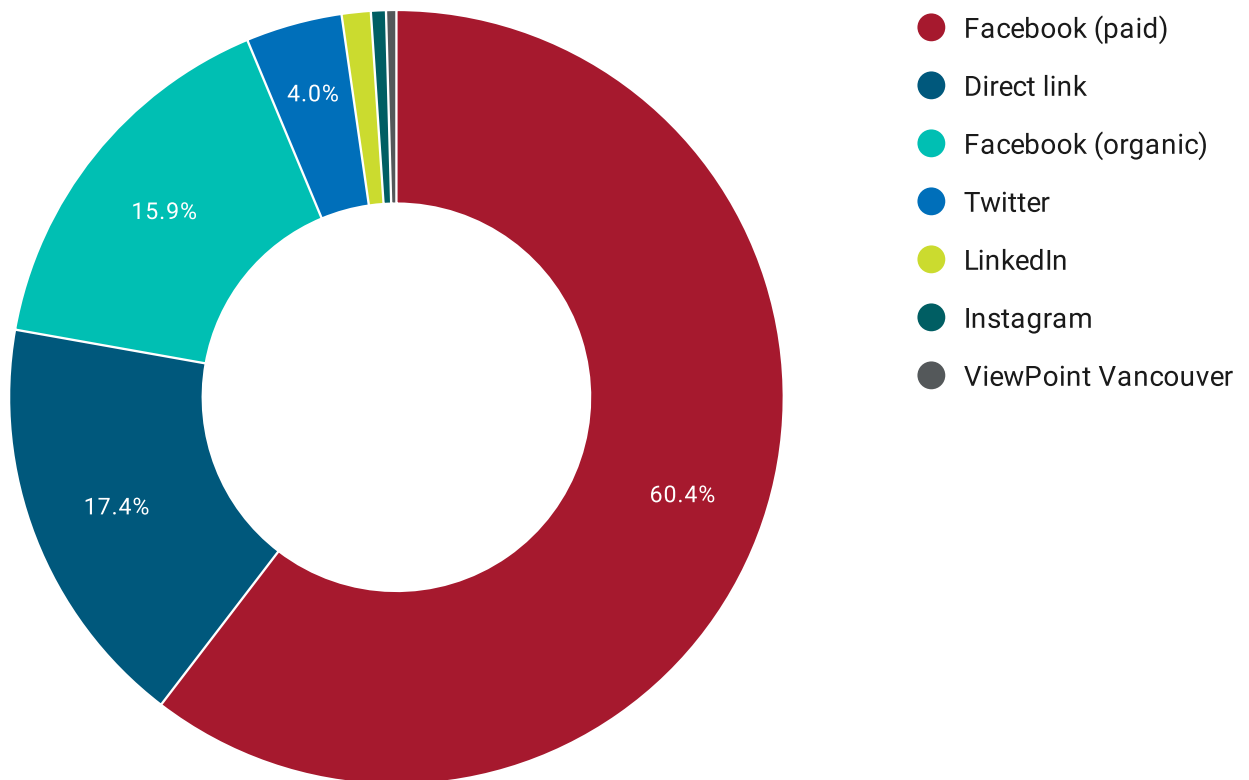


View the survey at sfu-public-hearings.ethelo.net.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

In order to ensure the "Renovate the Public Hearing" survey reached a broadly representative sample of BC residents, the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue staff, alongside the Ethelo team, executed a digital outreach campaign, which included social media posts and ads, online articles, and email campaigns to important stakeholder groups.

The following graph shows the traffic sources to the survey platform.



SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Several static ads ran on Facebook and Instagram, sized for different placements on desktop and mobile devices, to inform BC residents that the engagement was now open and awaiting their input.

Overall, the ads reached 310,016 people, received 1,860,667 impressions, and resulted in 2,805 link clicks with a cost of \$1.13 per click. The ads received 109 comments on Facebook, elicited 81 likes and reactions, and were shared 42 times.

The following are examples of ads that ran on Facebook and Instagram.



Regional Targeting

The aim of the social media campaign was to engage participants from all over British Columbia and get as close to a geographically representative sample from each of the five regions of the province as possible, i.e. the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and coastal communities, the Southern Interior, North and Central BC, as well as the Kootenays and Boundary region. At first, Facebook ads ran in all of British Columbia. Once a target number of residents from a certain region had participated in the survey, the ads were set to exclude people of that region from being targeted.

The following table shows the population of each major region of British Columbia and the percentage it makes up of the total provincial population, as well as the number of participants who indicated they resided in a given region and the percentage they made up of the overall participant pool. The Lower Mainland population is slightly under-represented, while the Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities are slightly over-represented.

	BC Population	% of Population	No of Participants	% of Participants
Lower Mainland	3,113,153	59.7%	268	41.8%
Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities	974,212	18.7%	202	31.5%
Southern Interior	619,894	11.9%	80	12.5%
North and Central	342,738	6.6%	49	7.6%
Kootenays and Boundary	164,808	3.2%	35	5.5%
Not in BC	-	-	7	1.1%

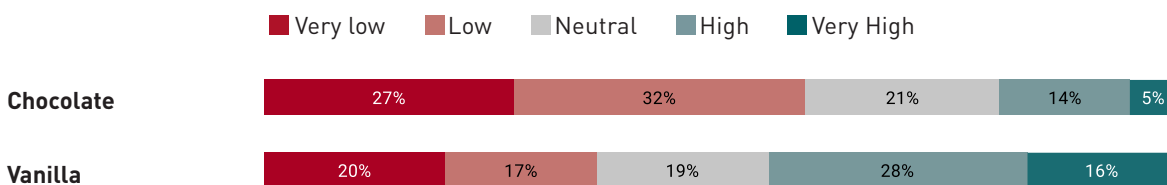
Population numbers were sourced from [British Columbia's 2021 municipal and sub-provincial population estimates](#).

ETHELO'S APPROACH

Ethelo uses its own methodology and terms to understand how people feel about the topic. The key analysis terms are defined below. For each question, participants are also able to post comments and like each others comments.

Each section contains a table showing the above metrics for each option in a section. The following example shows how to interpret the survey results section. Scenario: an ice cream shop is trying to decide which flavours to offer their patrons. They use Ethelo to prompt survey respondents to ...

Rate the following ice cream flavours, from low to high, according to how much you like them.



The above graphs show exactly which percentage of respondent selected which rating for each flavour of ice cream. For example, 7% of people selected a very high rating for chocolate, while 18% selected a very low one. The Ethelo algorithm analyzes the votes, and provides four scores for each option (here: flavour).

- **Support** is the average value of the votes, where the value of a totally opposing vote is 0 and a totally supportive vote is 100.
- **Conflict** is a measure of the level of disagreement in a group. Higher conflict scores represent internal resistance and risk of failure.
- **Consensus** (Ethelo score) is a measure of the overall strength of the decision, considering both support (higher is better) and conflict (lower is better).
- **Approval** is the percentage of people who gave a positive vote rather than a neutral or negative vote. Approval above 50% is a traditional "majority".

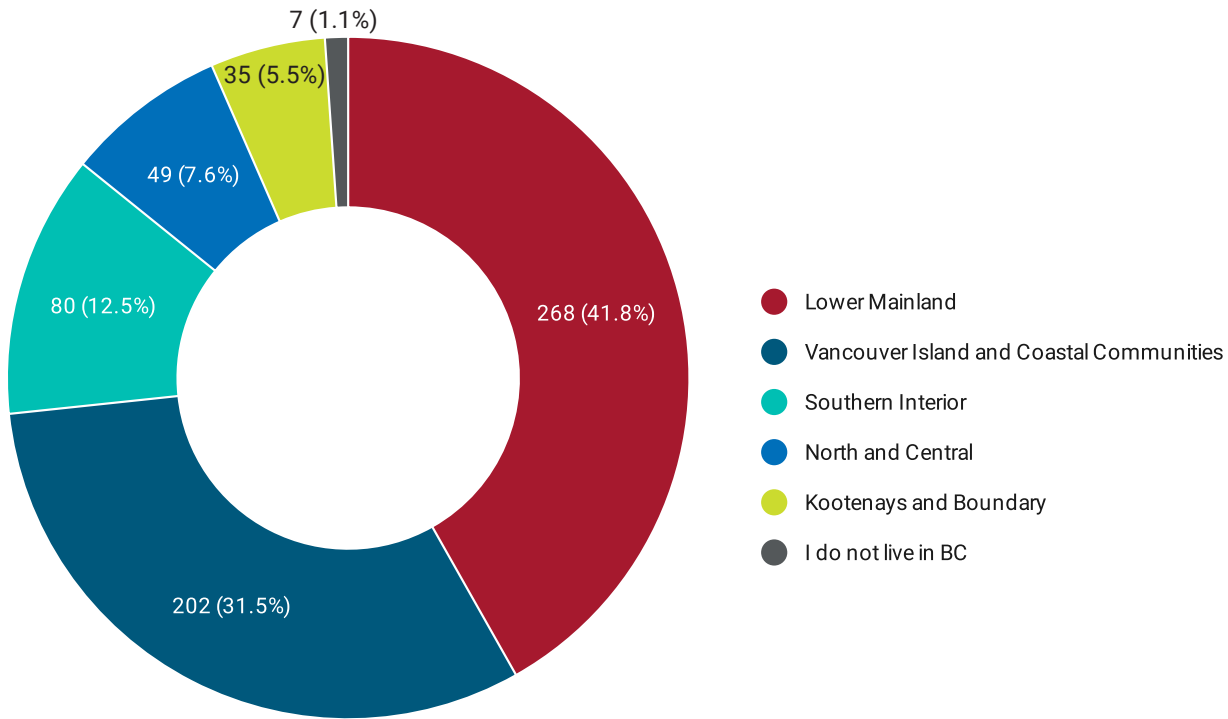
For the question above, the scores look as follows:

	Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
Chocolate	34%	34%	34%	19%
Vanilla	47%	46%	51%	45%

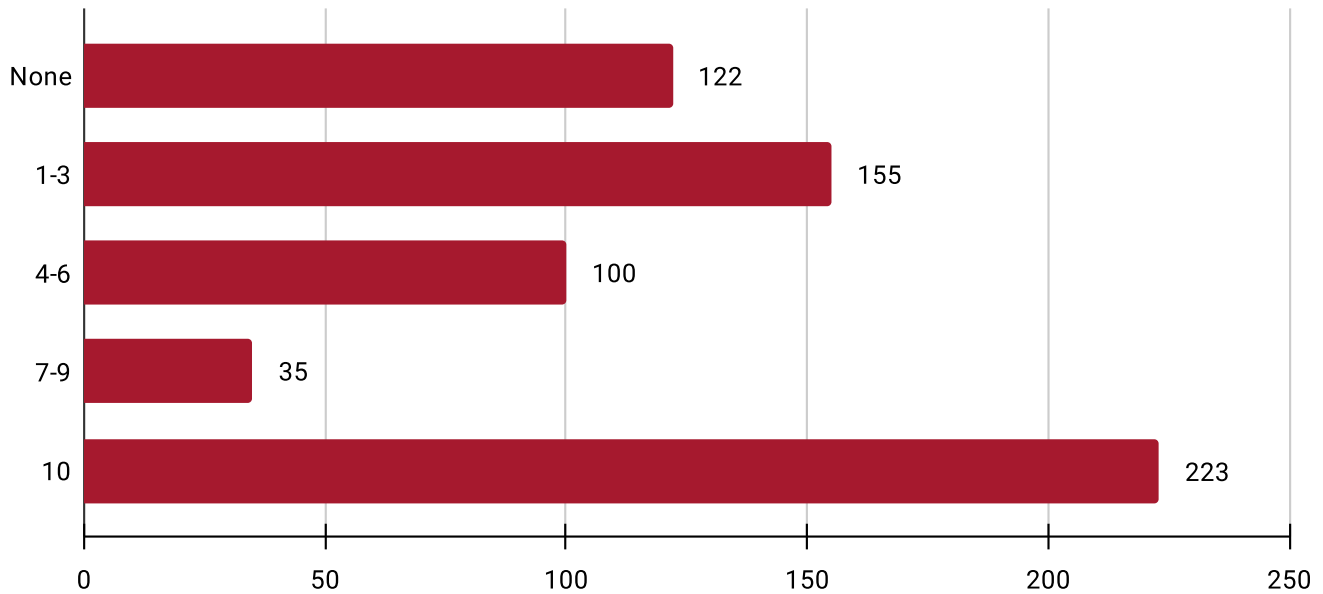
The green and red boxes indicate the best and worst option for each score. For conflict, a lower score is better, so the option with the lowest score is marked green, while that with the highest conflict is marked red. For support, consensus, and approval, a higher score is better, so the option with the highest score is marked green, while the option with the lowest score is marked red. The more green boxes, and the fewer red boxes an option has, the better. In this scenario, vanilla is the better option.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

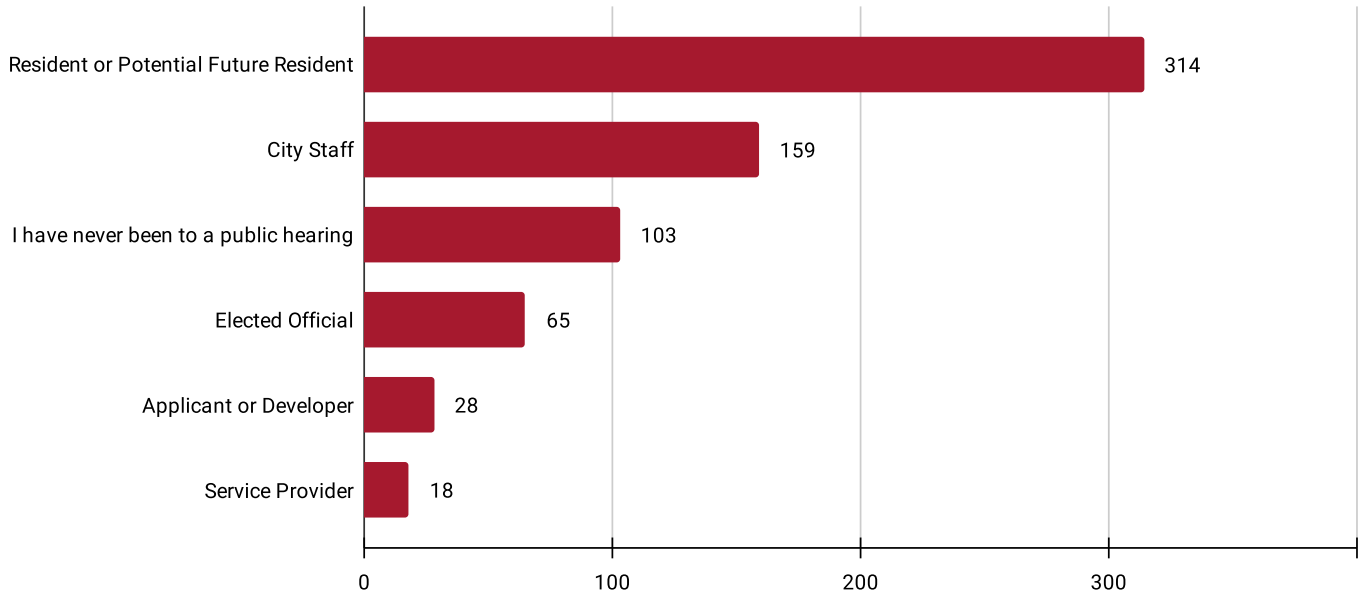
Which of the following best describes the area of British Columbia where you live? (n=641)



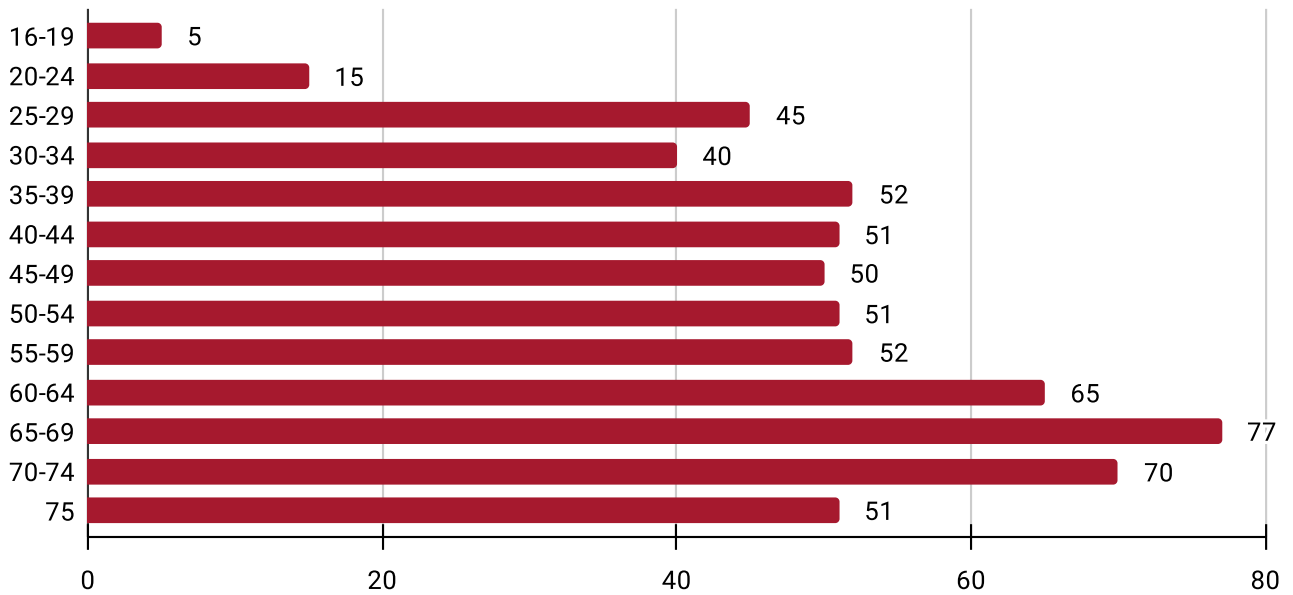
How many local government land-use-related public hearings have you attended? (n=635)



In what capacity do you usually attend local government land-use-related public hearings? (n=687)

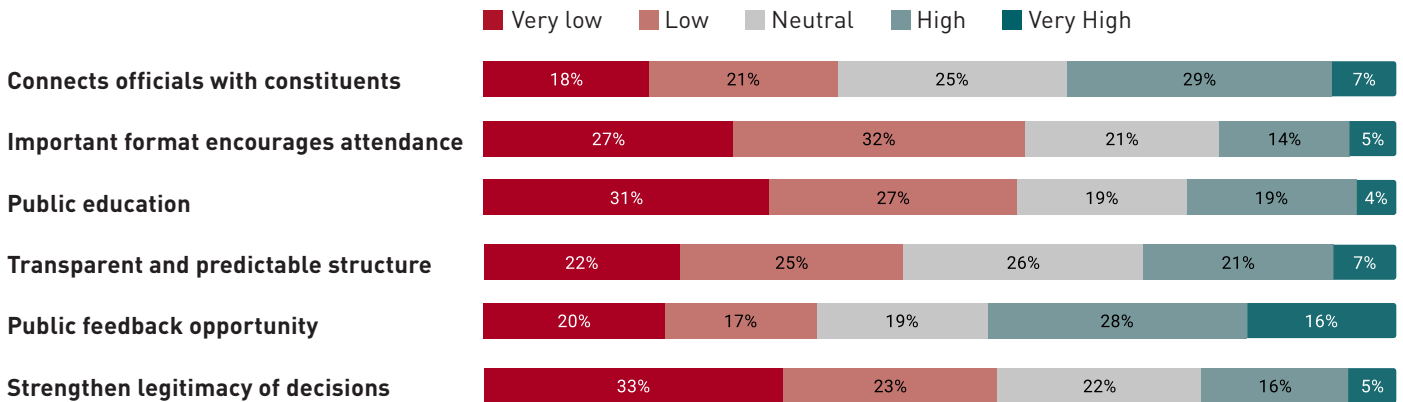


How old are you? (n=624)



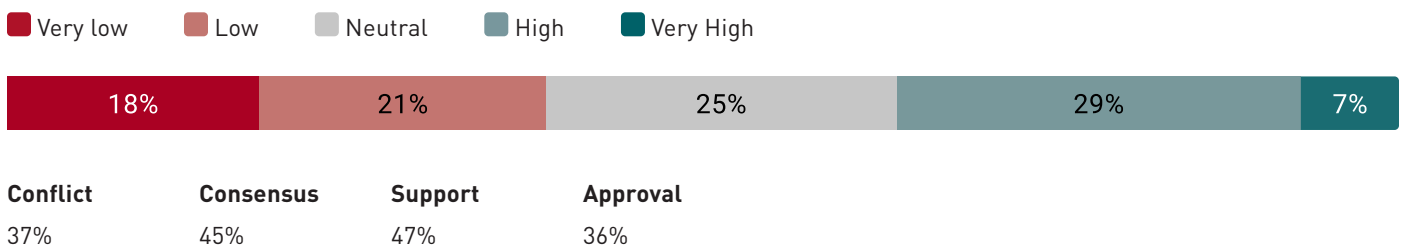
BENEFITS OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

What is good about public hearings? Rate the following benefits of public hearings.



	Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
Connects officials with constituents	37%	45%	47%	36%
Important format encourages attendance	34%	34%	34%	19%
Public education	37%	33%	34%	23%
Transparent and predictable structure	37%	41%	42%	28%
Public feedback opportunity	47%	46%	51%	45%
Strengthen legitimacy of decisions	38%	33%	34%	21%

Connects officials with constituents



Top 5 Liked Comments

"It connects them haphazardly with no consideration of whether the "constituents" are representative of the community." ❤️ 4

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SURVEY RESULTS

Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"While a noisy minority with a vested financial interest in maintaining the status quo tend to dominate public hearings, the silent majority of reasonable people are by definition never heard. Elected officials therefore are forced to pander to the skewed view of the vocal minority of voters present, rather than doing what they have been already elected to do, which is make the best decision for the future of the community overall." ❤️ 4

"Public hearings are an essential part of the planning process but I do not feel they directly connect elected officials with constituents in a meaningful way. Their purpose is to literally allow elected officials to hear the opinions of constituents, and not much more, but in reality, many people who attend public hearings want to ask questions and have more of a discussion and they don't understand the purpose of the public hearing. The public can't be expected to provide meaningful input if they still have questions, etc. While public hearings are important, there is room for better public consultation that actively engages the public in a more meaningful way, before a public hearing takes place." ❤️ 3

"Officials aren't bound to do anything with the feedback they receive, so at best, hearings serve as a place for motivated whiners to grind axes." ❤️ 3

"The format of PH connects with SOME participants, but only those with the time and resources to attend the events in person. This excludes many members of the public whose work or life responsibilities conflict with PH scheduled times. Further, the nature of the "engagement" - where the public has 5 scheduled minutes to say their piece and mayor and council may or may not have follow-up questions - hardly constitutes a real connection between elected officials and constituents." ❤️ 3

Important format encourages attendance

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Table with 4 columns: Conflict (34%), Consensus (34%), Support (34%), Approval (19%)

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Not at all. It's often the public's only chance to have their say but many have given up attending because they've learned that it's just part of the game and elected officials will likely not take their position into consideration when making their decision." ❤️ 5

"The only people motivated to attend are those that oppose any change." ❤️ 3

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SURVEY RESULTS

Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"The format is exclusive by its nature; requiring people to sit in a room at a certain time on a certain day is a selection mechanism." ❤️ 3

"Most people don't attend because they don't think it will make any difference." ❤️ 3

"Only folks with the privilege of free time, no kids or elders at home to look after, the confidence and life situation to speak out (city employees are not allowed to contribute as residents), and an already vested financial interest in growing their portfolio attend public hearings. Renters have no relationship with local governments and they know it.." ❤️ 3

Public education

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Category	Percentage
Conflict	37%
Consensus	33%
Support	34%
Approval	23%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"No. I'd say that public hearings do not educate the public about government processes and the decision. They show the public it's a requirement and is done for that reason only. The decision-makers are not required to listen." ❤️ 4

"It's very poor modeling of dialogue, leadership and communication. I guess the value is that we all learn that this type of format really sucks." ❤️ 3

"Not at all. Participants at PHs by and large do not understand the sometimes years-long process that led to the PH, nor do they understand the role of Council at a PH." ❤️ 3

"They are quite often formatted to promote the goals of the officials rather than encourage the input of the community" ❤️ 3

"A public hearing is a snap shot of the process, it is not a learning opportunity for residents other than learning about a specific project. Many people, including some Council members and developers, don't understand fully the various processes local governments have to follow. Education of the public on the workings of local governments would help but most people don't have to time to learn about something that they feel rarely affects them" ❤️ 3

SURVEY RESULTS

Transparent and predictable structure

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
37%	41%	42%	28%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"This really is 2 part question, the process is predictable. It's not a structure for gathering public input" ❤️ 2

"Most comments here seem to focus on the council meeting public input process, but there are also open house and workshop events that are engaging and good at gathering public input." ❤️ 2

"Generally officials (elected and otherwise) have already made up their minds about what is going to happen, and public forums are simply used as a way to say the public was consulted. At all the hearings I've attended, it was clear the staff and politicians were just humouring people to get through the event, and had no intention of taking any input seriously" ❤️ 2

"Public hearings present a chaotic and unpredictable structure in almost every way. The vast majority of participants have no idea when or if they'll get to speak, what input is being sought, what the scope is for changes based on their input, and no opportunity for dialogue, learning, or evolution of input through the process." ❤️ 2

"Usually the decision has been predetermined. Changes are not communicated, so frustration sets in" ❤️ 2

Public feedback opportunity

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
47%	46%	51%	45%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Public hearings are incredibly abelist and classist. They require you have time away from work and caregiving, can sometimes give up hours of your life waiting for your 5 minutes to speak, and are limited to English only. In really contentious issues, it can be highly intimidating to have to confront your neighbours whose emotions may be running very high." ❤️ 4

"There are systematic barriers to participation in PHs, and the PH process rarely allows the feedback to be implemented, but for those who show up and want to gripe about a project, it provides a ready podium." ❤️ 2

"Inaccessible and intimidating for many residents; can become horrific experiences for racialized and marginalized communities who can become targeted in the polarizing rhetoric; rarely provides a forum for informed feedback - more of a soap box for positional politics" ❤️ 2

"The opportunity for constructive feedback is extremely limited, it is generally too late to make small amendments in a responsible fashion. The hearings give the impression of being a feedback opportunity but they are not good for acting on it." ❤️ 2

"Much more weight needs to be put on those who are directly adjacent, rather than someone who shows up at multiple different projects, but lives many kilometres away from all of them. Emphasize immediate neighbors, not hobbyists." ❤️ 2

Strengthen legitimacy of decisions

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
38%	33%	34%	21%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"No. Decisions are usually made already, it collects input but there is insufficient consideration and reflection by decision makers by that point. Unfortunately, it is a farce sometimes." ❤️ 2

"Public hearings only serve as a public outlet for concerns. Government often have already made up their minds an no matter what is presented to them in a public hearing, their opinion won't be swayed. Hearings are lip service." ❤️ 2

"There is no connection between the opinions expressed at a PH and the decision. Binding plebiscites would be better." ❤️ 2

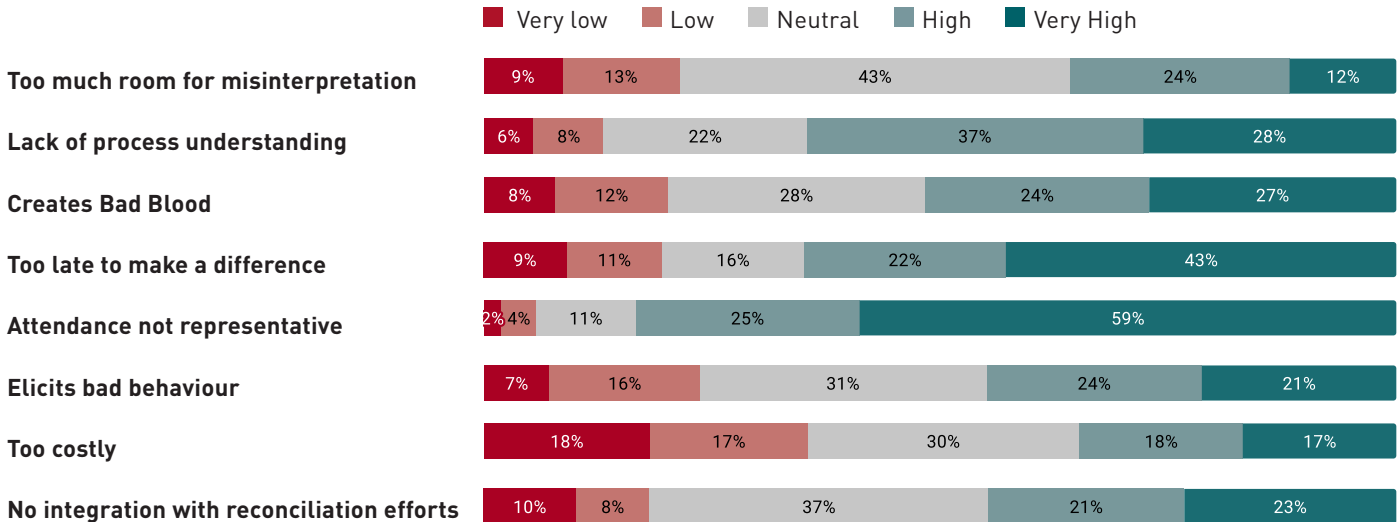
Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"Typically we hear from NIMBYs who are against the administrative recommendation, it is rare people come out in support. I would argue this weakens the legitimacy." ❤️ 2

"Meh. Technically, it should be the OCP. Everyone - Staff, Developers, Elected Officials, and Residents - should be using the same playbook. The PH is all about politics. Like I said earlier, you can have qualified professionals with years of experience working on a proposal with a proponent that meets all the objectives of the OCP, Council policies and bylaw requirements. Heck, it could even be a LEED certified project with a green roof. But it can be defeated because a NIMBY neighbourhood association doesn't like tall buildings that block their views, and can potentially cause parking and traffic issues worse than the City of Los Angeles at peak rush hour. Oh, the humanity. Think of the children. [Insert Tears and Emotional Outrage]" ❤️ 2

WHAT IS NOT WORKING?

How important are the following problems with public hearings?



	Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
Clear guidelines and materials	29%	57%	54%	36%
Lack of process understanding	31%	70%	68%	65%
Creates Bad Blood	38%	61%	63%	52%
Too late to make a difference	44%	64%	70%	65%
Attendance not representative	23%	86%	84%	83%
Elicits bad behaviour	35%	58%	59%	45%
Too costly	44%	46%	49%	35%
No integration with reconciliation efforts	37%	58%	60%	45%

SURVEY RESULTS

Too much room for misinterpretation

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
29%	57%	54%	36%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"It's quite clear that, following the advice provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs earlier, most municipal Councils don't even understand the role of PHs. When a project is before Council which is compliant with the OCP, which itself has been approved after a series of PHs, then why on earth should it go to another PH???" ❤️ 3

"I don't believe that there is variation on how local governments across BC run their public hearings. I believe, from the workshop discussions, the difference between local governments is in their community engagement processes which happen before public hearings. Some communities do the minimum mandated under the Local Government Act. Other communities have broadened their community engagement to include, for example, Development Permit Applications, which do not require the same legal structure of engagement which is necessary for an OCP amendment or re zoning application." ❤️ 2

"The whole process, in fact all our systems, seem overly complex. With complexity comes confusing, misinterpretation and mistakes. Public hearings can be hard to follow, legal language is convoluted, it's all a major deterrent for public participation." ❤️ 2

"Public hearings are governed by a combination of legislation and court precedent. This leads to an opaqueness around public hearings. There is also a fundamental misunderstanding that a Public Hearing is not the same as a Council meeting." ❤️ 1

"They should be conducting them according to the law. Pre-PH participatory processes help separate the good from the bad." ❤️ 1

Lack of process understanding

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
31%	70%	68%	65%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Very much true that people engaging at the Hearing don't understand the process of OCPs, Rezoning, Zoning Variances, etc." ❤️ 5

"This is true. Most members of the public do not understand the PH process. However, PHs are essential for the public to inform both elected representatives, and Planning Staff of the potential impact of an application. It may not be a good forum, but it is what is available. It is easy to dismiss PH attendees as irrelevant, but their concerns need thoughtful evaluation, and at times, action." ❤️ 4

"True. Often people are engaging with a project at public hearing for the first time, even if there's been information, open houses, news stories and more on the projects beforehand." ❤️ 3

"This is expert-level content - hire the experts and let them do their job. The public doesn't really want or need to know everything about this. Where public input is most important is in shaping policy, not evaluating individual projects. But most folks find the outcome too remote and the work too abstract to care about." ❤️ 3

"This is one of the mechanisms used by developers to change plans their way. Glitzy concepts are presented at public hearings for zoning applications. Once the general zoning is granted the concept changes into something entirely different and less acceptable to those most impacted. There is no reasonable way to even keep upto date with the information let alone assert that this was not really what was on the table in the first place." ❤️ 3

Creates Bad Blood

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
38%	61%	63%	52%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"The PH becomes the all-or-nothing last stand for or against a project, which leads to hyperbolic narratives and win-at-all-cost mentality that is not community-building. There is a lot of decision-based evidence-making at a PH." ❤️ 4

"Absolutely. People are often afraid to speak up for or against or write in similarly" ❤️ 3

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Top 5 Liked Comments Cont'd

"This is why PHs for the OCP are far more useful than PHs for individual properties. The former asks participants to think "big picture", and provide comments on the LG's vision for the future of their city. The latter encourages "micro-thinking", by forcing the attendee to only think about the impact of a proposal on themselves, rather than the city as a whole." ❤️ 3

"The structure adds to community polarization and the entrenchment of positions on issues." ❤️ 3

"This can be true of any step in the planning process whether it happens at a public hearing or not. While perhaps not a panacea, the solution here goes back to the "consult early and often" proposition. For explosive issues such as the location of supportive housing projects, council and planning staff should be working with all neighbourhoods long before such a project is being considered for a specific location to discuss how (not why) supportive housing can be integrated into a neighbourhood. This up front strategic and proactive discussion never happens." ❤️ 3

Too late to make a difference

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
44%	64%	70%	65%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"And it's also mainly true that by the time a project reaches PH, most developers have engaged local residents in multiple rounds of consultation, and have (where possible) incorporated their comments into revisions of their project proposal. It's only the hard-core opponents, who will never be convinced that a project is good for the city, who attend." ❤️ 3

"Often the recommendations made at public hearings have been influenced by public engagement, community meetings, surveys, etc., but those who attend public hearings often haven't engaged earlier in the process - whether through a lack of awareness, access, or interest - and express frustration that they have not been informed earlier, when they become aware of the issue at public hearing. There are many reason for this - questionable engagement processes, lack of hype that would interest media and yes, staff reluctance to involve the public in major decisions because they are not trained planners." ❤️ 2

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Top 5 Liked Comments Cont'd

"Absolutely true. If staff and developers would take the time to proactively ask the neighbourhood what they think of the proposal early in the process, they can save a lot of time and money on inappropriate options." ❤️ 2

"Most cities require some initial consultation by the proponent to discover any unique preferences of the neighborhood, which is great because it excludes hobbyists from the other side of the City. Public hearings typically occur once staff and the proponent work out myriad of design details, based on best practices and convention (especially with nearby and recent developments). At the time of public hearing, staff (and councillors) have refined those elements of a project in which community preference (e.g. amenities) can should ascertained." ❤️ 2

"This is much less correct in rural areas. But people often do make the assumption it is a done deal because it has already passed through Board/Council with first and second reading." ❤️ 1

Attendance not representative

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
23%	86%	84%	83%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Many people literally cannot attend at those scheduled hours. This skews the input to those folks who are retired or can afford to take time off of work." ❤️ 2

"Groups dominate the public hearing process and news organizations use the process inappropriately." ❤️ 2

"As noted already, this issue can happen at any time during the planning process and not just specifically at public hearings. Nevertheless, we need to ensure that all methods of participation are given equal weight and that you don't have to physically show up to a meeting/ hearing in order to be heard." ❤️ 2

"Also - no person housed in a potential new development can take part in a Public Hearing." ❤️ 1

"Absolutely. 99% of people don't care enough about any given development to attend a public hearing." ❤️ 1

SURVEY RESULTS

Elicits bad behaviour

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict 35% Consensus 58% Support 59% Approval 45%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Heckling, cheering for supporters, booing for opponents -- none of this should be acceptable in Council chambers." ❤️ 3

"The way this one is phrased suggests that all fault goes to the individual. Instead, I think the way the questions are asked of the public, the process leading up to the PH, and the lack of transparency by staff all contribute to the bad behaviour. Also, I've witnessed both staff and councillors behave badly, not just the public!" ❤️ 3

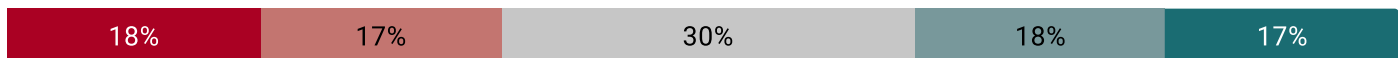
"Most behavior is respectful, but a very few can make the entire evening go off the rails if they choose not to respect others in the room. In an all-or-nothing last stand, there is motivation for people to go down that path." ❤️ 2

"I'm very tired of hearing the loud, bullying behaviour that can emerge through these processes." ❤️ 2

"People need to get over their precious sensibilities. Oh no, a person got angry and used a swear word. Yeah, because they're very upset. It is okay for people to be very upset and struggle to communicate that, as long as they are not attacking other people. If someone is just yelling, crying, or not using the best language, get over it. Your head will not explode because you heard the word f---ing." ❤️ 2

Too costly

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict 44% Consensus 46% Support 49% Approval 35%

Top 5 Liked Comments

- "No. In today's world there's no reason why public hearing couldn't be held in a digital format. Every single person that could be affected by a decision should be able to make an electronic submission in an easy cost-free manner." ❤️ 3
- "The process seems contrived" ❤️ 2
- "Staff spend an inordinate amount of time assembling the required agenda packages and making sure that all the information ever produced about a project is included (per court decisions)." ❤️ 2
- "Some "body" has to make a decision whether it is at a regular council meeting or a public hearing so the costs of the meeting are moot. The public, in either case, also needs to be notified about the upcoming decision point so that also will not vary. The applicants can save money by working with the community from day one." ❤️ 2
- "Democracies cost money, although this system can be improved. Those effected by land development must be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard. If an applicant is proposing a 50-storey tower, or something completely out of scale with a livable pedestrian environment, they need to pay to demonstrate a good fit with the neighbourhood. Ideally, a good fit would be established prior to the PH. Maybe a micro context OCP review is needed, set the design parameters, have a PH and don't require a PH for the use/ zone change that is compatible with any OCP changes." ❤️ 2

No integration with reconciliation efforts

■ Very low
 ■ Low
 ■ Neutral
 ■ High
 ■ Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
37%	58%	60%	45%

Top 5 Liked Comments

- "A public hearing is not the place to begin reconciliation efforts. Consultations with First Nations as with neighbourhoods about what is being proposed needs to happen at the beginning of the planning process not at the end." ❤️ 3
- "Very true. Often folks on both sides of an issue have no idea what the Indigenous or First Nation perspective on that issue is - no one has bothered to ask." ❤️ 2

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Top 5 Liked Comments Cont'd

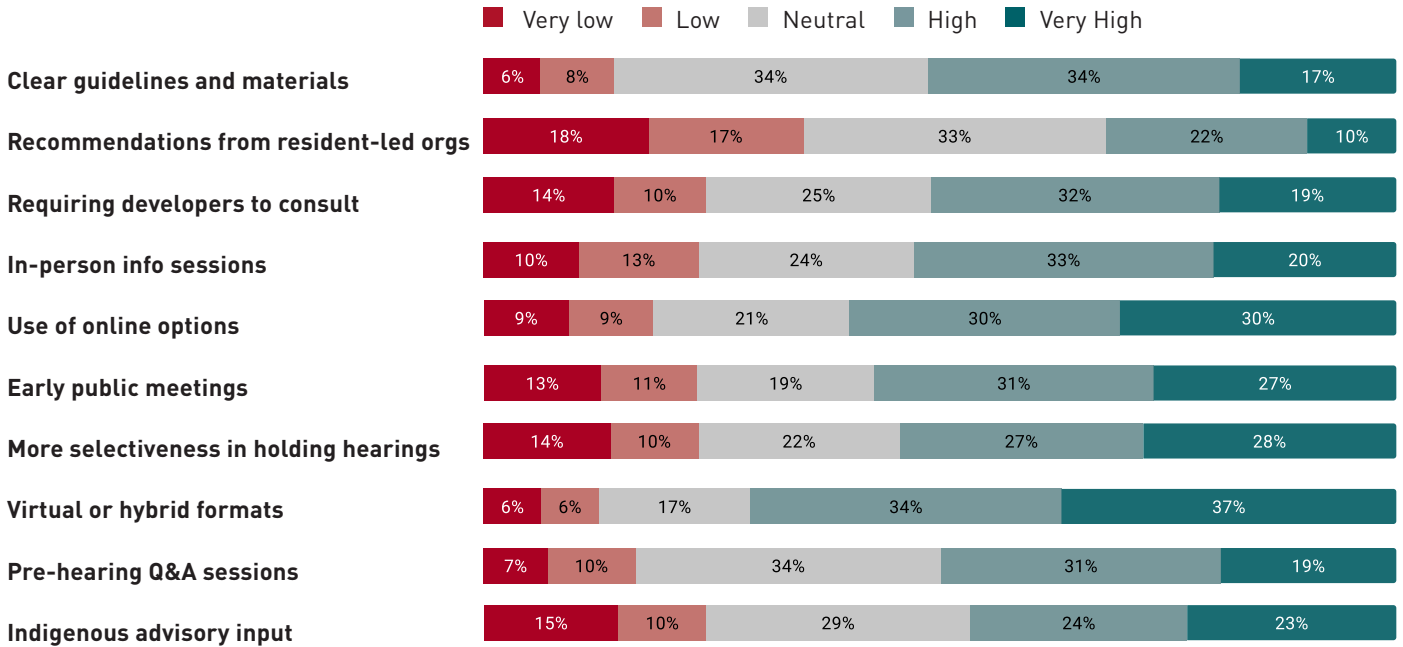
"The LGA emphasizes LGs integration with FNs for the provision of local services. "Land back" needs to come from the two orders of government: federal and provincial, as well as corporations like the Hudson's Bay Co who profited from taking the land. LGs should facilitate "land back" and FNs need to develop such land in the public interest, using principles of participation, livability, safety and affordability. No one should develop out-of-scale buildings which result in poor urban design or environmental effects for short term gain." ❤️ 2

"Reconciliation is separate from PHs. The PH is a tool to gather public input. Reconciliation activities should occur outside of a public hearing process and should include agreed upon engagement and culturally appropriate dialogue with FNs." ❤️ 2

"We need way better Provincial efforts on this. It can't be left to the local governments to figure out alone, especially financially.." ❤️ 2

WHAT IS WORKING?

How important are the following activities?



	Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
Clear guidelines and materials	28%	65%	62%	51%
Recommendations from resident-led orgs	37%	46%	47%	32%
Requiring developers to consult	42%	54%	58%	51%
In-person info sessions	38%	58%	60%	53%
Use of online options	40%	62%	66%	60%
Early public meetings	44%	57%	62%	57%
More selectiveness in holding hearings	46%	56%	61%	54%
Virtual or hybrid formats	33%	72%	72%	71%
Pre-hearing Q&A sessions	31%	63%	61%	50%
Indigenous advisory input	44%	53%	58%	47%

SURVEY RESULTS

Clear guidelines and materials

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Table with 4 columns: Conflict (28%), Consensus (65%), Support (62%), Approval (51%).

Top 5 Liked Comments

- Five top liked comments with heart icons and counts: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.

Recommendations from resident-led organizations

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Table with 4 columns: Conflict (37%), Consensus (46%), Support (47%), Approval (32%).

Top 5 Liked Comments

- One top liked comment with heart icon and count: 2. Includes text 'Continued on next page'.

Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"Neighbourhood associations are too often made up of the grumpy and disgruntled." ❤️ 2

"Neighbourhood associations are mostly undemocratic groups of busy bodies who appoint themselves and their successors and hold themselves out as representative." ❤️ 2

"These bias the system towards the interest of incumbent residents and property owners, who often have a vested stake in slowing or stopping the process. It also amplifies the voices of already hyper-engaged people at the expense of those who may feel less strongly about it." ❤️ 2

"Often hijacked and misrepresented as the view of the "majority", when, in fact it is the view of the chosen few." ❤️ 2

Requiring developers to consult

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
42%	54%	58%	51%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"I don't think developers are the ones who should be running public consultation. This is the job of the local planners and the facilitators they may need to hire." ❤️ 3

"This would be more collaborative than a simple yes or no vote on an already developed plan that has had very little or even zero public input before the public hearing." ❤️ 3

"I think you can do the same process but with the initial rezoning application already filed and just amend it as you go." ❤️ 2

"I assume very high means I concur that developers should give their presentations however I believe that at the same presentation community groups OPPOSED to the development should be present to challenge statements and presentations made by developers." ❤️ 2

"The problem is that in my experience, this tracking of public engagement is hyper-focused on spexcific "public" and often only serves the developers.." ❤️ 2

SURVEY RESULTS

In-person info sessions

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Table with 4 columns: Conflict (38%), Consensus (58%), Support (60%), Approval (53%)

Top 5 Liked Comments

"To be truly accessible these sessions need to be both in person and online. In person is inaccessible to many due to being immunocompromised, disabled, or having time constraints. Online can be less accessible to people without access to internet and tech. So there needs to be both." ❤️ 2

"These activities should ideally be held where people are already going. Go to the farmers markets, shopping malls, schools, etc. It takes time and money but the system needs to be revamped." ❤️ 2

"Very few people show up to in person sessions, most people are too busy, and this is yet another filter that skews demographics toward the retired and wealthier set." ❤️ 1

"At these the plans are usually already set in stone." ❤️ 1

"Define open house. Residents within the affected area need an interactive session that gives them an understanding of the issues associated with the proposed development." ❤️ 1

Use of online options

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Table with 4 columns: Conflict (40%), Consensus (62%), Support (66%), Approval (60%)

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Very high but there needs to be a way of ensuring that the feedback is submitted by people from relevant areas only and that ppl don't submit multiple entries." ❤️ 3

Continued on next page

Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"The surveys are frustrating and take way too long to fill out. It's "agree or disagree" with no form of "yes, and" option." ❤️ 2

"Lots of people, especially older ones do not use online options" ❤️ 2

"Taking the emotion and combativeness out of PHs would be a good start. Video, email, web-based comments or snail-mail should all be given equal weight, and in-person presentations should be ended." ❤️ 1

"The surveys are not usually actual surveys. The questions are usually not well designed. There is no opportunity to learn from others." ❤️ 1

Early public meetings

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
44%	57%	62%	57%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"A more frequent review of OCPs and providing more assurance that land use regulations can not be changed so easily would do more to encourage faith in local government." ❤️ 3

"Holding public meetings in neighbourhoods where proposals are located is contrary to the requirements for public hearings where anyone who feels they are affected by a development is allowed to comment under the Local Government Act. This disconnect can lead to a lot of misunderstanding when a localized survey shows, for e.g. strong opposition, but there is generalized support across the city." ❤️ 2

"Early meetings lead to confusion - neighbors may come out to support or oppose a development multiple times leading to burnout before the actual public hearing." ❤️ 2

"I think this might be a better time and place for Council to be initially involved. Then they can see if the developer has taken public input into their design and plans. This would allow the public to see that Council does want the best designs." ❤️ 1

"Town halls are like public hearings - too transactional in nature; focus on early stage public engagement - follow the arc of engagement - from awareness building, to education, to judgement, to advocacy to action" ❤️ 1

SURVEY RESULTS

More selectiveness in holding hearings

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
46%	56%	61%	54%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Local governments are also using the Alternate Approval Process (AAP) to avoid public hearings and proper referendum ballots. The AAP is widely misunderstood. Extremely low public participation. And that's exactly what the decision makers like. They craft the question to fit the desired outcome." ❤️ 3

"Removing the public from the process is undemocratic. We will get what developers and city staff decide is best without any input." ❤️ 2

"The legislation isn't helpful because you still need a council/board decision to waive the hearing and to notify it to the public. It takes the same amount of time and money to do this, but you annoy anyone who wanted to speak." ❤️ 2

"This only works if the rest of the process is transparent and truly has the public good at heart." ❤️ 2

"Of course they are because then it is easier for council to vote for their personal agenda. Semi-direct democracy principals should be used in all significant community decisions" ❤️ 1

Virtual or hybrid formats

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
33%	72%	72%	71%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"This can work, but it has happened that the hearing gets cut off as soon as people start asking questions." ❤️ 1

Continued on next page

Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"The fact that this wasn't already an option is very telling about who the public hearings are for." ❤️ 1

"It may open the door to more participation, but phones also add an element of anonymity that can make a community discussion devolve to a Facebook comments sections." ❤️ 1

"This is way more accessible but it is still a terrible process. It is in some ways akin to an arms race between supporters and opponents, and thus an even bigger waste of time." ❤️ 1

"Where feasible this is great and can allow for increased participation and reduced barriers to access." ❤️ 1

Pre-hearing Q&A sessions

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
31%	63%	61%	50%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"A great way to correct mis-information before the PH" ❤️ 2

"Neat idea, again not required under legislation so highly dependent upon official direction/capacity." ❤️ 1

"Dependent on answers staying consistent. Often a staff member provides answers that need to be corrected at the beginning of PH" ❤️ 1

"Information sessions are great for projects that are more controversial, however, from personal experience the public's attendance is still low. People call in with complaints or concerns but trying to get them to attend or even submit a letter difficult" ❤️ 1

"Info sessions are often slanted in the way of the desired outcome. They're not a presentation of all sides of the issue." ❤️ 1

SURVEY RESULTS

Indigenous advisory input

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
44%	53%	58%	47%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"The onus is on the local governments here, not the Province who should be leading the way. I find this is not actually working together, just a tick box exercise and moving forward." ❤️ 3

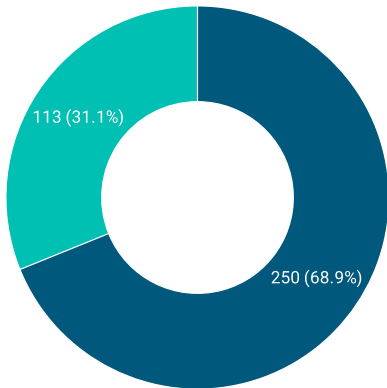
"Yes, but this input is sought in a way that can be challenging for First Nations, who are often under resourced and attempting to make progress in their own strategic priorities." ❤️ 2

"Its a great idea, but most First Nations don't have the resources to fully engage with the dozens of municipalities and hundreds of projects coming along." ❤️ 1

"This process must be developed with the respective FN governments. Cannot be a blanket approach." ❤️ 1

"I would be very worried that this might actually worsen relations, particularly if a Council/Board put aside the recommendation from an Indigenous advisory commission/panel (especially if it did this on a routine basis) and approved or denied something against the advice of this body." ❤️ 1

KEY DECISION JUNCTURES



1) Which would you recommend?

- Emphasize the Official Community Plan development process as the time for public input.
- Emphasize the need for public input on each individual rezoning application.

1) Top 5 Liked Comments

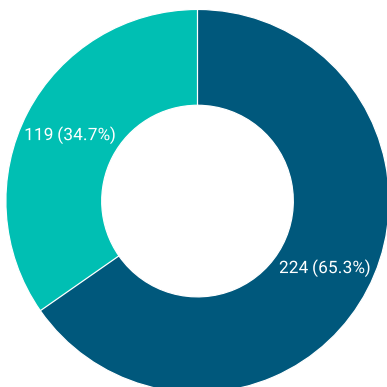
"Our OCP is routinely ignored and developments requiring a change to the OCP approved weekly. We also create literally hundreds of special zones and do not look at planning holistically." ❤️ 2

"I think the OCP has to have a larger role but I don't think that can replace public input for ALL rezoning applications. It's a bit of a false choice - if the OCP is done well, there is much less need for rezoning applications, and the case for requiring public input is actually heightened because the rezoning application is asking government to set aside the consensus built through the OCP." ❤️ 1

"Once developed, there should be no variance to the OCP unless very unusual circumstances arise. Maximizing profit is not one of those." ❤️ 1

"OCP must carry more legal weight for the OCP approach to work. Right now a change in OCP and a rezoning can be done simultaneously and that is not helpful to the community." ❤️ 1

"Wrong binary question, both are important." ❤️ 1



2) Which would you recommend?

- Require each local government to build a central system such as a website for updating residents on projects.
- Continue to require individual notification for each proposal.

2) Top 5 Liked Comments

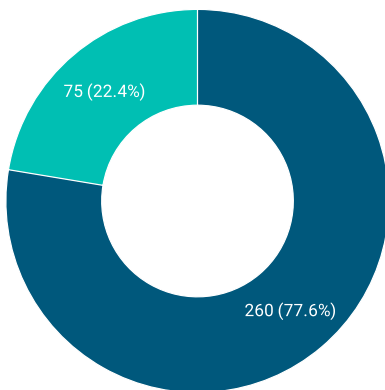
"Not everyone is into the web." ❤️ 2

"agree that BOTH are necessary" ❤️ 1

"Vancouver has a good system to check on nearby land use change." ❤️ 1

"I picked "continue to require individual notification" but I think it should be both. They should have to build a central website AND continue to send out individual letters AND put things in local media (e.g. radio). That's the only way to ensure accessibility for all." ❤️ 1

"It doesn't matter because no one seeks out this information anyway" ❤️ 1



3) Which would you recommend?

- Legislation that applies a customizable approach.
- Legislation that applies a one size fits all model.

3) Top 5 Liked Comments

"What is practical and what would work in the lower mainland is very different from what is practical in the north in a rural area. Flexibility is required." ❤️ 3

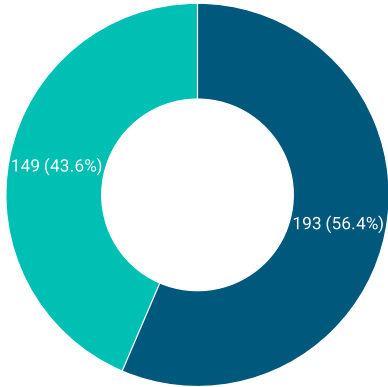
"Customizing would be best but placing that on small governments is excruciating" ❤️ 3

"Customization could be even more complex... good processes should be scalable." ❤️ 2

"Something in between" ❤️ 1

"I view the OCP to be a bit like the Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms. It is the big picture document (not a bunch of little rules that can be used to justify ANYTHING council wants to do). Basically anything that violates the big picture of the OCP needs to be approved by taxpayers" ❤️ 1

SURVEY RESULTS



4) Which would you recommend?

- Improve public input requirements and accountability in Official Community Plans legislation and remove public input from bylaw zoning amendments.
- Continue public input requirements for individual zoning bylaw amendments.

4) Top 5 Liked Comments

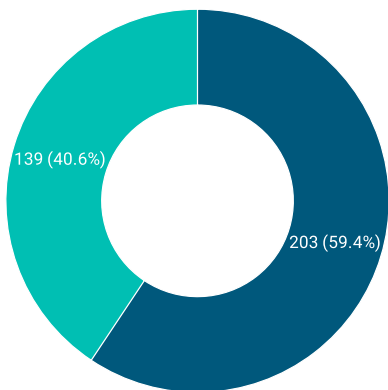
"Need both for larger development projects." ❤️ 2

"Odd questions. The OCP should be a firm guide to zoning. At present they seem to be eminently mutable to suit developers." ❤️ 1

"I feel like there are benefits to each of these. Why can't it be parts of both? These questions need to have more options." ❤️ 1

"People need input on Zoning bylaw amendments- especially surrounding properties. However, a public hearing may not be necessary - written comments are likely just as effective and can be provided to Council for their consideration." ❤️ 1

"Simplify the process, yes. But don't convince yourself that people understand the OCP process and will care then. It's too high level for a lot of poeple." ❤️ 1



5) Which would you recommend?

- Use different approval processes for different kinds of land use and building purposes (ie. for-profit, affordable housing, "For Indigenous, By Indigenous" buildings).
- Use the same pre-approval process for all applications.

5) Top 5 Liked Comments

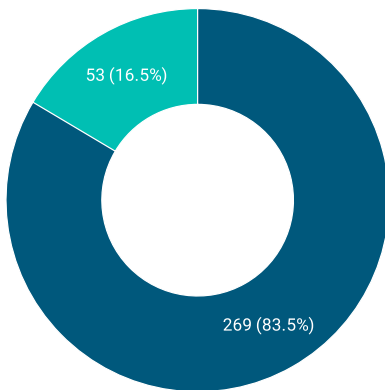
"It needs to be a level playing field for everyone. Why affordable housing or Indigenous housing would be treated differently makes no sense. Providing special processes for one group separate from the rest of the public breeds hatred. Isn't it the advantageous treatment of Caucasian people that caused many problems to begin with?" ❤️ 2

"Streamline non-profit, affordable, etc." ❤️ 1

"Use pre approved house plans, like Victoria is planning to do. Bring back easy, basic homes like the Vancouver special." ❤️ 1

"But every single one of those processes should contain public consultation, because again it isn't just about public input into the development, but also supporting change management for the public. I oppose removing public consultation on nonprofit housing because it removes this opportunity for neighbours to get used to the changes that are coming to their home." ❤️ 1

"Don't make more processes please, for heavens sake, we have enough on our plates." ❤️ 1



6) Which would you recommend?

- Move public input requirements to the beginning of the zoning bylaw application.
- Keep public input requirements at the end after proposal details have been finalized.

6) Top 5 Liked Comments

"Why can't it be both at the beginning AND at the end? This survey is getting annoying with its lack of choices." ❤️ 3

"To be meaningful, public input needs to come early enough in the process, but that shouldn't mean that it can't occur later in the process as well. Development planning is an iterative process." ❤️ 3

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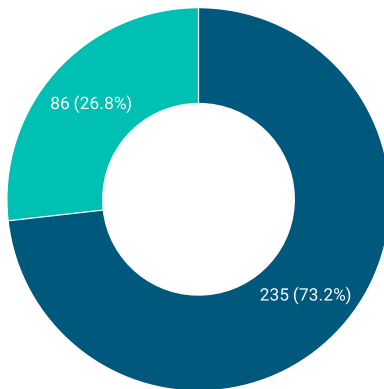
SURVEY RESULTS

6) Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"It depends on what you mean by "public input". If you were suggesting a public hearing early on, I don't think that can work without enough detail. However, if you were talking about an approach that allows for dialogue between neighbours and potential developers, that should happen as early as possible." ❤️ 2

"No public input requirements." ❤️ 1

"Council asking a proponent to make big changes after they have already gone through several rounds of public consultation, just because a few neighbours are screaming bloody murder is simply wrong." ❤️ 1



7) Which would you recommend?

- Provide multiple asynchronous ways to submit input, such as on-line surveys.
- Expand direct, synchronous opportunities to talk directly to decision-makers.

7) Top 5 Liked Comments

"Both." ❤️ 22

"In person commenting should be done away with. Eliminate opportunities for bullying and toxicity." ❤️ 1

"Surveys are practical and powerful but the must be by invitation to a specific person based on either resident status or taxpayer status. And ONLY residents are allowed to vote ... give input. It is their community, their tax dollars and their quality of life." ❤️ 1

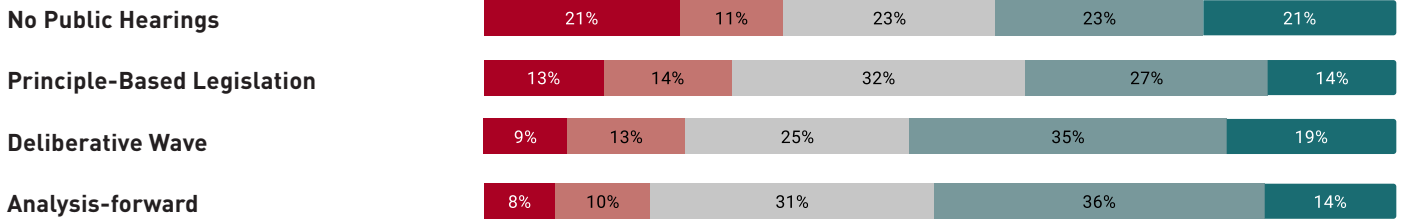
"Poorly written options you are assuming people understand asynchronous and synchronous..." ❤️ 1

"Since developers will use all of the above, so should opportunity be for public engagement" ❤️ 1

ALTERNATIVES TO PUBLIC HEARINGS

Rate your support for the following alternatives to public hearings.

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



	Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
Connects No Public Hearings	51%	46%	53%	44%
Principle-Based Legislation	37%	52%	54%	41%
Deliberative Wave	36%	59%	60%	53%
Analysis-forward	30%	62%	60%	51%

No Public Hearings

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
51%	46%	53%	44%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"I think that the public and near-neighbours need to have input." ❤️ 2

"Yes. We are highly educated professionals, using our professional judgement, within the bounds of a public plan like the OCP. If you didn't bother to get involved in public process through the OCP or electing your representative, then why bother us on the small things." ❤️ 2

Continued on next page

SURVEY RESULTS

Top 5 Liked Comments cont'd

"Sound sketchy to me. I don't think I trust government enough to follow its own rules." ❤️ 2

"No choice between "neutral" and "high," such as "I'd give this a try" or "support somewhat." ❤️ 1

"I could not support this more strongly. We don't need a public hearing for every hearing; residents have plenty of other opportunities to make themselves heard, especially the ballot box every 4 years." ❤️ 1

Principle-Based Legislation

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
37%	52%	54%	41%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Defining these terms would be very challenging, and everyone (including Council members) would have their own interpretation. I understand the concept, but it could be very challenging in practice." ❤️ 1

"Worth further investigation." ❤️ 1

"Devil in details; that list of principles has different definitions and different levels in each individual." ❤️ 1

"I would need more information on this process to comment." ❤️ 1

"These are sort of motherhood statements. I am not sure there would be easy agreement about what this involves in practice. I am also not sure small town council members necessarily know how to put any of these concepts into any meaningful practice." ❤️ 1

Deliberative Wave

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
36%	59%	60%	53%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"So long as these are not volunteer orgs (which again are self selecting) and are intentionally set up to represent the communities demographics culturally and socioeconimcally they would help. they should also be as regional as possible, becuae housing is a regional and provincial issue and each new site effects all areas of the city no matter the class and racial makup" ❤️ 2

"Why bother electing representatives/decision-makers if this is the model?" ❤️ 1

"If only the public could see the huge costs of consultation and public hearings, they might question whether those tax dollars could be spent in a better way." ❤️ 1

"Depends on who runs for Council, or the make up of your Council. If you're racially and economically homogeneous, this is not a problem. For diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds within a community, under representation is a major issue, as poor people of color don't usually run for Council because they are unable due to socio-economic conditions/factors. They may be good leaders, but their voices are never heard." ❤️ 1

I would love to see this in BC! It would result in a much more amicable, informed process that actually gets into the nuances to land use decisions." ❤️ 1

Analysis-forward

Very low Low Neutral High Very High



Conflict	Consensus	Support	Approval
30%	62%	60%	51%

Top 5 Liked Comments

"Letting staff do their job and trusting them is fairly good" ❤️ 3

"I suppose Housing Needs Reports are part of this. If a city identifies the need for housing (and almost every single one would, if it's being honest), then good planning principles would identify optimal locational characteristics, which should inform the OCP." ❤️ 2

"Another City of Surrey example is them refusing to accept a housing needs report because it was "too negative". Without the political context, the policy direction is at the whim of the council. Any thing which provides wider public input should be considered." ❤️ 1

"The current system of lengthy public meetings does not work" ❤️ 1

"Not as an alternative, but integrated into process" ❤️ 1

DEMOCRACYDIALOGUE.CA/PUBLICHEARINGS