

Centre Plan

Community Engagement Strategy

Report of Step 1 – Engage & Define

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About This Document

The Centre Plan Engagement Strategy outlines the ways and means by which staff at the Halifax Regional Municipality will engage with the community through the Centre Plan project. A key component of the Strategy is meaningful and regular reporting on progress. This report signifies the end of Step 1 of the Strategy, and will provide the reader with an understanding of what progress has been made. The report provides **measures** of the success of **actions** taken toward achieving the **goals** of the engagement plan.

This report will also describe Step 2 of the Engagement Strategy, with learnings from Step 1 integrated with the intent of improving performance in the next stages of the project.

If there is a singular thread that we be woven through the entirety of this document and the Centre Plan project it is one of **clarity**. This means clarity in communication, clarity in form, and clarity in the intended outcomes of the project. We strongly encourage any reader of this document to follow up with staff at planhrm@halifax.ca with any questions or comments.



Goals



Actions



Measurement



Clarity

Background

What is the Centre Plan?

The 2014 Regional Plan establishes long-range, region-wide planning policies outlining where, when, and how future growth and development should take place in the Municipality to the year 2031. Between 2006 and 2011, the Halifax Regional Municipality's population grew to over 409,510 (Census, 2011). This growth has not occurred uniformly across the municipality, but has been focussed mainly in the suburban communities and rural areas within commuting distance of the Regional Centre.

The 2014 Regional Plan targets at least 75% of all new housing units to be located in the Regional Centre and other urban communities, with at least 25% of all new housing units within the Regional Centre itself during the period between 2009 and 2031. The Regional Plan identifies the Regional Centre as the focus for economic, cultural and residential development activities in the Region.

To aid in the successful attainment of this goal, the Centre Plan project has been established to ensure that the desired population growth is supported while maintaining the success of existing neighbourhoods and remaining true to the Guiding Principles for the Centre Plan developed through the 2014 Regional Plan.

The Centre Plan project will deliver a new **Regional Centre Municipal Planning Strategy** and accompanying **Land Use By-Law**. A new Municipal Planning Strategy for the Regional Centre will replace the current set of three (3) Municipal Planning Strategies in the Centre and their three (3) associated Land Use By-Laws. The project is envisioned as a 24 month project, having started in October 2014.

For a more comprehensive description of the project, please reference the Centre Plan website at <http://www.halifax.ca/planhrm/centreplan.php>.

Engagement Strategy Goals

Considering the breadth of issues that are manifest in the Regional Centre the project cannot rely on standard practices for Community Engagement alone, and the project recognizes that a unique strategy for this project will help staff address the demands as we progress toward a unified plan for the Regional Centre.

Drawing from the experience in Regional Planning on past projects we know that a well-defined Strategy will help focus the efforts and provide necessary stability when difficulties arise. To provide direction to the strategy four clear goals have been defined for the Centre Plan Engagement.



Goals

- 1) Be consistent with and draw on the strength of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy,
- 2) Respect the work done by staff and the public in earlier engagement,
- 3) Build trust that will enable staff and the public to engage in effective city building, and
- 4) Provide clear framework for actions and allow for all bodies to observe measured success.

Review of Step 1 – Engage and Define

With Council direction at the end of January staff were able to begin engagement with the aim of explaining the goals and scope of the project and how it fits with the other Plan strategies that have been (or are being) developed. This step has included significant stakeholder and public education and the feedback received through Step 1 has had significant influence on the detailed development of the project plan for the Centre Plan.

As originally conceived this stage was to last for four months and allow the development of a project plan while introducing the project to a large cross section of stakeholders and the public with a mix of new and traditional methods of engagement. A minor lag in the approval of the engagement strategy and resourcing the creation of consultation materials has led to a moderately altered timing of deliverables. The net effect on the project timeline is negligible, as progress has continued on in-process policy work and the technical studies that serve as inputs into the comprehensive Centre Plan project. For reference to the original action plan, please see the approved Community Engagement Strategy contained within the Report and Recommendation to Regional Council on January 28th, 2015. The actual account of actions is included in Figure 1, below.

Tools & Techniques	2015				
	Step 1				
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
1. Online Portal				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Plain Language Guides					
3. Planning Workshops		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
4. Remote / Open Work Spaces					
5. Community Narratives				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Citizen Survey					
7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Toolkit					
8. Educational Engagement					
9. Stakeholder Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Actions

Online Portal

Halifax Regional Municipality has a comprehensive municipal website that acts as a significant communications tool for the work of the municipality. The Centre Plan has an updated, simplified, presence on halifax.ca at the following address:

<http://www.halifax.ca/planhrm/centreplan.php>

This site will act as the landing page for inquiries and interest in the Centre Plan project and it fits into the overall online presence provided via other municipal platforms. Combined with the Community Design Advisory Committee webpage and the Shape Your City portal the Centre Plan web page is the first component of the complete Online Portal. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the different aspects of the proposed portal.

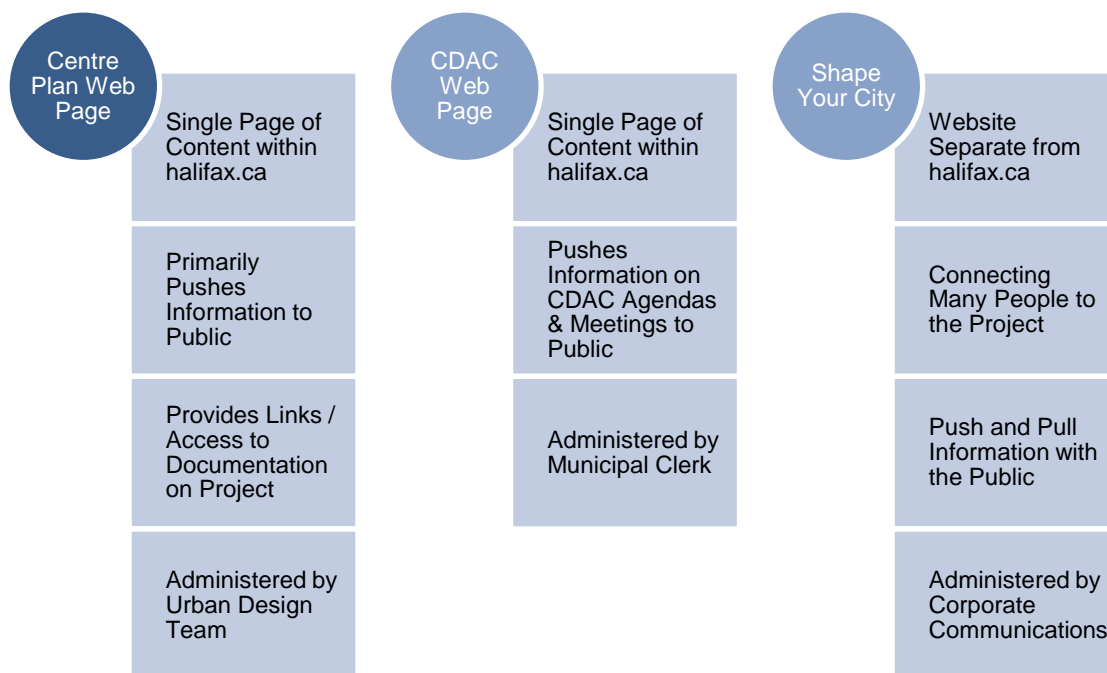


Figure 1 - Online Portal & Web Presence



Measurement

As the webpage has been live for a short period of time there are no measures of success available at this time beyond the site creation. In future reports web traffic to all three components of the online presence will be reported. Monitoring initial take-up of the portal and how the portal is used will be an important early input into developing further processes.

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
1. On-line Portal	- Launch Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website live (yes) - # of hits (n/a)

Planning Workshops

Workshops are intended to be an opening to the public to engage with the project, these will help staff communicate directly and clearly in public forum to explain the direction being considered on the Centre Plan. In parallel with the re-engagement of the Centre Plan project the Urban Design team has been busy working with the public on a variety of policy projects throughout the Regional Centre. When considering the timing and applicability of a Centre Plan “Planning Workshop” during the same period it was decided that this may betray the overall goal of clarity as it would be difficult to communicate the purpose of the workshop in light of (a) other policy projects, (b) a fluid project work plan, (c) ongoing development applications, and (d) previous public consultation on Centre Plan work.

With the project plan defined Planning Workshops will be possible as part of Step 2 of the Engagement Strategy.

Where the project has been discussed publicly is through invited talks, through the aforementioned policy projects, and in Public Information Meetings for recent Development Applications in the Regional Centre. Staff members have had the opportunity to speak about the Centre Plan project at general meetings of Business Improvement Districts and other non-profit associations. These do not replace Planning Workshop, but they were in Step 1 an effective forum for conversations with the public.



Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
2. Planning Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage a broad group of citizens in education - Provide clarity with respect to scope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - # of events (n/a) - # of attendees (n/a) - participant scoring (n/a)

Community Narratives

Community Narratives exist throughout all communities and by working with citizens to pull these stories to the front of the Centre Plan project we can make a difference in how policy work is understood in the community – and in how it responds to the community. Staff have begun to pull stories from Stakeholder organizations and create the terms of reference for how these narratives will be used.

The actions proposed in the Engagement Strategy assumed that we would immediately begin collecting stories and sharing them. Similar to the Planning Workshops, staff determined that it would be premature to begin such sharing before a project plan was determined.

The development of the Community Narratives tool will continue with support from internal resources in Government Relations & External Affairs who have expertise in this area of practice.



Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
5. Community Narratives	- Provide a forum for local narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - # of stories (n/a) - # of posts / shares (n/a)

Stakeholder Outreach

To date, the Centre Plan project has employed an open approach to engagement of stakeholders. The stakeholders may change as we progress through the steps of the planning process, and with CDAC's direction we will ensure that stakeholders are given the opportunity to engage at appropriate points in the process and in an appropriate manner.

Staff have engaged stakeholders in a repeatable engagement process that helps ensure that all stakeholders have a similar opportunity to understand the Centre Plan project. The opportunity for stakeholders to work with one another in these sessions may help ensure that policies created through the Centre Plan process are supported throughout the Regional Centre.

The table below (Table 1) shows the categorization system that is being used collect groups together to optimize the effort spent in consultation with stakeholders and beginning to build connections through our planning process.

Table 1

Stakeholder Categorization

<i>Type</i>	<i>Area of Interest</i>	<i>Geography</i>
Core	Economy	National
Internal Municipal	Culture	Provincial
Non-Governmental	Open Space	Region
Other Government Group	Transportation Land Use Community Health Urban Design Planning	Regional Centre

Please reference Table 1 in reviewing the stakeholder list included as an appendix to this report (Appendix A).

Through these consultations we have been able to inform the stakeholders as to the goals of the Centre Plan, present the high level work plan, and garner feedback to assist in the development of the project plan.

Themes

Consultation with stakeholders has assisted staff in identifying and scoping the suite of technical studies and understanding the needs of various communities. The following themes were constant in most consultations with stakeholders:

1. Process Improvements

It is not uncommon for stakeholders to recognize the complicated process for development outside of Downtown Halifax.

2. The Need for Certainty

It is extremely common for stakeholders to cite the current level of uncertainty as having serious impacts on quality of life in communities and the ability to plan for future projects in the development sector.

3. Scale of Community

Most stakeholders referenced the need for consideration of abutting or neighbourhood character in the development of new buildings. The question of what was reasonable to expect in an urban context was a common thread in consultation.

4. Impact of Development on Residential & Commercial Uses

Carrying forward from the conversation of scale, stakeholder groups were sensitive to the fact that development impact stretch beyond whether a building is felt to be “too big”. Consideration of what commercial uses would be supported in new developments was regularly addressed.

5. Current Housing Need & Absorption of Approved Development

There was considerable discussion of the “need” for new housing units in light of the high level of residential activity in the Regional Centre.

6. Transportation & Parking

An oft referenced issue among stakeholders is the carrying capacity of our roads, not only for single occupancy vehicle traffic but also for all other users and uses (including on street parking).

The Stakeholder Outreach was one of the most successful facets of Step 1 of the Engagement Strategy. Staff worked diligently to ensure meetings were continually being booked and that the input from the Stakeholders was feeding into the project plan.

This work will continue through the project and efforts will be made to continue linking Stakeholder groups together through consultation to build an awareness and network of support for the project.



Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
9. Stakeholder Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share engagement plan - Build the stakeholder network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - # of events held (12) - # of stakeholders (35)

Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees

Supporting working groups and detailed technical committees have been identified within the staff team. Working groups for Environment, Demographics, and Transportation have been struck and are meeting on an 8 week cycle. These groups bring together staff from various departments to ensure that issues known to the municipality are considered at an appropriate time within the Centre Plan project.

A technical committee for review of the existing Land Use By-Laws has been formed with senior staff from the Planning Policy and Development Approvals groups. As a first task the terms of reference for this committee are being drafted with committee members.



Measurement

Tools & Techniques	Objective	Measures
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	- Working Group Definitions / Resource	- Creation of Groups (yes)

Summary, Step 1

The work carried out throughout Step1 has been highly beneficial. The breadth of engagement techniques applied is narrower than what was originally planned, yet the insight has been rich. The dialogue has been multi-directional, providing education on process, generating interest and collaborative spirit between internal and external stakeholder groups, and gathering local knowledge to guide the engagement process itself as well as the progressive development of policy and programming internally.

Opportunities for improvement in process exist, mostly with respect to ensuring that staff has a complete understanding of the tools – especially in the case of tools that are new to HRM – and that time is allocated to ensure that the engagement tools can be deployed effectively to achieve the goals of the strategy.

Preparing for Step 2 – Learn Together

With the project defined for all stakeholders and the community we can begin to talk about how the new comprehensive Centre Plan will ensure that the Vision for the Regional Centre and Guiding Principles are achieved and enshrined in policy. The action plan for Step 2 has shifted slightly to reflect the change in Step 1 timing (see below). The intent will be to work with the Lead Consultant through 2015 to carry forward work from the past and add relevant comprehensive analysis to inform draft policies for the Regional Centre and communicate this work through the Engagement Strategy.



Actions

Tools & Techniques	2015					
	Step 2					
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Online Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Plain Language Guides						
3. Planning Workshops			<input type="checkbox"/>			
4. Remote / Open Work Spaces		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
5. Community Narratives	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Citizen Survey						
7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Toolkit					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Educational Engagement				<input type="checkbox"/>		
9. Stakeholder Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As identified as an area for improvement in reviewing Step 1, it is important to define techniques and refine implementation strategies before embarking on the next steps in the process. The Tools and Techniques planned for Step 2 include the continued development of the Online Portal, hosting of Planning Workshops, using Remote / Open Work Spaces, gathering of Community Narratives, creation of Planning Workbooks, engaging with Schools in the Regional

Centre, continuing Stakeholder Outreach, and the Staff Working Groups/Technical Committees. Given the novelty of many of these approaches, there is a need to reach clarity regarding their purpose, their functionality, and the logistics of their application. These tools have been iteratively defined and explored throughout the engagement process to evaluate and establish their application. Table 2 (below) identifies the new tools being proposed for Step 2 and attempts to further clarify their use and scope.

Tool / Technique	Application in Step 2
<p>1. On-line Portal A municipally created and administered participatory platform where citizens contribute to the planning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Launch of Shape Your City (Halifax)
<p>2. Plain Language Guides Technical work and language can obscure the planning process and goals, guides help avoid this without losing technical rigour in the plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A
<p>3. Planning Workshops Engaging with the community at key points to share progress and gather input.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A September event will introduce the Lead Consultant to the Community and Outline the Path to Completion
<p>4. Remote / Open Work Spaces Getting away from desktops and meeting rooms, staff can work through a platform of publicly accessible planning activities to engage a wider group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In August and September some Urban Design Team staff will work periodically out of the Downtown Halifax Business Commission storefront on a rotating schedule

Tool / Technique	Application in Step 2
<p>5. Community Narratives Through the online portal to assist framing policy direction stories from the community will help ground the process in the reality of the Regional Centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff will continue to pursue narratives and position these as a lens for policy creation and for communication
<p>6. Citizen Survey Enabling third party interaction with citizens to ensure that communication is effective throughout the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A
<p>7. Planning Workbooks / Local Event Planning Toolkit Throughout the process there will be a need for the input and knowledge of the community. Workbooks allow the collection of this in a meaningful and comprehensive manner where plans are communicated using plain language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workbooks will be developed in concert with the Lead Consultant around major emerging issues for the project.
<p>8. Educational Engagement Working with local schools to engage students in the planning process as it relates to their academic curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff will work with local High Schools to engage with students to leverage volunteer engagement or (if possible) participate in learning outcomes of students.
<p>9. Stakeholder Outreach Talking to industry, commercial sectors, institutional sectors, and others throughout the process to ensure we understand the varied needs of a broad cross section of the community and that they understand the project at all phases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing work done in Step 1.
<p>10. Staff Working Groups / Technical Committees Understanding the depth of knowledge within the municipality and ensuring collaboration will be key to creating an implementable plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing work done in Step 1.

The suite of tools and resources outlined herein provides a mix of tried methods and innovative new forms of engagement that fit within the spirit of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy.

Next Steps

The successful engagement in Step 1 has allowed staff to prepare a Request for Proposals for consulting services to support the development of the comprehensive Centre Plan. When this competition closes and a Lead Consultant is selected it is possible that amendments and/or enhancements to the Engagement Strategy are proposed during the next Step of the strategy. If changes to the Engagement Strategy are envisioned at any time they will be brought to CDAC.

We will continue to report on the success of engagement at each step along the way. It is important to monitor and assess the quality of engagement, as well as the progress toward the end goal. With early success, the project can gain the confidence of stakeholders and staff, and as a corollary, early missed opportunity will identify the need for change while being a signifier of an open planning process intended for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Call to Clarity

There is a need for consistency in the communication of the Centre Plan project progress. In response to this need, and to help set the tone for the project, results of the Centre Plan Engagement Strategy to date have been summarized in this report.

Appendix A

Stakeholder List, Pink Shading Denotes Consultation

Project: Centre Plan
Sheet Title: Stakeholders
Date: 2015-06

ID	Name	Type	Area of Interest
1	Halifax Regional School Board	Other Government	Community
2	Ecology Action Centre	Non-Governmental	Community
3	Park to Park	Group	Community
4	Wyse Road Society for Sensible Urban Design	Group	Community
5	North End Community Circle	Group	Community
6	United Way	Non-Governmental	Community
7	YWCA	Non-Governmental	Community
8	YMCA of Greater Halifax / Dartmouth	Non-Governmental	Community
9	NSCC	Non-Governmental	Community
10	Dalhousie University	Non-Governmental	Community
11	NSCAD University	Non-Governmental	Community
12	Saint Mary's University	Non-Governmental	Community
13	Destination Halifax	Other Government	Community
14	SHYM	Group	Community
15	Park Oven Group	Group	Community
16	St. Vincent Nursing Home	Non-Governmental	Community
17	Dartmouth North Community Food Centre	Non-Governmental	Community
18	Feed Nova Scotia	Non-Governmental	Community
19	Shelter Nova Scotia	Non-Governmental	Community
20	Salvation Army	Group	Community
21	Theatre Nova Scotia	Group	Culture
22	Writers Federation of Nova Scotia	Group	Culture
23	Visual Arts Nova Scotia	Group	Culture
24	North End Business Association	Non-Governmental	Economy
25	Spring Garden Road Business Association	Non-Governmental	Economy
26	Quinpool Road Business Association	Non-Governmental	Economy
27	Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission	Non-Governmental	Economy

28	Downtown Halifax Business Commission	Non-Governmental	Economy
ID	Name	Type	Area of Interest
29	Halifax Chamber of Commerce	Non-Governmental	Economy
30	Halifax Partnership	Internal Municipal	Economy
31	NSBI	Other Government	Economy
32	Innovacorp	Other Government	Economy
33	Woodside Industrial Park	Group	Economy
34	Halifax Gateway Council	Non-Governmental	Economy
35	CDHA	Other Government	Health
36	IWK	Other Government	Health
37	Farmers Markets Nova Scotia	Group	Health
38	Walk Halifax	Group	Health
39	Dartmouth Seniors Service Centre	Group	Health
40	Northwood Manor	Non-Governmental	Health
41	North End Community Health Centre	Non-Governmental	Health
42	Dartmouth Community Health Board	Non-Governmental	Health
43	Heart & Stroke Foundation	Non-Governmental	Health
44	Urban Development Institute	Group	Land Use
45	Halifax Port Authority	Other Government	Land Use
46	Halifax Development Applications Division	Internal Municipal	Land Use
47	Nova Scotia Realtors	Group	Land Use
48	Nova Scotia Home Builders Association	Group	Land Use
49	Property Valuation Services Commission	Non-Governmental	Land Use
50	Halifax Parks & Recreation	Internal Municipal	Open Space
51	Parks Canada	Other Government	Open Space
52	Department of Natural Resources (Parks)	Other Government	Open Space
53	Point Pleasant Park Society	Group	Open Space
54	Friends of the Halifax Common	Group	Open Space
55	Community Design Advisory Committee	Core	Planning
56	Regional Council	Core	Planning
57	Planning & Design Centre	Non-Governmental	Planning
58	FUSION Halifax	Association	Planning
59	Halifax Municipal Operations	Internal Municipal	Planning
60	Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs	Other Government	Planning
61	Provincial MLAs	Other Government	Planning
62	CFB Halifax	Other Government	Planning
63	Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia	Non-Governmental	Planning
64	It's More Than Buses	Non-Governmental	Transportation
65	Halifax Transportation & Public Works Department	Internal Municipal	Transportation

66	Halifax Transit	Internal Municipal	Transportation
ID	Name	Type	Area of Interest
67	Waterfront Development Corporation Limited	Other Government	Urban Design
68	Nova Scotia Architects Association	Group	Urban Design
69	Heritage Trust	Group	Urban Design
70	Small Home Designers	Group	Urban Design
71	Halifax Home Owners Association	Group	Land Use
72	The Friends of the Public Gardens	Group	Open Space
73	Willow Tree Community Association	Group	Land Use
74	Progress in the Park	Group	Open Space
75	Halifax Community Health Board	Non-Governmental	Health
76	ACORN Canada (Nova Scotia)	Non-Governmental	Community
77	North Central Community Council	Group	Community
78	Bloomfield Neighbourhood Residents	Group	Planning
79	Ward 5 Community Centre	Non-Governmental	Community
80	Peninsula South Community Association	Group	Land Use