

# ***Neighborhood Plan Stewardship Survey***

A snapshot of plan stewardship in Seattle



May 2001

Seattle Planning Commission

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Dear Friend:

The Seattle Planning Commission is pleased to share with you the results of its survey of neighborhood plan stewardship groups. Early in 2001, Planning Commissioners interviewed plan stewards in 37 neighborhood planning areas about their work to implement the neighborhood plans. The enclosed document reports the results of the surveys and includes observations and recommendations from the Commission.

The results of this survey are encouraging, but they also highlight some of the potential weaknesses of plan stewardship citywide. Overall, neighborhood plan stewards express much enthusiasm and commitment to their work. However, they face significant challenges in terms of keeping people involved, gathering needed resources, and keeping up with City actions in their neighborhoods.

The Planning Commission's recommendations focus on meeting these needs by providing sufficient resources for basic plan stewardship, re-evaluating the relationship between stewardship groups and the City, and improving communication.

We encourage you to read the report and offer your feedback to the Commission and the City Council regarding those recommendations you believe are most important. Copies of the appendices containing resource information are available by calling or emailing Commission staff

Thank you to the neighborhood plan stewards and City staff for taking part in the surveys, offering advice and feedback and generally contributing your time and energy to helping make Seattle plan stewardship efforts successful.

Sincerely,

*Chuck Weinstock* *Darryl Smith*

Chuck Weinstock,  
Chair,  
Seattle Planning Commission

Darryl Smith,  
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# *Introduction*

## **Neighborhood Plan Stewardship Survey**

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Between 1996 and 2000 people throughout Seattle engaged in a major planning effort through which 37 neighborhood plans were created. Neighborhood planning was initiated as a mechanism for implementing the City's Urban Villages strategy, and was designed as a collaborative effort between citizens and the City of Seattle.

Since adoption of the neighborhood plans, both the City and neighborhood planning groups have turned their attention toward implementing specific projects from the plans. The City has reorganized its departments to better support neighborhood-generated projects. Neighborhoods have also worked to organize and fund specific projects using an array of resources.

Implementation of projects is an important part of plan stewardship because it provides tangible results of a neighborhood plan's goals and priorities. However, plan stewardship involves other equally important aspects related to building a strong community.

- n Neighborhood plan stewardship is the way neighborhoods provide ongoing organization and focus within the community for carrying out neighborhood plan priorities.
- n Neighborhood plan stewardship is how neighborhoods and the City manage the implementation of specific projects.
- n Neighborhood plan stewardship involves refinement of the neighborhood plan and periodic assessment of accomplishments as well as emerging needs.
- n Neighborhood plan stewardship is an important opportunity to keep the spirit of the neighborhood plans alive for elected officials and staff, for citizens within the planning areas, and for the city as a whole.

With encouragement from the Department of Neighborhoods, the Planning Commission initiated a survey of neighborhood plan stewardship groups early in 2001. The purpose of this effort was to learn how groups are doing—both in terms of accomplishing their programmatic goals and in creating a presence in the community. The following pages outline the survey process and findings.

## **The Focus of this Survey**

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The Planning Commission has been a strong advocate for neighborhood planning for many years. The Commission was involved in every phase of the neighborhood planning program that was initiated in the 1990s. During its review of neighborhood plans and matrices, the Commission identified a concern by members of the community regarding how neighborhood plans would be carried forward after the planning phase was completed. The City of Seattle indicated its commitment to neighborhood plan implementation through several resolutions, the creation of the Neighborhood Development and Preservation Division in DON (with six Neighborhood Development Managers), significant additions to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, and reorganization of key departments to ensure proper attention to implementing neighborhood plans.

The Planning Commission survey focuses on how plan stewardship is faring at the neighborhood level. In order to shed light on how neighborhood stewardship groups are doing, the Planning Commission surveyed forty stewardship groups involved in thirty-seven different neighborhoods through interviews or a written survey. Planning Commission staff began by meeting with the City's Neighborhood Development Managers to gain their assistance in identifying the appropriate neighborhood representatives to interview for each of the neighborhood planning areas, and in helping to devise the survey questions.

Forty surveys were completed. Georgetown, North Beacon Hill, and Westwood/Highland Park are reported as two separate groups conducting stewardship activities. Queen Anne and Uptown are reported as one implementation effort, although two distinct stewardship groups organize activities within this planning area. A majority of the people the Commission interviewed had been involved in the earlier neighborhood planning process as well as plan stewardship.

Interviews were scheduled with neighborhood plan stewards either as part of a regularly-scheduled stewardship meeting or at a separate meeting. One Planning Commissioner and one staff person met with one or more representatives of each stewardship group for a one-hour interview. Both the Commissioner and staff took notes from the interviews. Staff used these to record and compile the survey results into this

report. Seven stewardship groups submitted their responses to the survey in written form after speaking with a Planning Commissioner or staff. In a few cases, follow-up phone calls were made to clarify information from those interviewed. To ensure accuracy, each interviewee was given the opportunity to review the recorded responses. A list of interviewees is included in the appendix.

## **Reading this Report**

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The twenty-two questions used in the interviews frame the organization of this report as summarized below:

Group Organization and Operations

Reaching Objectives

Outreach and Community Involvement

Working with the City

Challenges and Resources

Planning Commission Observations and Recommendations

Within each of the chapters the report uses actual survey questions as headings to specific sections. Graphic depictions of data are used to illustrate survey results whenever useful. Additionally, the report uses examples from the community at the end of sections to communicate the array of approaches used by stewardship groups. Finally, because the survey polled a relatively small sample (40 neighborhood groups), percentages are used to a limited degree. Because some groups elected not to answer a few questions, the report will indicate when figures indicate a sample of less than 40 groups.



## ***Group Organization and Operations***

Each neighborhood planning group faced the initial challenge of identifying or establishing an organization responsible for implementation and stewardship of the neighborhood plan. In its survey the Commission found that a diversity of organizations and approaches to stewardship have emerged.

### **How is group leadership organized?**

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#### ***Existing Organizations***

In a majority of planning areas (nineteen of the 37 planning areas) plan stewards report that an organization that existed prior to the planning process has taken responsibility for implementation and stewardship of the neighborhood plan. Of these ongoing organizations, many address plan stewardship as part of the overall business of the organization (10). Others have integrated neighborhood plan stewardship as a committee within the organization (9).

#### ***Independent Stewardship Organizations***

Almost one-quarter of the respondents say their neighborhood has created a distinct organization devoted to implementing and updating their neighborhood plan (9 planning areas). These organizations frequently evolved from the neighborhood planning group, and are still led by the people who were actively involved in the neighborhood planning process. Some independent stewardship groups collaborate with a community or neighborhood council, such as Capitol Hill.

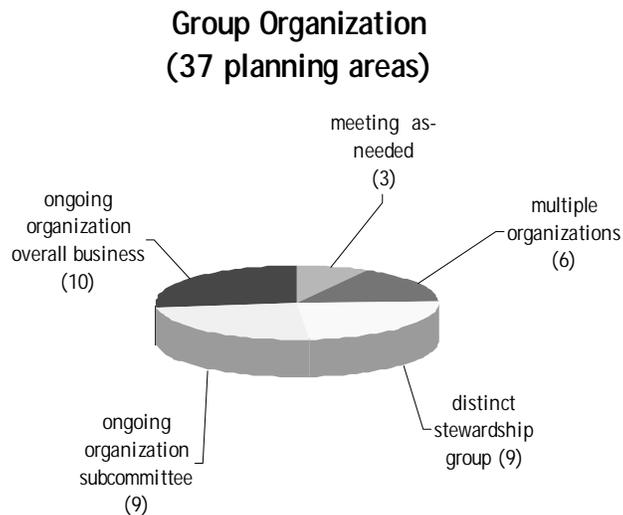
In many cases, the planning process strengthened the identity of the neighborhood. The survey found that many newly-formed stewardship groups were organized in areas that did not have a neighborhood organization prior to the planning process. Morgan Junction's Morgan Community Association (MoCA) was created through the planning process, for example. In other cases, the geographic neighborhood was formally defined through the neighborhood planning process. Such is the case with North Rainier where neighborhood planning occurred because the area was designated as an urban village in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Stewardship in North Rainier is the responsibility of a distinct organization, the North Rainier Plan Stewardship Group.

### *Multiple Organizations*

In six of the 37 neighborhood planning areas, multiple organizations (two or more) have taken responsibility for plan implementation and stewardship. For example, in Georgetown, Duwamish and MLK @ Holly, separate groups representing the business community and the residential community have undertaken different aspects of plan implementation and stewardship. In many areas, several community groups collaborate closely on plan stewardship. In some cases groups are able to cooperate even though their goals differ.

### *Plan Stewards Meeting As-Needed*

Three neighborhood plans are stewarded by small groups of citizens who were actively involved in the neighborhood plan development. These individuals meet on an as-needed basis to implement aspects of the neighborhood plan. For example, stewardship in Rainier Beach consists of two individuals who frequently meet to discuss three specific projects from their neighborhood plan.



## **About how often do you meet?**

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Groups meeting monthly:	29
Groups meeting on an as-needed basis:	10
Groups meeting on a quarterly basis:	1

## **Do you formally select leaders?**

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Groups that formally select their leaders:	30
Groups with informal leadership:	10

- n Formal leadership indicates that there are organizational bylaws dictating the number of leaders, their length of office, and the manner in which they are selected.

## **Examples from the Community:**

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### *Stewardship Group Organizations*

- n Eight neighborhood groups in Capitol Hill represent various interests. One representative from each of those groups serves on the Capitol Hill Stewardship Council, as do 12 members of the at-large community. The Council votes on new members.
- n Wallingford used their Early Implementation Fund (EIF) dollars to create the "Weaving Wallingford" office. Staffed by an Executive Director and governed by a Board of Trustees, the office serves as an information clearinghouse, citizen involvement tool, and neighborhood meeting place. Stewardship in Wallingford is still the responsibility of the Wallingford Community Council, but Weaving Wallingford is one of their primary tools for communicating to and involving citizens.
- n The Ballard District Council organizes stewardship efforts in Ballard. The Council has eight topical subcommittees, including one dedicated to Neighborhood Planning. This subcommittee regularly reviews the Neighborhood Plan and their progress towards its implementation.
- n The Pioneer Square Planning Committee managed the development of the Neighborhood Plan. At the conclusion of the neighborhood planning process, the group merged with the Pioneer Square Community Council (PSCC). The PSCC's board of directors is comprised of 18 members who are elected by the general membership.

- n A representative from the Fremont neighborhood planning group serves as a member of the Fremont Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber then addresses neighborhood plan priorities on an as-needed basis.
- n In Delridge and the International District, stewardship activities have been incorporated into the overall business of a Community Development Corporation (CDC). Implementation of the plan is coordinated by CDC staff.
- n The Central Area has created a formal committee structure to address neighborhood plan priorities. The Vice Chair of the Central Area District Council serves as chair of the neighborhood plan stewardship committee which in turn is composed of action teams that are organized by issue or geographic areas.
- n Morgan Junction and Eastlake report that while they do have organizational bylaws for the selection of leaders, they have been unable to recruit new people interested in leadership.

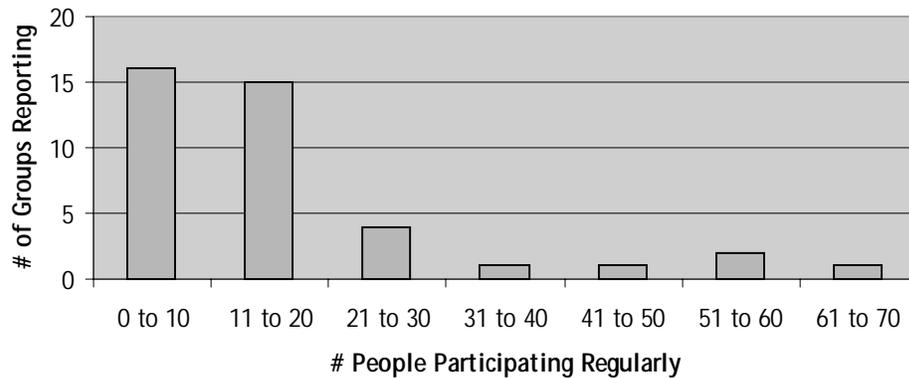
### **In addition to your leaders, about how many people are involved in stewardship efforts?**

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The number of people involved in stewardship varies from group to group. Plan stewards report that volunteers are willing to get involved in short term tangible projects—such as a tree-planting or a park clean-up day. Events organized around politically “hot” issues related to the plan universally garner a lot of attendance.

However, plan stewards report difficulty in recruiting people to get involved on an ongoing basis. The following chart illustrates that most groups (30) report that twenty or fewer people are involved in the regular work of the stewardship organization.

## How Many People Participate in Neighborhood Plan Stewardship on a Regular Basis?



### Examples from the Community

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#### *Stewardship Involvement*

- n "From my experience, people in Seattle like to attend short-term, organized projects and meetings on current topics. However, they are reluctant to stay involved in plan stewardship on an ongoing basis." —plan steward
- n In Belltown, for example, events requesting public input for activities at Regrade Park, the Belltown P-Patch, and Growing Vine Street have drawn upwards of 100 people.
- n The Columbia City stewardship group has organized over 200 people to help with neighborhood plan-related projects, yet they report that only four people are involved in stewardship on an ongoing basis.



## *Reaching Objectives*

### **Do you find that the neighborhood plan is a useful tool?**

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Nearly every group interviewed agreed that their neighborhood plan is a useful tool, although its use differs from group to group. When asked how the neighborhood plan is used, respondents provided a wide variety of comments, summarized below.

- n Eighteen groups reported that the neighborhood plan gives the neighborhood “clout,” adding legitimacy to the goals of the neighborhood. It garners respect from the City, from agencies (including Sound Transit and the Seattle School District), and from developers. Citizens refer to their neighborhood plan when referencing a project they would like the City to pursue, when applying for grants or neighborhood matching funds, or when communicating their wishes to agencies or businesses.
- n Fifteen groups said their plan is used to identify action items and establish priorities within the community.
- n Twelve groups commented that the plan is the backbone of their community or organization, and that it serves as a directive for their actions. Eight groups said that they refer to their plans on a regular basis.
- n Community councils responsible for plan stewardship often commented that while the plan is a useful guide, they do not limit themselves to only the issues set forth in the plan as they have broader purview.

Additional ways in which the neighborhood plans were identified as useful include:

- n Creating common goals for different groups within the neighborhood.
- n Increasing citizen participation in projects.
- n Consolidating the community goals and projects that existed prior to the Plan.
- n Helping to resolve controversies.
- n Guiding development and serving as a tool for developers or a tool for preventing development that is inconsistent with the plan.

Several neighborhoods, while stating that their plan is a useful tool, also had concerns about its use. Those concerns include:

- n Neighborhoods learned much from the planning process and could write a more specific, more useful plan now.
- n Some neighborhood groups say that the City implements projects in the Plans that meet the agencies' goals but do not reflect what is the highest priority for the neighborhood.
- n Their plans are already outdated.

## **Examples from the Community**

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### *How Useful is Your Neighborhood Plan?*

The Columbia City Revitalization Committee (CCRC) notes that their neighborhood plan has been used by Sound Transit and Seattle's Station Area Planning team. In some cases, the neighborhood reports that references to the neighborhood plan have been used to serve Sound Transit's agenda, not necessarily the interests of the neighborhood. This is a problem largely because the neighborhood conducted its planning prior to Sound Transit's decision-making process. The CCRC further notes that the neighborhood plan has been referenced by the City and other agencies when making land use decisions, which have been generally consistent with the spirit of the plan.

In Belltown, the Denny Hill Association states that the Belltown neighborhood plan is their community "bible" and guide document. It defined their goals and directs their implementation priorities.

Survey respondents from Greenwood/Phinney Ridge say their Neighborhood Plan is not used as much as it could be because the people involved think they know it. When issues arise, such as a new development, people then look to the Plan to see if there is anything stated within it to support their position about the development.

## **What are the most important long-term objectives or goals from the plan?**

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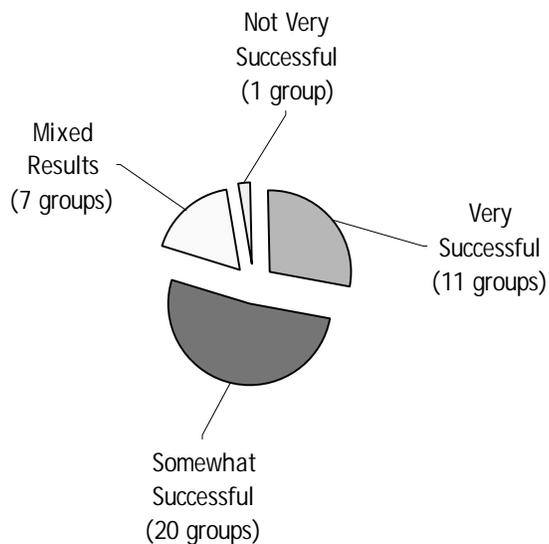
Neighborhood respondents were also asked to describe their most important long-term objectives and goals from the Neighborhood Plans and how successful they had been at achieving those objectives. The most-frequently cited objectives and goals included the following:

- n Install and expand trails, p-patches, parks, open space, landscaping & beautification (referenced by 21 of the responding 40 groups)
- n Address transportation, parking & traffic issues
- n Develop design guidelines to create and/or preserve neighborhood character and uses
- n Improve infrastructure, including sidewalks and drainage, pedestrian streetscape improvements, street lights, and "Green Streets"
- n Strengthen the health of the neighborhood business community and redevelop the existing retail area
- n Improve public safety

### **Have you been successful in making progress towards those objectives?**

A majority of groups ( 31 out of 39) say they have been somewhat or very successful in progressing toward the long-term goals and objectives set forth in their neighborhood plans. Seven groups feel that their progress has been less successful, or they have had mixed results on different projects. One group feels it has not been successful in making progress toward key objectives.

#### **Have you been successful in reaching your objectives?**



## Examples from the Community

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### Success Toward Neighborhood Plan Objectives

South Lake Union identified their long-term objectives from the Neighborhood Plan as beautifying the neighborhood and creating community character. They seek to create a “green belt instead of a trash belt.” They feel they have been very successful in making progress towards these objectives, though projects have progressed more slowly than anticipated.

In the BINMIC area (Ballard Interbay Manufacturing Industrial Center), long term objectives involved storm water drainage, transportation improvements, and the integrity of the area’s industrial land uses, especially through business retention. BINMIC representatives said they have been somewhat successful in meeting these objectives. They recently had success in modifying the City’s “Change Of Use” policy. However they are still working on modifying the City’s policy regarding pier repair and maintenance.

Survey respondents from the Denny Triangle said that they have not been very successful in making progress towards their long-term objective of changing key land use and zoning policies. They say they need a City department or official to help them advocate for these changes.

### What are your highest priority projects right now?

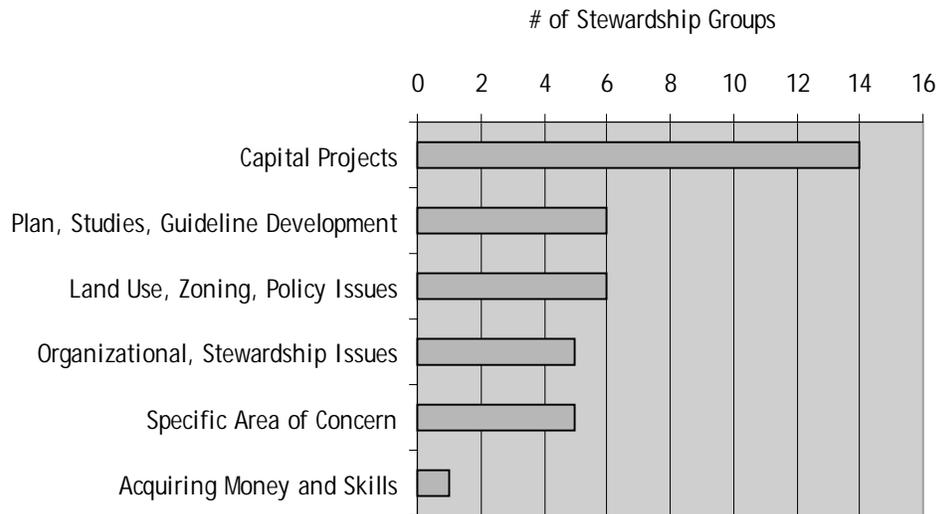
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Each stewardship group described several high priority projects. These can be consolidated into six categories:

- n Capital Projects**, such as park improvements, construction or development of a library or community center, or the installation of kiosks or a public art project.
- n Land Use, Zoning, or Policy Issues**, including public safety, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs, or zoning changes.
- n Plans, Studies, or Guidelines Creation**, such as design guidelines for a neighborhood, the drafting of a Master Plan or Street plan for a specific area, or implementation of a traffic study.

- n **Addressing specific areas of concern**, where a plan or study is not being developed. Examples include Wallingford, where the highest priority project is the 45<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor that encompasses issues of business health, traffic, parking and urban design.
- n **Organization and Stewardship Issues**, such as distributing a newsletter, or communicating among different groups involved in plan stewardship.
- n **Acquiring money and skills**, such as in Bitter Lake-Haller-Lake-Broadview, where citizens are focusing on fund-raising for the Linden Avenue project and trying to gain the political savvy to work with the City and gain funds from the City.

### Highest Priority Projects for Stewardship Groups



## **How did you use your Early Implementation Fund dollars?**

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The Early Implementation Fund (EIF) was a City allocation of \$50,000 provided to each neighborhood planning group. It was intended to help “jump start” implementation and stewardship efforts. The majority of stewardship groups spent their EIF Dollars on several different projects. For example, the Merchants of Pike-Pine used the neighborhood's EIF funds to complete a parking study, to install kiosks, and to place mosaics on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue sidewalks.

When Stewardship groups were asked how they used or are using their EIF dollars, their responses fell into four categories:

- n Capital projects**, such as the Fidalgo pedestrian crossing in Georgetown; kiosks in Westwood, Licton Springs, Ballard, and Pike-Pine; and traffic calming devices and beautification projects.
- n Plan, Study and Guideline Development**, such as the 56<sup>th</sup> Street Master Plan under development in Green Lake, and the I-5 Noise Mitigation Study in Eastlake.
- n Stewardship activities**, such as in the International District, where the EIF funds were used to fund staffing for plan stewardship. In Morgan Junction, the EIF funds were also used for stewardship, but funded the development of a web site, sandwich boards for meeting announcements, bulletin boards to be installed in the business district, a phone system and fliers.
- n Other Projects**, such as the industrial resource database for Duwamish, the West Seattle Helpline, and library services including a bookmobile and storyteller for South Park.

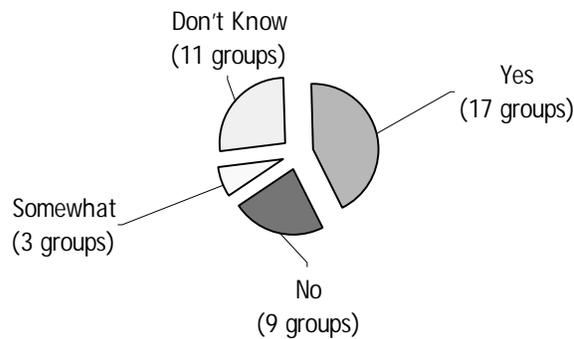
## Did your Early Implementation Fund project/s contribute to maintaining or building the capacity of your group?

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The Planning Commission asked stewardship groups if EIF-funded projects contributed to building the capacity of stewardship groups. Seventeen groups (43%) reported that they used at least a portion of their EIF dollars to support their organization.

It was difficult to identify whether EIF funds expanded the capacity of stewardship organizations. Almost half of the stewardship groups reported that their EIF projects contributed to building or maintaining their group. Neighborhoods that focused on capital projects found that volunteers will contribute their time to a specific hands-on project. However, several groups (6 out of 40) reported that EIF dollars did not aid them in expanding their long-term capacity, particularly when those funds were applied to plans or studies.

### Did Your EIF Project Contribute to Maintaining or Building Your Stewardship Group?



## **Examples from the Community**

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### **Early Implementation Funds and Capacity Building**

The Roosevelt neighborhood applied their EIF funds toward a Cable Glide Ride at Cowen Park and the Art Identity Project. Representatives from the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association report that their EIF projects contributed to maintaining and building the capacity of their group because the money gave people an incentive to get involved.

North District EIF funds were spent on several projects including land acquisition, a parking garage, a post office drop box, and administrative staffing. The temporary part-time staffing helped them develop their mailing list and create a consistent presence in the community for a time.

Wallingford used their EIF dollars to build organizational capacity instead of conducting projects, establishing WEaving Wallingford, their stewardship organization. The organization is now an effective conduit for getting things done.

## ***Outreach and Community Involvement***

During the neighborhood planning process, community outreach was a focus of both neighborhoods and the City. Getting a lot of people involved helped ensure that the resultant plans were representative of the neighborhood and incorporated many good ideas. Groups now face the same concerns as they work to implement their plans. However, they do not have the same resources today that were available during the planning process.

### **What methods of outreach have you found to be most successful in terms of generating interest by the general public in the work of your group?**

Plan stewards report that person-to-person or word-of-mouth contact is the most effective way to get people involved in plan stewardship. Plan stewards use e-mail and newsletters to keep each other and citizens up-to-date on current events or upcoming meetings. Groups continue to use direct mail and posted notices, though less frequently than during the planning process. Many plan stewards reported they make frequent presentations to other groups, and many groups have created web sites.

Even with the popularity of e-mail as a primary form of communication (many groups say it is their only form of communication), it is acknowledged as a limited tool. Almost one third of groups said that person-to-person communication was the most effective way of getting people informed, interested, and present at events.

#### ***Most frequently used methods of outreach and communication***

Word-of-mouth/person-to-person contact

E-mail/phone calls

Mailings

Notices on kiosks, bulletin boards, and at local businesses

Newsletter/webpage

Working with other groups

Notices/ articles in the local paper

Broadcast fax or phone messaging machine

On-line newsletters

Business to business outreach

Fliers

Comment boxes placed around the community

### *Most frequently cited methods of ensuring community attendance and participation*

- n Hosting a meeting about a specific issue, especially “hot” issues
- n Planning a “hands on” event, i.e. a tree planting or park clean up
- n Hosting a monthly meeting or forum on a specific topic
- n Hand-delivering notices to community residents, especially those living in condominiums and apartment buildings
- n Planning and coordinating an Open House or community event
- n Sidewalk outreach

## **Examples from the Community**

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### *Community Outreach Methods*

The Uptown Alliance experiences a lot of success with their “sidewalk outreach.” They set up a card table at a busy intersection and talk with passersby. They are able to talk with 30 - 50 people throughout a 90-minute lunch period. They also emphasize that major community problems bring people out. They have held events at different locations to attract different populations, and they have much success organizing highly visible projects, such as work at Kinnear Park.

The Bitter Lake-Haller Lake-Broadview stewardship group reports they successfully involve members of the community in events where opinions will be polled on popular neighborhood issues.

Many groups noted that the topic or issue is more important than the methodology in gaining people’s interest. People will attend a meeting or an event if they are concerned about an issue. General issues such as “neighborhood plan stewardship” are tough to keep in the public’s attention. A respondent from Green Lake commented that this is why their community council newsletter is so important. People will not attend the majority of meetings because they have busy lives and other important things to do, but the newsletter keeps them informed. If they’re informed, community members will take the opportunity to be involved when an issue arises about which they really care.

The majority of plan stewardship groups hosted a neighborhood plan-related event after plan adoption inviting the general

public. Events include workshops, open houses or social events, project dedications, fund-raisers, and Neighborhood Plan Updates. All of these events help the stewardship group raise awareness within the community. The most common stewardship group relationships exist with community and neighborhood councils, district councils, chambers of commerce, parent-teacher associations, arts organizations, parks organizations, schools and colleges, crime prevention councils, hospitals, faith-based organizations, and youth organizations such as the Girl Scouts.



## *Working with the City*

How do neighborhood plan stewards perceive their experience with the City? The Planning Commission asked stewardship groups which City departments they worked with. We also asked plan stewards to reflect on the quality of their experiences in working with the City overall. Many groups offered commentary on specific departments.

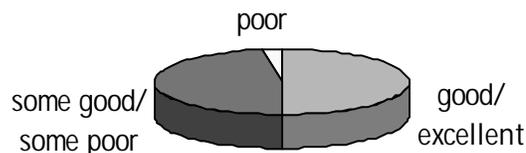
### **What has been your overall experience working with City Departments?**

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Overall, neighborhood plan stewards said they enjoy positive experiences in working with the City of Seattle government. Half of the respondents (20 out of 40) indicate a “good” or “excellent” experience in working with the City. Nineteen respondents gave the City mixed reviews. Only one respondent said the said their experience with the City deserves a “poor” rating.

Plan stewards also provided important commentary about the overall quality of their experiences. For example, many groups said they appreciated a coordinated, interdepartmental approach to neighborhood requests. While some neighborhoods believe the City does not really try to coordinate between departments, many groups say the City has improved since neighborhood planning took place. Several groups say they appreciate meetings or tours in the community used by departments to coordinate projects.

#### **Overall Experience Working with the City**



## **Here is a sample of comments made by neighborhood plan stewards**

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- n "We would like to see better coordination between City departments."
- n "Community tours and interdepartmental meetings in the community are extremely helpful."
- n "Departments seem to be looking at the neighborhood plan and how the different projects proposed for a neighborhood really meet the goal of that plan."
- n "City departments understand projects, but they often do not know how to utilize an effective process."
- n "We haven't figured out how to stay abreast of news from within City government."
- n "It is difficult for the average person to obtain information from the City."

## **Who have you worked with in the City?**

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Neighborhood plan stewards say they work most frequently with Seattle Transportation, the Department of Neighborhoods, the Department of Construction and Land Use, and the Parks Department. Stewardship groups also say they work with the Strategic Planning Office, Seattle Public Utilities, the City Council, and City Light.

Interviewees gave the Department of Neighborhoods the highest number of positive comments (18 positive/ 1 negative). The Parks Department garnered an overall positive response (10 positive/ 1 negative). The Department of Construction and Land Use received five positive responses (mainly to City Design) and four negative comments (about the department in general). SEATRAN garnered the greatest number of negative responses (10 negative comments/ 4 positive). Positive responses tended to reflect good experiences with staff. Negative responses related to lack of coordination between and within the department, and a general lack of responsiveness by the department. Finally, the City Council received four negative comments, primarily regarding the role of the Council steward.

Neighborhood plan stewards also offered advice on how to effectively work with City departments. Almost universally, plan stewards say it is critical to find one or several responsive persons within an individual department. According to one

neighborhood plan steward, "if you don't know a specific person within a key department, you can play phone tag for a long time." Indeed it appears that the quality of overall departmental responses is highly dependent upon representative staff. For example one plan steward commented that "...it is useful to have people in SEATRAN who can serve as a liaison to the broader department."

Conversely, if that liaison moves or changes jobs, stewardship groups report that the effect can frustrate the success of projects within the neighborhood. However, stewards report that most Neighborhood Development Managers, while overloaded in their jobs, do an excellent job serving as a liaison between departments.



## *Stewardship Challenges and Resources*

One of the most important survey questions addresses the challenges identified by stewardship groups, and the kinds of resources that would help make ongoing stewardship of the neighborhood plan successful. By far, the most frequently mentioned challenge involves the need to recruit and retain volunteers, and invigorate leaders. This was followed by a corresponding request for assistance in conducting outreach within the neighborhood. Similarly, nearly every group mentioned the need for funding for projects. This was matched by near-unanimous agreement that additional money would help stewardship efforts.

### **What has been your greatest challenge in making progress towards your objectives?**

	Number of Responses
Recruiting volunteers and leaders/ retaining volunteers and leaders	17
Working with large institutions and agencies ( <i>Sound Transit, DOT, School District, University of Washington</i> )	11
Working with City departments	10
Bringing together diverse interests in the community ( <i>business/residential, ethnic diversity</i> )	8
Time: lack of time to organize projects that keep pace with development and current events	8
General lack of organization within the stewardship entity	6
City doesn't understand a non-residential community model (South Lake Union, Georgetown, BINMIC, Greater Duwamish)	5
Keeping abreast of City information	4
Finding solutions that meet both the City's and the community's interests	4
Lack of fund-raising capacity (skills, time)	4
Creating a sense of community identity	2

## **Which current City or community resources do you use?**

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Interviewees were asked about the City and community resources they currently use. While the survey prompted several responses, stewardship groups offered information about resources the Commission had not previously considered. Commissioners received the following responses in order of the most to the least-often mentioned.

### ***Resources Provided by the City to Stewardship Groups:***

- Meeting space
- Speakers
- Staff assistance and advice
- Skills training
- Funding (EIF, NMF, etc.)
- Web page assistance or posting
- Mailing/ mailing list assistance
- Neighborhood Service Center
- Meeting notices
- DCLU notices
- Language translation services
- Programs (City Light's Street Trees, P-patch)
- Office space
- Interdepartmental team meeting
- DON Newsletters and other publication

### ***Resources Provided by the Community to Stewardship Groups:***

- Volunteers
- Meeting space
- Refreshments
- Mailing list maintenance
- Mailings
- Web page assistance
- Meeting notices
- Speakers
- Support from other neighborhood organizations
- Outreach assistance
- Copies/Printing
- Skills Training
- Technical Expertise (accounting, legal, development, etc.)
- Maps
- Dues
- Media Coverage

## What resources would strengthen stewardship efforts?

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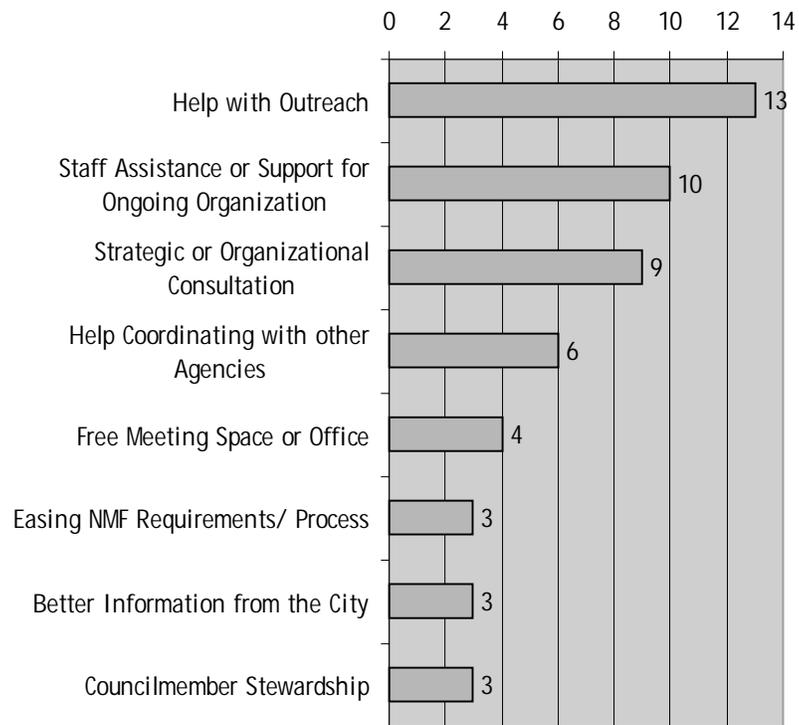
When asked about other resources that would strengthen stewardship efforts, responses fell into several broad categories that address the capacity of groups to conduct stewardship activities. Nearly every interviewee mentioned the need for more money to organize projects or carry out the work of the stewardship organization. Plan stewards also said the following kinds of assistance would be helpful from the City:

- n Help with outreach. With the exception of a few well-organized groups, plan stewards expressed frustration about their efforts to recruit new people and keep people involved. According to one plan steward, "Continued outreach is one of the best ways the City can help neighborhood plan stewardship efforts. Otherwise you're just dying on the vine."
- n Thirteen people said their stewardship efforts would be enhanced by the following kinds of communications assistance: list management, bulk mailing assistance, translation services, list-serve assistance, web page and newsletter design.
- n Six respondents said they need help working with government agencies, businesses or institutions that impact the neighborhood and are far more powerful than citizen groups in the area.
- n Six groups say their stewardship efforts would be aided by simply having access to staff who could perform basic organizational duties. One active plan steward noted that few people have the time necessary to keep up on City events, maintain an organization, conduct outreach and organize projects. She suggested the City pay a stipend to committed neighborhood plan stewards to address this need.
- n Many respondents (10) mentioned the need for consultation on a range of issues. For example, plan stewards said they needed help developing fund-raising strategies, understanding and working with City processes, setting up an organizational structure, legal services such as incorporating as an organization, and strategies for managing volunteers. Some of these issues are being addressed by the Department of Neighborhood's Leadership Training Program or by the Neighborhood Development Managers. Other issues are more specialized or require an ongoing dialogue with the neighborhood.

n Many groups mentioned other types of assistance that would be useful from the City: better communication from the City regarding projects in the neighborhood, higher commitment from the City council on plan stewardship, simplification of the Neighborhood Matching Fund application process and work with groups in terms of meeting their volunteer hours requirement. Several groups (4) also mentioned the need for office space or meeting space, suggesting that the City offer free meeting space to stewardship groups on City properties. One group suggested the City make available staff who can aid groups in running Request for Proposal (RFP) processes.

Viewed another way, the following chart illustrates interviewees' preferences for assistance from the City.

### Resources that Would Strengthen Stewardship



## *Planning Commission Observations*

Overall, Commissioners were impressed by the fact that, at the time of the survey, active stewardship was taking place in nearly every neighborhood planning area of the city. The Planning Commission was also pleased that community members were willing to talk with Commissioners about their experiences as stewards of neighborhood plans. In only a few cases did the Commission experience difficulties scheduling neighborhood representatives for interviews, and this was usually due to conflicting schedules.

Following are some of the Commission's observations based on their interviews with stewardship groups and follow-up by staff.

- n Commissioners observed much variety in how neighborhoods have organized to carry out plan stewardship.** Interviews confirmed the Neighborhood Development Managers' initial assessment that groups have adapted their work to the resources available in the community and to the needs of their neighborhoods. Thus, there were many different organizational structures. There is clearly no one way to carry out neighborhood plan stewardship.
- n Nearly all neighborhood plan stewards express a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to making sure their plan is implemented.** Neighborhood plan stewards are very committed to their work and generally enthusiastic about the progress they are making on implementing projects. Many stewardship groups have a small core of three to six people who are involved on a regular basis. Commissioners observed that larger groups more often are able to work on multiple projects and have established effective ways to communicate with each other and the City.
- n Few groups have been successful in involving new people in the overall task of plan implementation.** Hands-on projects and controversial issues are most effective in drawing new people to the work of plan implementation. However, in most cases it is the small core of neighborhood plan activists who are trying to meet the demands of neighborhood plan stewardship. Commissioners observed that this lack of capacity to

communicate with and do outreach to the broader community will be detrimental to sustaining support and advocacy for the neighborhood plan over time.

**n Stewardship groups struggle to keep pace with the multiple demands of neighborhood plan stewardship.** One year after the last neighborhood plan was adopted, many groups report they do not have the ability to carry out the range of tasks involved in plan stewardship. These include:

- Monitoring neighborhood plan projects as they are being developed and implemented, often by City departments;
- Communicating with the City to help move forward projects;
- Communicating with the neighborhood to keep people informed of the progress of the plan;
- Recruiting and involving new people from the community involved in plan implementation.

**n For many stewardship groups a lack of resources for carrying out administrative tasks involved in maintaining their organization has limited their ability to steward their plan effectively.** Compared to the organizational resources available during the planning phase, few dollars are applied to helping neighborhood plan stewardship groups maintain and build their organizations. Most plan stewards appreciate the City's responsiveness to neighborhood plan recommendations, but are frustrated by the lack of resources available for communications and administrative needs of stewardship groups.

**n Stewardship groups themselves are not formally recognized by City government.** In most cases, the Neighborhood Development Managers know the leaders of various stewardship groups and work with them on a regular, if informal, basis. However, information about stewardship group participants is not maintained in an easily accessible form within the City. Nor does communication occur between stewardship leaders and City departments on a routine basis. The City has been reluctant to formalize its relationship with plan stewards for many reasons. Commissioners are concerned that the informality of this arrangement will become limiting and less reliable over time. This would weaken the long term viability of neighborhood plans and, as in the past, result in longer range recommendations not being implemented.

## *Planning Commission Recommendations*

Citizens and City staff have worked hard to find ways to initiate neighborhood plan stewardship efforts. The purpose of this survey has been to “take the pulse” of neighborhood plan stewardship from the point of view of citizens involved in the process. This includes finding out how stewardship is going, what is working and what is not, and what is needed to sustain plan stewardship efforts over time. To this end, Commissioners offer the following recommendations to address several key issues that were noted in the Observations section above.

### **RECOMMENDATION #1: Improve and increase communication and coordination between stewardship groups and City departments.**

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Neighborhood plan stewards say that communicating with the City and with their neighbors is one of their biggest challenges. The Commission offers two recommendations for addressing this need.

- n **Maintain and make available a comprehensive list of neighborhood plan contacts.** The City should maintain up-to-date information on neighborhood plan stewards that can be shared with other stewardship groups, District Councils and City Departments. This could include names of stewardship group contacts, regular meeting times/places, group structure, and current projects. This list should be available through the Department of Neighborhoods website, at libraries, neighborhood service centers, and other City departments.
- n **Notify plan stewards of projects and actions occurring in their neighborhoods.** Stewardship groups often say they hear about City actions and development projects long after the planning phases are complete. Late notification means plan stewards are not able to provide comments or coordinate resources between both neighborhood plan-related and independent projects. While the Neighborhood Development Managers disseminate much of this information and provide a critical coordination role, they cannot be responsible for all communication from all departments to neighborhood groups. The Commission recommends several simple steps that could make this communication more effective. Web sites could be used more extensively to post information from the City. Departments could routinely gather together project

information and report to neighborhood groups. Bulletins from key departments (such as SEATRAN, SPU and DCLU) could be e-mailed to key contacts on a regular basis.

**RECOMMENDATION #2: Provide tools and resources to stewardship groups to help them carry out basic communications, plan monitoring and organizational functions.**

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The City has committed significant resources to implementing neighborhood plans. For example, Neighborhood Development Managers (NDMs) were hired to support stewardship efforts. City departments reorganized in order to respond to the sector focus. Departments have also reprogrammed some of their funds to implement priority projects from neighborhood plans. Additional Neighborhood Matching Funds were allocated to support neighborhood-based projects. Some neighborhoods have used Early Implementation Funds (EIF) to help support their organization and initial work implementing their plans. Finally, a very small amount of funding has been provided to DON to allow NDMs to provide limited assistance for mailings to neighborhood plan stewardship groups.

However, these efforts do not focus resources on the task of supporting the ongoing stewardship work. Based on feedback from stewardship groups, Commissioners have concluded that a modest investment of City resources could help neighborhoods sustain a basic level of organization and carry out stewardship-related tasks. The Commission recommends the City take two steps to provide support for basic communications, plan monitoring and organizational functions.

- n **Provide a small amount of ongoing funding for outreach and communications.** The Commission recommends that a small annual allotment of funds to stewardship groups be made available. This could contribute significantly to the stewardship groups' ability to communicate with citizens and maintain their organizations. This fund could be used to fund basic materials and mailing production.
- n **Provide Coordinated Staffing Support.** Neighborhood Plan Stewards consistently cite the need for more time to maintain mailing lists, send meeting notices, set up communications systems, organize events, and recruit new members and volunteers. These are the kinds of tasks that can be provided by people working for volunteer programs such as AmeriCorps and Vista, and university internship programs

The Commission recommends that the City hire a volunteer coordinator to recruit, place and/or supervise long-term volunteers for a modest sum of money. This kind of administrative and organizing staff support would make a critical difference to some stewardship groups.

**RECOMMENDATION #3: Define the role of stewardship groups; link resources to responsibilities.**

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Regardless of the organizational structure, an important goal for stewardship groups is to continue to represent their neighborhood in implementing the neighborhood plan. Most stewardship groups know they should communicate with and involve more members of the community, but most have met with only limited success. Few have held community-wide events since plan adoption.

In its *Citizen Participation Evaluation* dated March 2000, the Planning Commission recommended the City more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of stewardship efforts, including expectations for outreach, representation, communication and feedback, and plan implementation monitoring. DON developed a brochure that identifies these roles, but there is nothing beyond this to follow through in ensuring stewardship groups can and do meet these expectations.

The Planning Commission recommends that the City more clearly define the role of neighborhood plan stewardship, including ongoing communication, outreach and recruitment, and involvement in refining and implementing plan priorities. Resources to support stewardship efforts, suggested in Recommendation #2, should be linked to specific actions and accomplishments. Stewardship groups, whether part of a District Council, Community Council or a newly formed organization, should be eligible for funds and expected to demonstrate their efforts to continue to actively involve and communicate with the neighborhood as plan implementation moves forward.

**RECOMMENDATION #4: Expand the capacity of the neighborhood development managers to support neighborhood plan implementation.**

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Currently, the Neighborhood Development Managers and the City's Sector strategy are the foundation for the City's

relationship with neighborhood plan stewardship groups. In lieu of a formal decision making/communications strategy between the City and stewardship groups, Neighborhood Development Managers hold the system together. They guide neighborhoods, prod City departments, and bring people together to solve complex problems. Neighborhood Development Managers receive positive reviews from outside and within City government, and there is general consensus that the NDMs could accomplish much more with added resources.

The Planning Commission recommends that the City provide additional programmatic and administrative staff and/or intern assistance for each Neighborhood Development Manager. Given current budget limitations, the City should develop an ongoing internship program with masters-level urban planning and public administration programs to provide staffing assistance.

**RECOMMENDATION #5: Monitor the progress of neighborhood planning stewardship and make adjustments where needed.**

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Experience from previous neighborhood planning efforts tells us that the neighborhood plans will not remain relevant unless citizens and City government alike stay engaged in refinement of recommendations and implementation of projects. The Commission recommends that progress in implementing neighborhood plans should be evaluated and documented annually. In addition to project updates, this should include reporting on outreach, communication and involvement efforts of the stewardship group.

In 2001 and 2002 this review could be coordinated with the City's review of the overall growth management strategy, based on more detailed census data reports that will be available late 2001. This would provide a good opportunity to focus on areas that need more attention due to more rapid or slower growth than was anticipated, and changing demographics.





# Appendix

## Neighborhood Plan Stewardship Survey

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Neighborhood Plan Group:  
Representing Organization (if any):  
Name of Person(s) Completing Form:  
Contact Phone Number:  
Date:

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## Instructions

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Thank you for taking the time to complete the following survey. Your input is very important to helping the City understand what challenges exist for The purpose is to create a baseline of information on Neighborhood Plan Stewardship that can be shared with the Department of Neighborhoods, NPIAC, and the City Council. A final report will be mailed to you within the next two months.

Please fill out one survey for your organization.

All questions are numbered. If you need additional space to answer a question, please do so on the attached sheets at the end of the survey, referencing the question number.

Please attach any written documents your organization has created, including by-laws, plans, reports, etc.

A self-addressed, stamped-envelope has been attached for your use in returning the survey to us. If needed, the mailing address is:

Seattle Planning Commission  
Municipal Building  
600 4th Avenue, Suite 300  
Seattle, WA 98103-1826

Please call Susan McLain at (206) 684-0432 if you have any questions while completing the survey.

## Organizational Information

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- a distinct and formal organization that is devoted to implementing and updating the neighborhood plan
- a group of individuals who meet on an as-needed basis to discuss specific projects or to maintain the currency of the neighborhood plan
- neighborhood plan stewardship has been incorporated into the business of an ongoing organization:
- as part of a subcommittee
  - as part of the overall business of the organization on an as-needed basis

## Comments

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- 1 How is your group organized?
- 2 About how often do you meet?
- We meet: weekly  monthly  quarterly  as needed
- 3 How is the group leadership organized? Do you formally select leaders?
- Formal Leadership  Informal Leadership
- Please Describe:
- 4 In addition to your leaders, about how many people are involved in stewardship efforts?
- # participating on a regular basis in meetings or working on projects: \_\_\_\_\_
- # participating occasionally, such as part of a larger event: \_\_\_\_\_
- Comments:
- 5 Do you find that your neighborhood plan is a useful tool?
- Yes  No
- How is it used by participants?

**6** What are your most important long-term objectives or goals from the plan? Examples might include "improving pedestrian mobility" or "creating a neighborhood center."

Please list your long-term goals and objectives from the Neighborhood Plan:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**7** Have you been successful in making progress toward those objectives?

Very Successful  Somewhat Successful  Not Successful

Please Explain:

2

**8** What has been your greatest challenge in making progress toward your objectives?

3

**9** What are your highest priority projects right now?

**10.** Who have you worked with in the City?

Departments:  Parks  DON  SEATRAN  DCLU

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the interactions between your organization and City Departments:

**11.** What has been your overall experience in working with City departments?

Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor

Please Explain:

5

**12.** How did you use your Early Implementation Fund dollars?

**13.** Did your Early Implementation Fund project/s contribute to maintaining or building the capacity of your group?

Yes  No

7 Please Describe How or How Not:

14. Which City or community resources do you currently use?

Which have you used?

Community or City Resource?

15. What other kinds of resources would strengthen your stewardship efforts?

### **Outreach & Community Involvement**

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16. What method/s of outreach have you found to be successful in terms of generating interest by the general public in the work of your group? Would you recommend that we share your experiences with other organizations?

17. When was the most recent community-wide event to which the general public was invited? How many people attended?

Our Stewardship Group has recently held an event to which the general public was invited:

Yes                       No (If no, then skip the rest of this question)

Type of Event:

General Date of event:

About how many people attended:

18. Do you work/ have you worked with other groups or organizations in the community?

YES:                       NOT REALLY:  (skip the following question)

19. Which group/s have you worked with and in what capacity? (Use a separate paper if necessary)

20. Additional Comments - Observations - Questions?

Thank you once again for your time and contribution. The Planning Commission will add your responses to those of other plan stewards in the form of a final report that will be sent to you. We will also share the report with the City Council, the Department of Neighborhoods, the NPIAC, and members of the public. Please share with us your mailing address:

Name

Street Address

City, Zip



# *Acknowledgments*

## **Thank you to the citizens who took the time to talk with the Planning Commissioners and Planning Commission Staff**

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Robert Harahill  
Fred Hart

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Lilah Heath  
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