

Governor's 2010 Smart Communities Awards

Smart Vision Award

Submitted for: Comprehensive Planning

Local governments only are invited to submit nominations in this category. Entries may include adoption or amendment of comprehensive plans, public participation, county-wide planning policies, resource lands, critical areas, subarea plans, urban design plans, downtown revitalization plans, rural plans, and/or transportation plans.

Please check applicable jurisdiction size: (to insert a check, hold down the ctrl key and double click on the box)

County

City population **under** 10,000

City population **over** 10,000

NOMINATION FORM	
Nominee (name of project or plan)	Neighborhood Planning OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT
Name of City or County	Seattle
Contact Person	Barbara Wilson, Executive Director, Seattle Planning Commission
Address	700 5 th Avenue, Suite 2000 Seattle, WA 98124
Phone and Email	Phone: 206.684.0431 Email: barb.wilson@seattle.gov
LIST THE NAMES OF ALL RECIPIENTS AS THEY ARE TO APPEAR ON THE AWARD CERTIFICATE	
Department of Neighborhoods	
Department of Planning and Development	
Seattle Planning Commission	
NOMINATION CATEGORY – SMART PARTNERSHIP AWARD	
Provide the estimated total cost of the plan or project, if available.	
The Neighborhood Plan Outreach and Engagement cost approximately \$145,000. The public outreach liaison work was approximately \$100,000 and the cost of the hosting the in-person and virtual meetings and summarizing the reports was approximately \$45,000.	
Funding Information: List all other funding used for the plan or project. For Grants, list type, year of grant, and granting agency.	
All of the funding for the neighborhood plan outreach and engagement was provided by the City of Seattle's general fund.	



Name of Project or Plan:

Neighborhood Planning **OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT**

CHECKLIST OF CATEGORY CRITERIA

Comprehensive plans must demonstrate excellence in one or more of the following criteria. Please check each criteria that is demonstrated by the nominated project. (to insert a check, hold down the ctrl key and double click on the box)

- Demonstrates excellence in comprehensive planning
- Demonstrates innovative, thorough, and meaningful public participation
- Clearly carries out the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act or other documented community development objectives
- Offers an innovative solution or a model for other communities

NOMINATION STATEMENT – A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT (50 WORDS OR LESS)

Briefly describe the plan or project. Include what the project is about, who prepared the plan, and how long it took to complete the plan or project.

In 2009, the City of Seattle began updating neighborhood plans using multiple outreach and engagement processes. The first effort to update three neighborhood plans included targeted outreach to historically underrepresented communities using the Planning Outreach Liaison model. The second process gathered feedback about 24 neighborhoods through in-person and virtual meetings.

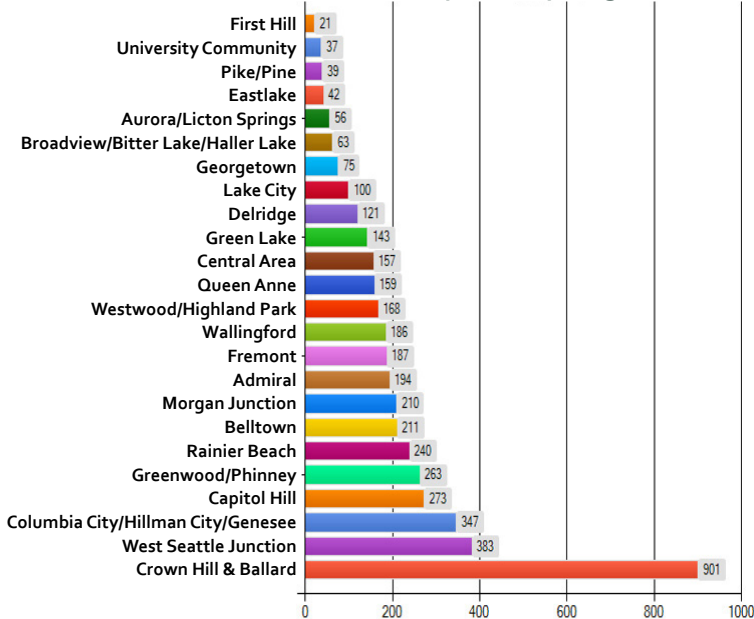


Somali youth participating in a workshop to update the Othello neighborhood plan.



Vietnamese POL-hosted workshop.

Final Questionnaire Responses by Neighborhood



SMART VISION: Comprehensive Planning

Name of Project or Plan:

Neighborhood Planning **Outreach & Engagement**

HOW THIS NOMINATION MEETS THE AWARD CRITERIA

Tell us why you think this is an excellent plan or project and how it meets the award criteria you checked on the previous page. Clearly state why the individual, organization, or project deserves recognition in the specific category.



Seattle City Councilmember Sally Clark listens in on a neighborhood discussion during the first Status Check meeting.

The Neighborhood Planning Outreach and Engagement involved two distinct and innovative approaches to public participation that can serve as models for other communities. The first, year-long process focused on updating three neighborhood plans in Southeast Seattle, where many people come from very diverse backgrounds. The Planning Outreach Liaison model was used to expand outreach to historically underrepresented communities within these three neighborhoods. The second “Status Check” process took place from June through August 2009, and encouraged citizens to discuss their neighborhood plans and changes in their neighborhoods since the plans were adopted in the late 1990s. More than 6,000 people participated in these two processes.

Neighborhood plan update workshops hosted by Planning Outreach Liaisons



Chinese Seniors – Beacon Tower

Demonstrates innovative, thorough and meaningful public participation

THE PLANNING OUTREACH LIAISON (POL) MODEL

As the City of Seattle began preparing for the 2009 neighborhood plan updates, they recognized the need for a more inclusive outreach and engagement process. In response, the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) developed the Planning Outreach Liaison (POL) model, which is based on the Trusted Advocate model developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and practiced in the White Center community. The basic principle of the POL model is to reach out to and civically engage historically-underrepresented communities through trusted and qualified, bilingual and/or bicultural liaisons.



Latino Community – El Patio Apartments

Recruiting Planning Outreach Liaisons

13 Planning Outreach Liaisons were selected for the 2009 neighborhood plan update process. While POLs were compensated for the time they spent working on outreach and engagement activities, they were not considered City employees. Many POLs held full-time jobs and undertook the neighborhood planning work on a contract basis. The City of Seattle partnered with the Seattle Neighborhood Group who functioned as the fiscal agent and subcontracted with the POLs. This partnership was essential to maintain costs and to preserve the POLs’ neutrality. DON and Department of Planning and Development (DPD) staff were responsible for recruiting and training the POLs, as well as providing technical assistance and materials needed to ensure an effective outreach effort.



Somali Community – New Holly

SMART VISION: Comprehensive Planning

Name of Project or Plan:

Neighborhood Planning **Outreach & Engagement**

HOW THIS NOMINATION MEETS THE AWARD CRITERIA

Recruiting qualified and trusted POLs was crucial in establishing a successful civic engagement and outreach program. It was important that candidates were respected in their community. To that end, community input and assistance was sought during the selection process. Careful consideration was given to ensure that POLs were perceived as neutral—not representatives of the City, or political/community advocates. This was done to minimize obstacles that often prevent different factions of the community from participating together.

The POL Qualifications for recruitment included:

- Experience providing outreach to respective community
- Experience working with diverse populations
- Capacity to communicate in a mainstream setting and within respective cultural community
- Fluency in English and native language
- Familiarity with community (where people live, gather, worship, etc.)
- Presentation and facilitation experience
- Ability to provide accurate and legible translation and simultaneous interpretation

POL Training

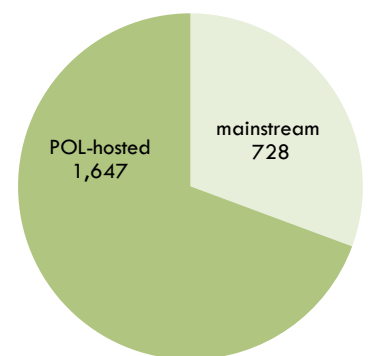
Desired qualifications for POLs did not include prior knowledge of urban planning or past participation in neighborhood planning processes. It was City staff’s responsibility to train and equip the POLs with the tools necessary to successfully bridge the cultural and language barriers between the City and underrepresented communities. POL training included:

- Outreach and workshop facilitation tips
- Community-building and leadership
- Logistics, expectations, values and goals
- Administrative issues and contractual obligations
- Content information, including materials to be presented at city-hosted workshops

Activities Performed by POLs

- Spread the word about Neighborhood Plan Updates and Status Reports
- Extended invitations to POL-hosted and facilitated workshops (in respective languages)
- Extended invitations to city-hosted neighborhood planning workshops (and provide interpretation when applicable)
- Recorded workshop notes in native language and translated into English
- Translated written materials, invitations, and planning documents

Workshop Attendees Phases I-III



The POL flower board helped non-English speaking participants at City-hosted workshops identify their POL. Different silk flowers are next to each POL’s name. The POLs carried the same flower at all times and vases full of silk flowers were located at the discussion table for each community group.

At both POL-hosted and City-hosted workshops childcare from a locally-operated and licensed facility was offered. POLs were encouraged to select workshop settings that were suitable for their community participants and to provide cultural refreshments that were purchased locally whenever possible.

Name of Project or Plan:	Neighborhood Planning <i>Outreach & Engagement</i>
HOW THIS NOMINATION MEETS THE AWARD CRITERIA	



Participants at the July 27, 2009 meeting watch the video introduction.



Screenshot of the introductory video played at each of the public meetings and available online.

THE STATUS CHECK MEETINGS AND ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

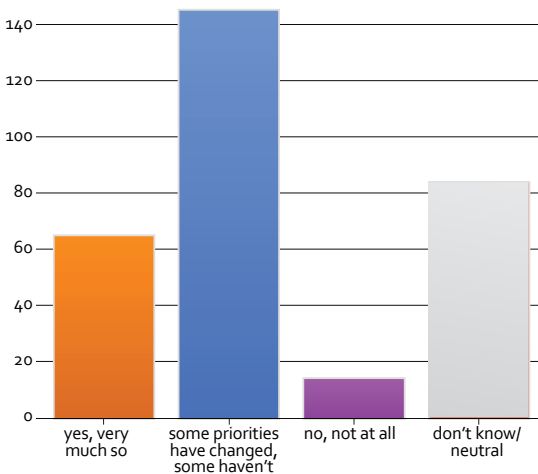
From June through August 2009, citizens were encouraged to discuss the status of their neighborhood plans and changes in their neighborhoods since the plans were adopted in the late 1990s. Almost 5,000 people participated in these “Status Check” meetings, which included Seattle’s first virtual meeting hosted by the Seattle Planning Commission (SPC).

The Status Check marks a unique contribution to planning because it was the first time in Seattle a virtual meeting was created. The SPC and the Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee co-hosted five public meetings that included 24 neighborhood-specific discussions. In an attempt to broaden participation, the SPC created and hosted a virtual meeting that mirrored the public meetings using a variety of web-based tools.

The virtual meeting was posted on the SPC website and allowed participants to go online at any time, view a short narrated video, read a status report of their neighborhood and then complete a brief questionnaire. Web-based tools are particularly helpful in a time of limited budgets – there was a limited amount of funding and staff time available to host the public meetings. The SPC also recognizes that it can be difficult for people to participate in public meetings, particularly on summer evenings when many Seattleites would rather be outside enjoying the beautiful weather than in a stuffy gym or community room; virtual meetings provide a new option.

The online meeting was a great success that far exceeded expectations. The SPC encouraged people to respond by posting a chart of responses to the questionnaire on its website. As the initial deadline for closing the online questionnaire drew near, the SPC encouraged local neighborhood blogs to post the chart on their websites, which sparked a bit of rivalry as residents encouraged each other to fill out the questionnaire to show support and pride for their neighborhood. As responses poured in, Commission staff began updating the chart daily. Because of demand, the questionnaire was kept open for an additional two weeks. Commissioners’ excitement about the number of responses was tempered by the fact that they would then have to summarize thousands of responses. Josh Brower, Chair of the Commission, suggested that the Commissioner who co-hosted each neighborhood discussion read through the verbatim questionnaire responses and write a brief summary of the key themes and compare the two sets of responses.

Are your neighborhood plan vision and key strategies still the priorities?



Most Status Check participants felt that the priorities in the Neighborhood Plans were still relevant, as illustrated in the above chart from the online questionnaire responses for the [West Seattle Junction](#).

Name of Project or Plan:	Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement
HOW THIS NOMINATION MEETS THE AWARD CRITERIA	



Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck (center) and NPAC member Catherine Stanford (standing) co-host the [Lake City discussion](#).

The final products of the Status Check are a series of documents: (1) an [executive summary](#) that compares neighborhood responses from the public and online meetings; (2) an [introduction to neighborhood planning](#) that provides background information on neighborhood planning and the status check process; (3) a [summary report of the neighborhood discussions](#) at the public meetings; (4) verbatim [transcripts of the online questionnaire responses](#); and (5) the Commission's [recommendations about the future of neighborhood plan updates](#).

These documents contribute to and enhance policy decisions made by City Council and departmental staff, including decisions about whether or how to update neighborhood plans.

As the City struggles with the current economic downturn it is more important than ever to have a clear plan and focus for aligning planning resources and capital and infrastructure investment in areas where we expect jobs and housing growth. The Status Check will inform the decision-making process on whether or how to update neighborhood plans now and in the future.

Clearly carries out the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act

The Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement demonstrates two exemplary strategies that implement the GMA goal “Encourage citizen participation and regional coordination.” While the POL model specifically targeted historically underrepresented communities, the virtual meeting fostered broad participation among people who were unable to attend the in-person meetings. On whole, updates to and evaluation of neighborhood plans was entrusted to citizens; through the facilitation of rigorous civic engagement, many new people became engaged in neighborhood planning.

Seattle neighborhoods are rich with urban villages that identify where most growth within the city will occur. The neighborhood planning process initiated in 1998 is evidence of the successful implementation of concentration of development in urban areas, which furthers the GMA goal of “Focus urban growth in urban areas.” The Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement processes validated the success of implementing this GMA goal, as residents reiterated support for neighborhood centers in the City’s urban village strategy and signified the success of the neighborhood plans in advancing the developing of the urban villages.

How long have you lived, owned a business, regularly visited, worked or attended school in Lake City?

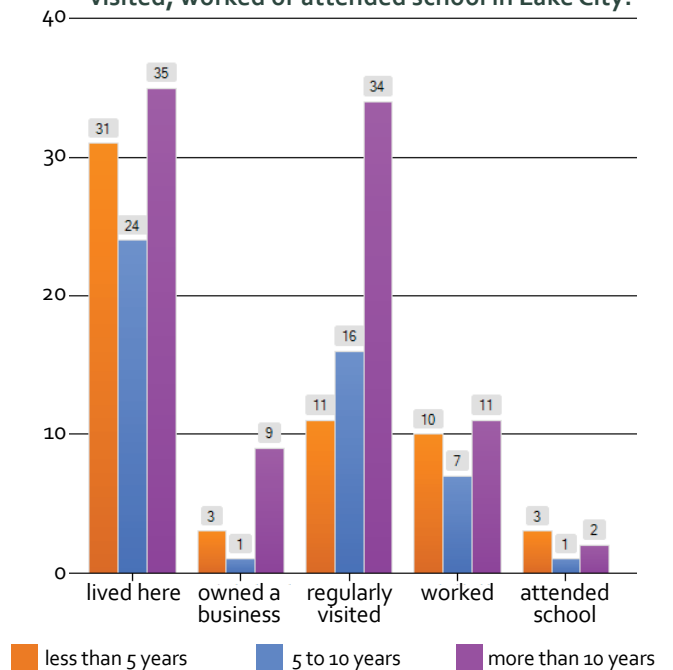


Chart of online [questionnaire respondents for Lake City](#).

Name of Project or Plan:	Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement
HOW THIS NOMINATION MEETS THE AWARD CRITERIA	

Offers an innovative model for other communities

The Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement process effectively reached more than 6,000 Seattle community members using the POL model and web-based questionnaire in addition to more traditional public meetings and workshops. These outreach methods can be used to evaluate and monitor a variety of plans – as one of the most challenging components of the planning process, evaluation and monitoring presents huge potential for return on investment – entrusting this phase of the planning process to citizens validates the entire planning process, sets the stage for future planning, and builds greater trust and improved communication between stakeholders and the City.



Screenshot of the [online questionnaire](#).

The Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement was conducted with a steadfast commitment to professionalism and integrity and the process has furthered the public respect for planning processes and advanced stakeholder and neighborhood relationships citywide. As the City begins to program for future neighborhood plan updates, the documentation from the online questionnaire will serve as a tremendous resource for the new Mayor, City Council and City staff as efforts are made to address the varying degrees of need for individual neighborhood plans.

The POLs and SPCs work was met with enthusiastic participation from citizens and stakeholders citywide – the dialogue created is rich with insight, community pride, and commitment to improving Seattle neighborhoods. Ultimately, the Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement successfully involved more than 6,000 citizens in the review of 27 neighborhoods plans and provided the City of Seattle with two new models that can be used to broaden public outreach and civic engagement in planning.

Links to Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement Documentation

Please use the links below to access more information about the Neighborhood Planning Outreach & Engagement

- Neighborhood Planning Outreach Liaison Community Workshop Themes http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cms/groups/pan/@pan/@plan/@neighborplanning/documents/web_informational/dpdp017744.pdf
- Planning Outreach Liaison Translation Process <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/docs/SampleofPlanningOutreachLiaisonTranslationProcess.pdf>
- Status Check Introduction to Neighborhood Planning <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/docs/IntroNhoodPlanning.pdf>
- Seattle Planning Commission's Recommendations on the Future of Neighborhood Plan updates http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/docs/PlanningCommissionRec_FutureNeighborhoodPlanning.pdf
- Summaries of Status Check public meetings and transcripts of online questionnaire responses <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/summarylinks.htm>