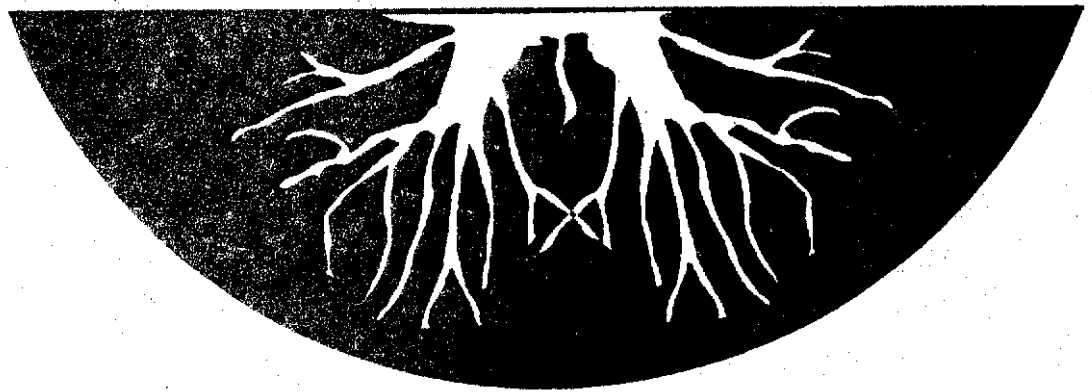
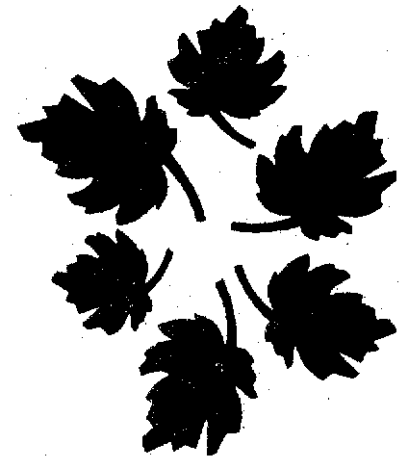


A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING



This Guide is for:

people who wish to
establish a community
social planning
organization,

to improve an existing one,

or to incorporate the
principles and processes
of community social
planning within their
own organization

✿ By Michael Clague

✿ A SPARC Publication

About SPARC

The Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia is a voluntary association of people committed to promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of our citizens and communities. The Council acts as an advocate for the principles of social justice, equality, and the dignity and worth of all people in our multi-cultural society. It promotes awareness of our responsibilities as citizens of the global community. The Council conducts research and planning for public information, education and citizen participation in developing social policies and programs.

Founded in 1966, SPARC of B.C. is a non-partisan organization whose members and directors are drawn from throughout British Columbia. SPARC is funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, by memberships and donations and by contracted consulting and research services.

Research projects undertaken by SPARC arise from periodic reviews of current social concerns and interests. Board members and other volunteers take an active role in the research process. Policy statements and recommendations emanate from the Board.

Membership in SPARC is open to all who share the purpose of the organization. Further information can be obtained by contacting SPARC at the address below.

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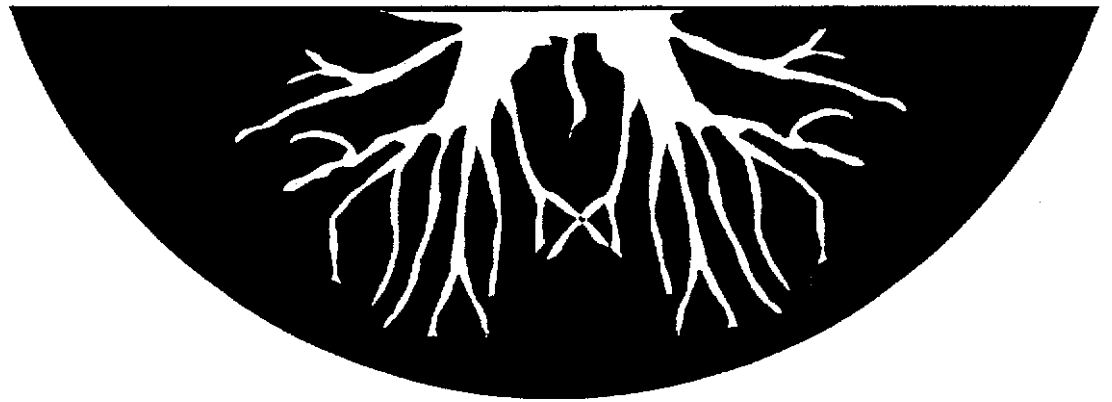
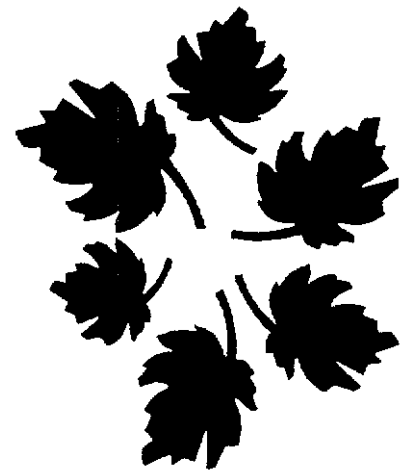
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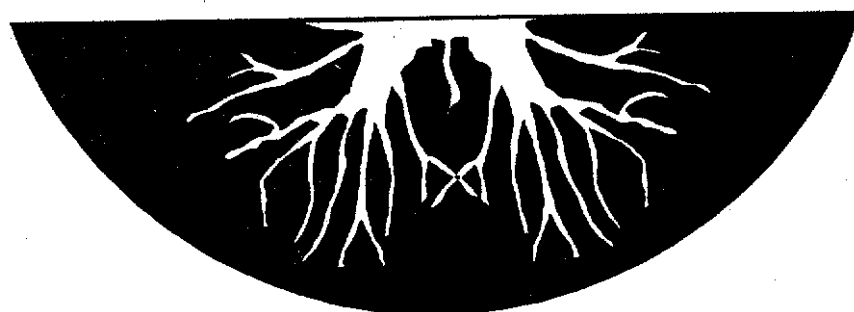
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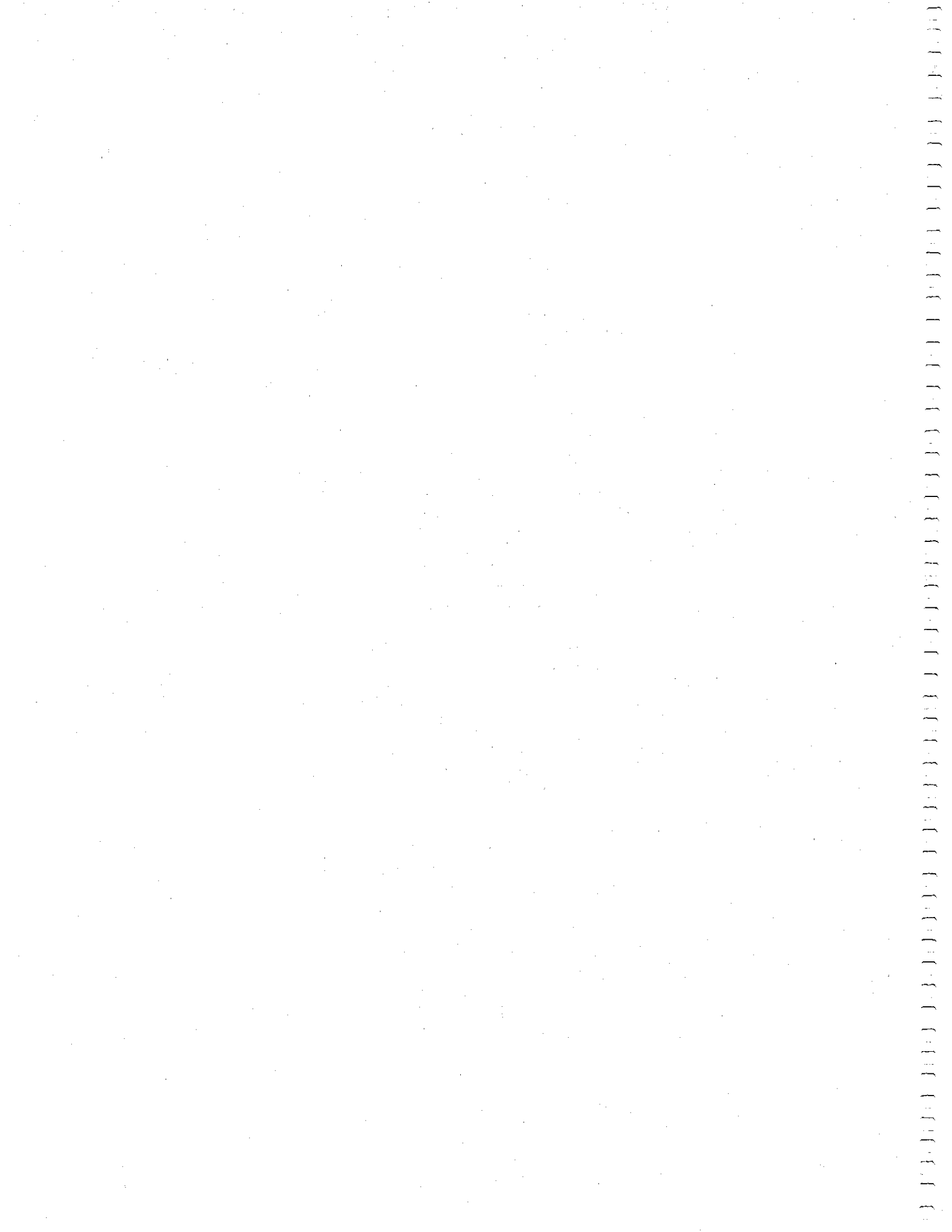
Section 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING



An overview of
community social planning:

- What is it all about?
- How is it organized?
- How does it work?





Community Well-Being

Community well-being; this is the continuing vision of community social planning. Working for community well-being is about learning how to live together in ways that give everyone the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

For example:

- a group of parents are concerned about the lack of a safe play space for children in their neighbourhood
- people who have been living in a mental hospital find they're on the street or in inappropriate housing after the hospital closes beds as a result of a policy of "deinstitutionalization."
- older workers are laid off with little likelihood of finding jobs with income equivalent to what they previously enjoyed
- a large, upper-income condominium housing development is proposed which would create a "walled community" within the community, physically and psychologically isolating residents from the rest of the town. It also would not provide much needed affordable family housing
- some children are hungry and undernourished in the community
- lack of services responsive to their culture and language is making it difficult for members of an ethnic and visible minority.

These are just a few of the many issues and challenges with which community social planning is involved. Each of these issues, if left unresolved, diminishes the well-being of the community.

AN INTRODUCTION
TO COMMUNITY
SOCIAL PLANNING



However community social planning's problem-solving approach doesn't concentrate on a community's deficiencies. It seeks solutions that build on the community's assets. It celebrates the communities strengths.

For example, through the assistance of Community Social Planning:

- a welfare rights advocacy group gets organized. The group campaigns for improved rates and regulations. It also organizes its own informal bulk purchasing to get better prices.
- a neighbourhood group organizes a community arts festival to celebrate local talent
- a group of women organize their own venture capital loan fund and planning service to support women in small business
- merchants, police, service agency and youth come together to resolve tensions around street youth. A community worker supports the young people in preparing their own newspaper, and in organizing alternate education opportunities
- a community planned and managed multi-purpose services centre is built
- a developer and neighborhood residents are brought together to reach a compromise on the social and physical impact of a building project
- a community research study is conducted on the availability of services to ethnic and visible minorities for a group of community service organizations
- a community consultation process leads to a city adopting a policy on secondary suites that is to be equitably applied in all residential neighbourhoods

All of these activities contribute to community well-being.

Community social planning looks for solutions that build on a community's strengths.



Community Social Planning Roles

Community social planning may be involved in one or all of the following activities:

1. **Advocacy:** acting on own or others behalf to change a public policy and/or to get support for action on a specific social issue
2. **Social policy analysis, criticism and recommendations** regarding government programs or their absence
3. **Informing and educating the public** on issues affecting community well-being
4. **Conducting applied research** that generates information to help the community document its needs and strengths
5. **Community organizing** to help those affected by a community issue develop plans and strategies for action
6. **Community problem-solving** that helps to build bridges and consensus among differing viewpoints for the benefit of the community as a whole
7. **Demonstrating** innovative approaches to community development

Community social planning is not driven by a single issue, nor does it offer a predetermined answer to every need. It is as concerned with the connections between issues as it is with issues in their own right, for no problem and no solution to problems exist in isolation from other factors in the community. It stresses the importance of integrating social, economic and environmental considerations in community problem-solving.

Activities Include:
advocacy, policy
analysis, education,
applied research,
organizing,
problem-solving,
& demonstrating
innovation.



Community Social Planning: A Definition

In a sentence, community social planning is about practicing good citizenship. We benefit from being a member of the community. We therefore have an obligation to contribute to the well-being of the community.

Community social planning is a way of doing things to strengthen the community. It is also an on-going, organized presence in the community; something that does not have to be recreated each time an issue, need or opportunity arise.

Community social planning is a local, democratic system for setting priorities, arriving at equitable compromises and taking action. It supports community needs and interests in social, cultural, economic and environmental affairs. It is a process for building community well-being.

There are a number of strong values inherent in community social planning. These are:

- Social justice
- Equity and opportunity
- Participation and inclusion
- Respect for and celebration of diversity
- Building consensus and shared values for the well-being of the community as whole
- Equitable distribution of public resources
- Community decision-making and management with respect to local social, economic and environmental priorities
- Strengthening voluntary, self-help initiatives
- Maintaining a healthy public service system to support community

Community social planning is a local, democratic system for setting priorities, arriving at equitable compromises and taking action.

It supports community needs and interests in social, cultural, economic and environmental affairs.

It is a process for building community well-being.



Community social planning is also about celebration; acknowledging and recognizing the human and natural assets that give meaning and worth to the community.

The Community Social Planning Organization

The first organizing principle of CSP is that no two community social planning organizations need to be alike! The values may be the same and the processes for community development similar, but the organizations themselves will reflect local requirements.

However there are five broad categories into which most community social planning organizations fit:

1. *Independent Community Social Planning Council*
2. *United Way and Member Agencies*
3. *Community Multi-Service Organization*
4. *Municipal Government*
5. *Neighbourhood Councils*

Each of these organizational examples has a different focus and mandate. This influences what activities they undertake and what functions they perform. The size of the community, its history in community development, and the existing arrangements and practices for planning and decision-making all influence which organizational form is most relevant. In some circumstances (usually a larger community) there may be more than one social planning organization.

Geography is another consideration, particularly with respect to examples one and two. A community social planning

5 Organizational Categories:

Independent
community social
planning council

United Way and
member agencies

Community
multi-service
organization

Municipal
government

Neighbourhood
councils



organization may function regionally, sometimes in partnership with more locally based councils.

It is possible — and often happens — that community social planning takes place on an ad hoc, episodic basis without the presence of a permanent social planning organization in the community. Sometimes circumstances dictate this situation. However the absence of an on-going social planning organization means that an organized body of expertise and knowledge may not be readily available to tackle unexpected issues, or to contribute to long range community planning and development.

Community Social Planning in Practice

Before proceeding, an explanation is in order. "What's the difference between community social planning and community development?" the reader may ask. The answer: "Nothing that justifies confusing people." The steps and methods that follow may be considered generic whether they are called community social planning or community development.

This *Guide* deals with community social planning as it would work as part of an on-going planning organization — any one of the five models just mentioned.

Such an organization requires its own **framework for planning**. Typically this consists of a mission statement, a set of program roles, a structure for operating and making decisions, a budget, a membership, a process for planning and priority setting, and, ways to evaluate its performance.

The **community social planning process** consists of a set of identifiable stages: regular scanning of the external



environment for trends and issues; identification of community needs, strengths and priorities; determination of short and long range priorities; developing strategies and taking action; monitoring and evaluating.

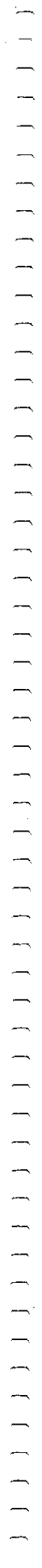
A Word of Caution

For purposes of simplicity and clarity it is necessary to describe how community social planning works in rational, logical stages. Life of course, does not work this way. In practice community social planning is a lot like operating a sail boat; you know where you want to go, but you have to do a lot of tacking back and forth to get there.

Good planning, the kind that generates action and results, requires:

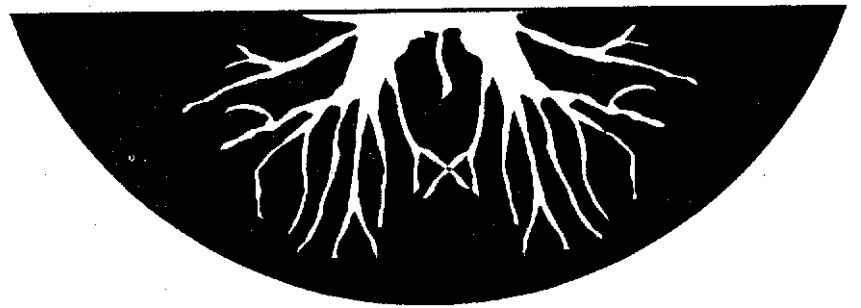
- involving those most affected by the issue so they have ownership of the task
- doing your homework to document the need or opportunity
- developing a realistic plan of action which:
 - assesses risks/benefits of goals and strategies
 - determines resources required and those available
 - targets the people and groups whose support is critical to success
 - informs and educates the public to build support
 - sets short term achievable objectives which help build credibility and support for the larger goal
- ensuring that good group development work among those involved in the issue is part of good strategic planning

In a word, "competence" in organizing, planning and acting is the key to effective community social planning.



Section 2

A COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION: THE OPTIONS



- An outline of the characteristics of five types of community social planning organizations





Building on Community Strengths

Building on existing arrangements and collaborative planning activities in the community — what's already working well — provides a good foundation for a community social planning organization.

Independent community social planning council; the United Way and member agencies; the community multi-service organization; municipal government; neighbourhood council — these are the major types of community social planning councils at work in British Columbia today.

Local circumstances should determine which is most suitable in any given community. In practice, elements can be borrowed from all and additional features added so that no two community planning organizations are ever likely to be identical. Examples one and two may also operate at a regional level.

What all the examples should share is a commitment to the values of social planning (page 4), and in their structure and activities modelling those of participation and inclusion — particularly for groups that have historically been marginalized.

**Building on existing
arrangements and
collaborative planning
activities in the
community — what's
already working well
— provides a good
foundation for a
community social
planning
organization.**



Independent Community Social Planning Council

This is a citizen-based organization, independent of government serving a specific geographic area. It has a broad mandate to support community well-being with a particular responsibility to ensure that social considerations are effectively linked to economic and environmental planning and decision-making.

Formal Status

A non-profit, voluntary association incorporated under the Provincial Societies Act with a registered charitable number granted by the Federal Government

Funding

- a) A grant from municipal government and/or United Way
- b) Special project funding from private foundations or federal or provincial governments
- c) Contracts for applied research and social planning work
- d) Memberships and donations

Structure

- a) Volunteers are utilized in all levels of the organization; policy-making, program, operations and fund-raising
- b) A volunteer board of directors is responsible for the overall direction and management of the organization
- c) The board may be composed of individuals elected at large or by a mix of elected and appointed people. Those appointed might come from designated community organizations and/or local government
- d) Another variant is a board elected at-large but with an advisory group of key community agencies and stakeholder interests (human care service agencies,

Independent
Community
Social
Planning
Council



advocacy groups, business, labour, local government, equity groups)

- e) The board designates committees as required to carry out particular responsibilities
- f) Those elected/appointed to the Board are confirmed at an annual meeting of the membership
- g) Membership criteria are established by the Constitution and By-Laws
- h) The board may employ staff to administer the day to day work of the organization

Functions

- a) Capable of carrying out all of the activities of community social planning if the resources are available
- b) In practice, the major functions are often: action research; public information/education; community problem-solving; service planning and organizing; advocacy and support to self-help groups
- c) Assistance may also be given to funding bodies by providing criteria and information they can use in allocating their dollars to community agencies

Beneficial Characteristics

- a) Independence from any other community institution can help ensure freedom to determine priorities and lend credibility to the results of the Council's work
- b) Uniquely situated to bring different community perspectives together, for instance social, economic and environmental interests
- c) Can be flexible and adaptable to meeting changing community needs and priorities
- d) Well positioned to support and advocate for social change with disadvantaged and marginalized groups
- e) Because of its non-profit status, the Council has access to diverse funding sources



Limiting Characteristics

- a) Lacks mandated authority to be consulted or to advise and recommend on issues before local government
- b) The absence in many cases of adequate, secure, long-term core funding from assured sources means that the resources may not be equal to the purposes
- c) Insufficient staff because of "b" reduces volunteer effectiveness
- d) Can be dominated by human care services professional and institutional interests

The independent, voluntary social planning council is the oldest and most wide-spread model of community social planning organization.



United Way and Member Agencies

United Ways provide annual operating grants to voluntary community social planning councils in a number of communities in Canada. Some United Ways will also organize ad hoc planning and coordination activities for their own member agencies.

Others also provide community service planning and organizational development assistance to their member agencies.

Formal Status

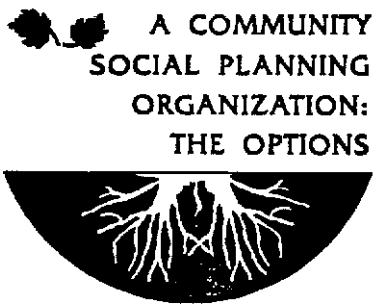
An incorporated, non-profit charity operating as an accredited member of the United Way organization in Canada

Funding

- a) Annual appeal
- b) Grants from government and foundations for special projects

Structure

- a) Elected board of directors and a United Way fund-raising campaign cabinet
- b) Paid staff for administration, fund raising and support to member agencies
- c) Agency and Community Services Committee of volunteers to advise on programs and support services to member agencies



Functions

- a) Raising and distributing funds to member agencies (annual sustaining grants)
- b) Raising and distributing funds to assist and promote new initiatives and community outreach within the charitable sector
- c) Providing research and planning support to the fund-raising campaign and to the planning, coordination and provision of services by member agencies
- d) Offering management and organizational development training services to member agencies and the charitable sector
- e) Community social planning functions

Beneficial Characteristics

- a) Can provide strong leadership to community social planning because of its credibility in the community and the dollars it raises.
- b) Effectively raises community consciousness about the importance of social priorities
- c) Brings together key community sectors and leadership groups; business, labour, local government and community service agencies

Limiting Characteristics

- a) There is often pressure for all fund-raising dollars to go to direct service agencies
- b) Social issue research, advocacy and action (which can generate controversy) and fund-raising (which requires broad community consensus) coexist uneasily when located in the same organization.
- c) The scope of community social planning goes beyond human care services and the United Way constituency



Community Multi-Service Organization

This model's origins began in the late 1960s, and it has come into its own in the 1990s. The community multi-service organization is in many cases a community social planning body by default. This organization operates a multiplicity of community human care services, largely through contracts or grants from the provincial and federal governments.

Some community multi-service organizations are essentially administrative mechanisms providing a legal and operational umbrella for the provision of a range of services. Others are more akin to social agencies with multiple services. They have a defined organizational mission. Programs and services offered must be consistent with that mission, whether they originate with the agency and its own resources, or are delivered under contract to government.

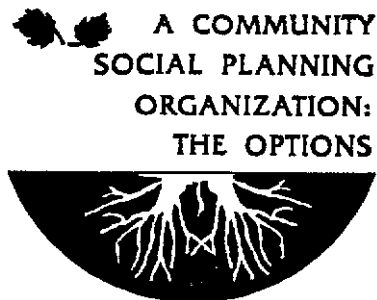
The third type of multi-service organization incorporates community social planning as an integral part of its work. The organization periodically consults the community on needs and priorities within its mandate. It brings other community agencies together for information sharing and joint planning. It advocates on community issues within its competence. It supports the development of self-help groups and new service activities.

Formal Status

Non-profit, voluntary association and registered charity

Funding

- a) Government contracts and grants and gaming revenues
- b) Private fund raising sources: foundations, service clubs
- c) United Way allocation



Structure

- a) Board of Directors (elected at-large or mixture of appointed and elected)
- b) Management and administrative staff
- c) May have separate operating units by service-sector within the overall organization

Functions

- a) Planning, provision, and coordination of human care services within its mandate
- b) Advocate for adequate funding for services
- c) Promote volunteer involvement in service planning and provision
- d) Raise community consciousness about social needs and priorities

Beneficial Characteristics

- a) Has the capacity to exercise a community social planning role
- b) Can make a strong contribution to the organization and support of self-help groups
- c) Knowledge of community social needs and resources can provide much needed expertise to community social planning
- d) Well-connected into many different community networks
- e) Respected presence in the community



Limiting Characteristics

- a) Combining social planning, advocacy and direct service provision in a single organization has limitations:
 - direct service provision can dominate the organization's attention
 - advocacy on issues affecting funders of services provided by the organization can be inhibited
 - particular sensitivity is required to encourage community participation in reviewing and assessing needs and the adequacy of services and to be the provider of these services
- b) Difficult to obtain and generate the resources to free up the time for community social planning



Municipal Government

More and more municipal governments are becoming involved in community social planning. For some it is limited to providing grants to community agencies or exempting them from property tax. Others have established community service committees of Council made up of a mixture of citizen volunteers and elected officials. A growing number of local governments have social planning staff.

Formal Status

No explicit responsibility is given to local governments in the Municipal Act for community social planning. However nothing legally prevents them from being involved, either.

Funding

- a) The municipal property tax base
- b) The Canada Assistance Plan (which permits cost-sharing for certain community development activities and social services — however the CAP is currently under review by Ottawa)
- c) An arms-length community development fund, established with a core grant from the municipality can provide leverage for other public and private sector dollars for social planning

Structure

- a) Local government can establish a committee of council or a citizen's advisory commission on community social planning.
- b) Municipal administrative staff may be assigned to work with the committee or the advisory commission or;
- c) The municipality may have one or more social planners that work with the committee or the commission. The social planner may report directly to the city



administrator or to the director of planning (who in turn reports to the administrator)

- d) In addition to responsibilities regarding social issues and human care services, the social planner can bring a social perspective to economic, zoning and land use as well as environmental matters in which the City is involved.

Functions

- a) Facilitating effective communications and problem-solving between citizens, citizen groups and City Hall
- b) Raising community awareness about local government activities and issues
- c) Doing or commissioning applied social research and providing information for decision-making
- d) Helping community organizations and self-help groups to take action to solve problems according to their own needs and priorities
- e) Advising on the social impacts of land use, development, transportation, economic and environmental planning
- f) Coordinating the planning and provision of human care services
- g) Advising on grant funding for community organizations
- h) Advocating with senior governments for improved services and funding
- i) Helping the community to understand and respond positively to social priorities (group homes, child care, affordable housing etc) and to accept responsibility for meeting them equitably in all neighbourhoods



Beneficial Characteristics

- a) A social planning presence within city hall means that the social quality of community life can be an integral part of all city decision-making
- b) Provides a framework and a process for resolving social issues and setting social priorities before they become serious or politicized
- c) Can integrate social, economic, land use and environmental decision-making
- d) Can improve communications between city hall and the community
- e) Provides a resource to city hall in dealing with senior governments on social concerns
- f) Provides a means to work with the community in defining goals, objectives and priorities for the future

Limiting Characteristics

- a) Can be overly dominated by city hall issues to the exclusion of other community interests and priorities
- b) Can become enmeshed in controversial political issues
- c) Problems of acceptance within the city hall bureaucracy
- d) Restricted on engaging in advocacy activities that may be against the municipality's interest, or outside its responsibilities



Neighbourhood Councils

In larger communities there can be value in building a sense of community at a neighbourhood level. Neighbourhood councils are entirely voluntary, citizen-led organizations composed of the residents of a given area. These councils can, on a small scale, perform a valuable community social planning role.

Formal Status

- a) May be an informal association of neighbours or may be registered as a non-profit society and charity
- b) May be established by and officially connected to City Hall
- c) May be connected to a Community Social Planning Council

Funding

- a) Operates with nominal funds
- b) May receive grant money for special projects
- c) May receive a small operating grant from the municipality

Structure

- a) Has representation from each block in the neighbourhood and/or from other local organizations (ratepayers, community school committee, tenants group)
- b) Elects an executive to provide coordination and support to activities
- c) Is small enough that all members can meet regularly
- d) May have the assistance of a social planner from the municipality or planning council



Functions

- a) Fosters information and communication on neighborhood issues/activities and on City activities that affect the neighborhood
- b) Brings people together for planning and problem-solving on local interests, including advocacy to City Hall
- c) Works at developing good communications with City Hall
- d) Facilitates good inter-group and inter-family relations in the neighbourhood
- e) Promotes celebration of the neighbourhood's accomplishments, history and people
- f) Can address all issues of local concern; social, educational, economic, land, environmental, cultural
- g) Proposes and acts on projects and activities that strengthen neighbourhood life
- h) May sponsor some programs directly, but assists existing groups, or starts new groups to operate these on an on-going basis

Beneficial Characteristics

- a) Can be a powerful means to build strong neighbourhoods and vigorous citizen participation
- b) Provides an opportunity for people to build their skills in democratic participation
- c) Openness of agenda and flexibility means it can respond as needs and opportunities arise
- d) Offers maximum impact for minimum financial resources
- e) Can provide valuable sounding board for municipal politicians on issues
- f) Can facilitate neighbourhood acceptance of city-wide social responsibilities (affordable housing)



Limiting Characteristics

- a) Requires a core of very dedicated volunteers prepared to invest large amounts of personal time in their neighbourhood for work that is not always appreciated
- b) Risks being dominated by a single issue group, or group that is not representative of the neighbourhood
- c) May require assistance in developing the skills for democratic community participation and decision-making



Community Social Planning Models for Specific Populations

This Guide has emphasized the diversity of interests and issues in which community social planning can be involved. However the principles and practices of social planning are also applicable to situations where there is a need to have a continuing focus on a specific population sector, or issue.

For example there may be a need for on-going attention to the needs and interests of older people from a social planning perspective, or to families. Sometimes these may function as part of a community social planning "umbrella" organization. There might be a standing committee on the elderly, or on families or youth. This arrangement could work with all five of the models presented here.

However there may also be circumstances where there is a stand-alone organization concerned with community social planning for a particular sector. A senior citizen's group for instance could be incorporated as an independent community social planning body in its right. This might be particularly important in a community with a high proportion of older people. Similarly, there might be a body for the planning and coordination of services to families, children and youth.

Does this fragment social planning?

Might these separate initiatives contradict the very idea of good planning by fragmenting it among interest sectors? The answer is yes and no. It depends on the characteristics of the community and on the history of how the organizations in the community have developed.

A community social planning organization cannot be all things to all people all of the time. There are situations where it makes sense to have a separate organization for a specific interests.



An over-all community social planning body and the specific interest social planning group can work very well-together, mutually supporting one another. After all the job of the over-all group is to ensure there is good communication and harmonization of activities among different community interests. It's task is to think about the well-being of the community as a whole. It does not have to take a direct leadership, planning and advocacy role in each specific interest group sector.

Moreover the field of community social planning has many examples where groups begin as a special project or committee of a community social planning council and then develop into independent organizations in their own right. This is a sign of healthy community development.

Adapting to other cultures

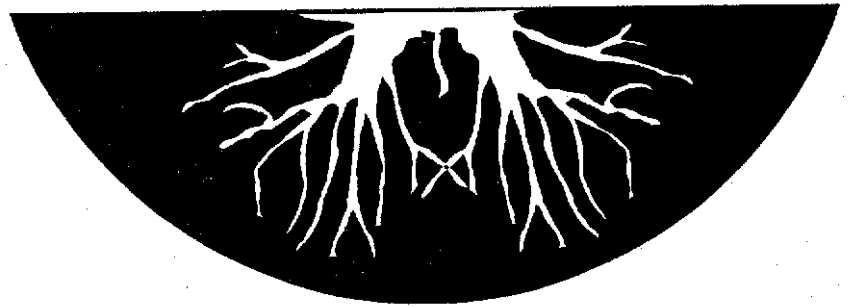
The principles, organizations and practices of community social planning may also be adapted to fit the needs and characteristics of specific cultures. First Nations people for example, are developing their own forms of governance that are concerned with strengthening the well-being of their communities.

**A COMMUNITY
SOCIAL PLANNING
ORGANIZATION:
THE OPTIONS**



Section 3

PUTTING COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING INTO PRACTICE



- A description of how a community social planning organization works
- An outline of skills and knowledge
- A word about politics





The Framework for Planning

The mandate for community social planning is broad. Literally any issue or matter that can affect the “social quality” of community life can be appropriate. The challenge therefore is to avoid the “Don Quixote” temptation; to mount one’s horse and charge off to tilt whatever windmills are on the horizon.

Community social planning is about “planning” and about choice — making decisions about which issues to tackle and about how resources should be allocated. There is a need to be selective, but there is also a need to be open to change — to respond to new and more pressing priorities and opportunities.

A social planning organization needs to have a formal process for identifying community needs and aspirations, for setting objectives, allocating resources and for taking action on clearly defined priorities.

It also must remain open to responding to the unexpected. It must act as an incubator for ideas and dreams whose relevance and importance are never known until they are suddenly needed. In this sense it should always be ahead of its time.

The presence of a social planning organization in the community means that there ought to be an ever-ready body of expertise and knowledge that is available as a resource as issues and opportunities arise. Such an organization operates within a framework that is meant to sustain its social planning role. The main elements of this framework are:

Mission Statement:

Embodies the guiding purpose and vision for the organization and the values on which it is founded

A social planning organization needs to have a formal process for identifying community needs and aspirations, for setting objectives, allocating resources and for taking action on clearly defined priorities.

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Elements of the Planning Framework:

Mission Statement

Program Roles

Organizational Structure
& Decision-Making

Finances

Membership

Planning & Priority
Setting

Performance
Evaluation

The Program Roles:

Describes how the organization will carry out its work: applied research; public information and education; demonstration projects; policy advocacy; service planning and coordination; support to self-help and other citizen groups etc.

Organization — Structure and Decision-Making:

Describes how the organization operates: its key planning and decision-making bodies; the key positions (volunteer and paid); the decision-making process; access by members and the community to decisions and participation

Finances:

A statement on the present and potential sources of funding for the organization

Membership:

A statement about who can belong and participate in the organization

Planning and Priority Setting:

A description as to how the organization identifies and undertakes work that is related to its program roles

Performance Evaluation

The procedures by which the organization is accountable to members, its sponsoring body, the community and itself for fulfilling its program roles in ways consistent with its mission statement

These seven elements can be considered the organizational framework for community social planning.



The Process of Community Social Planning

There are identifiable stages in planning and priority-setting that a community social planning body regularizes in its work. It is important to build into the organization such an on-going process. It is the only way it can hope to develop a sustained focus with its available resources, and have a maximum impact on the results.

In practice, however, it is necessary to keep one eye on the planning stages and another on the inevitable realities which push and pull the process: the emergence of unexpected needs and priorities; other dynamics in the community and in the organization which may cause a priority to be dropped, shelved or approached differently. Always time and resources are wild cards as well - there is never enough of either, and sometimes when there is enough, the issue may have passed.

An important value of a formal planning process is that it enables an organization to consciously decide what to drop or alter when other priorities emerge, rather than have them get lost.

On the following page is one approach to planning and priority setting for a community social planning organization, based on its mission statement and program roles:

An important value of a formal planning process is that it enables an organization to consciously decide what to drop or alter when other priorities emerge, rather than have them get lost.



A Community Social Planning Organization Sets Its Priorities...

Annual Environmental Scan

Surveying the community for major social, cultural, economic, environmental trends and characteristics



Identification of Community Needs, Strengths and Priorities

Undertaking a more focused investigation into major trends identified in the scan



Determination of Short and Long Term Priorities

Setting program priorities for the social planning organization based on significance to the community, suitability to its role, availability of resources and prospects for success



Taking Action

Developing strategies, assigning responsibilities and acting on priorities



Monitoring and Evaluating

Actions should be constantly monitored while underway against strategies and desired results. The experience should be evaluated at its conclusion for what can be learned.



Keep planning simple and to the point

There is of course much more to priority setting and taking action than can be described here. There are many guides that describe it in detail, whether for social planning organizations or for informal citizen action groups. SPARC's forthcoming ***Community Development Self-Assessment Guide*** is designed to help community groups and planning organizations to assess their own experience and knowledge in planning and advocacy in order to identify where they wish to improve their skills.

The challenge is to undertake a community development planning process that has sufficient detail to be credible while not becoming bogged down. Get the essential information, and keep it simple.

Make sure good planning and action, and good group development go hand in hand

Another challenge is to ensure that, as one proceeds through the stages of planning and action on any given issue there is also attention to effective group development. Great plans don't get far if the group is poorly organized. The ***Planning For Change*** chart in this booklet's appendix illustrates the point.



Two Major Roles for Community Social Planning Organizations

The community social planning organization plays two major roles throughout the planning and action exercise:

1. To provide leadership to the **planning process**.
2. To assist in developing the **content** of the issue

The work the organization does may originate internally (through its members, directors or staff) or externally (through the environmental scan or through being asked by an external source). In either case the organization usually goes outside of its own immediate constituency to work on the issue. It seeks the active involvement of those most affected in order that they can take ownership for the issue. Applied research becomes action research.

The essence of action research is to assist people in developing the skills, expertise and information to act on issues that affect them directly. Thus the organization is usually working with others in the development of the content.

The applied research the social planning organization conducts should be able to stand on its own as a credible body of work. The interpretation of the results of the research, and the actions that result are policy and strategic issues that are decided separately by the community social planning organization and by any other groups who wish to make use of the data.

Organizational credibility in applied social research and in the participation process of action research in large measure determine the worth of a community social planning organization

Organizational credibility in applied social research and in the participation process of action research in large measure determine the worth of a community social planning organization



The Skills and Knowledge of Community Social Planning

Here is a sample of the skills and knowledge that are required of the community social planning practitioner, whether volunteer or paid:

- Good interpersonal skills: social planning is about people; the way they live, where they live and how they live together with others in the community
- familiarity with resources inside and outside the community (people talent, money, resources in-kind)
- familiarity with community organizations and networks
- familiarity with the formal and informal systems operating in the community (how city hall is supposed to work — how it actually works)
- familiarity with the external systems that influence the community
- ability to work with diverse interests and groups
- effective communications: writing, speaking, public information/education, working with the media
- group facilitation and problem solving skills (conflict resolution)
- knowledge and skills in inter-cultural relations
- skills in educating
- meeting organizing skills
- applied social research skills
- community participation skills
- analytical skills
- strategic planning and social action skills



- knowledge of government
- familiarity with current public issues: local and global
- knowledge and ability to undertake/facilitate integrated social, economic and environmental planning and decision-making
- able to dream and envision

Develop a pool of talent

Don't panic! No one person has all of these characteristics. The secret is in assembling a pool of volunteers and staff who in total represent this range of requirements. Each practitioner will have some of these traits. Everyone should understand the importance of them all.

There are of course practical factors which will determine which of these skills are required and used more than others. The type of community social planning organization is one: independent community social planning council; United Way and member agencies; community multi-service organization; municipal government; neighbourhood council. The nature of the issue(s) in which the organization is engaged is another. A third is the kind of human and financial resources that are available.

Keep in mind as well the seven community social planning roles identified earlier:

1. **Advocacy:** acting on own or others behalf to change a public policy and/or to get support for action on a specific social issue
2. **Social policy analysis, criticism and recommendations** regarding government programs
3. **Informing and educating** the public on issues affecting community well-being
4. **Conducting applied research** that generates information to help the community document its needs and strengths



5. **Community organizing** to help those affected by a community issue to develop plans and strategies for action
6. **Community problem-solving** that helps to build bridges and consensus among differing viewpoints for the benefit of the community as a whole
7. **Demonstrating** innovative approaches to community development

A Word About Politics and Community Social Planning

Community social planning, if it is doing its job, is involved in those issues which are important, sensitive and often controversial. Healthy controversy is an integral part of civic life.

Politics in a democratic society is about people taking part in community affairs and decision-making. Politics is the formal word to describe the process by which people propose and argue points of view and then seek ways to arrive at conclusions acceptable to all concerned - or at the least, to a majority of citizens. Community social planning is therefore part of the political process. In this sense it is a political activity.

However the credibility of community social planning requires that it not be associated with a particular political party or formal political point of view. Its job in the political process is twofold:

1. to provide information that contributes to informed debate and decision-making (healthy controversy)
2. to make its own recommendations and take policy positions on issues that are based on credible research and on the values espoused by community social planning

Community social planning has two functions in the political process:

To provide information that contributes to informed debate and decision-making

To make its own recommendations and take policy positions on issues



Sometimes a community social planning organization may limit its role to the first in some contentious issues. In other situations it will provide information and argue a point of view.

These dual roles have an obvious tension between them. Will good information be heard if it is attached to a particular argument? Will the effectiveness of the organization be diminished if it is seen as "siding" on an issue?

The risks are worth taking

These are real risks. They are worth taking. A community social planning organization is not a "neutral" social research organization (which in any event is a term of convenient rationalization rather than fact). It is *engaged* in the life of the community. Its agenda, its outlook are shaped by the dominate values of community social planning; social justice, social obligation and empowerment.

The challenge for community social planning is to perform research and analysis work whose integrity is widely acknowledged, and to take policy positions that are respected even when they are not universally accepted

In some communities even conducting fact-finding research on an issue may be controversial though if no position is taken on the findings. While timing and discretion are always important considerations the community social planning organization should neither shy away from investigating an issue simply because it is controversial nor from expressing views about the most effective policies or actions that are required for dealing with it.

Poverty, unemployment and underemployment are all too prevalent issues in most communities. Yet raising them can be controversial. Community social planning should ensure that they are raised. It should also ensure that all views are heard and considered with respect to desirable solutions.

The challenge for community social planning is to perform research and analysis work whose integrity is widely acknowledged, and to take policy positions that are respected even when they are not universally accepted



This statement is a reminder about another contribution that community social planning can make to the political process. Because one of its values is a commitment to building community consensus, it can act as a facilitator in helping to resolve differences in the community, helping defuse them before they become intractably divisive. In such circumstances the social planning organization may choose to refrain from pursuing its own point of view in the belief that contributing to a compromise or consensus on an issue in the community may be more valuable to long term objectives.

The dark side or the bright side of human nature?

It is easy to conclude that community social planning focuses on what is wrong, what's not working with people and their communities — sort of wallowing in the dark despair of impossible ideals. On the other hand it may also be viewed as naively optimistic — oblivious to all the realities of human short-comings.

In practice the community social planning organization and practitioner need to be both visionary and hard-headedly realistic. Their guiding belief however, is in the innate capacity of people to create social and civic relationships characterized by caring, by understanding and respect and by equal opportunity to participate in decision-making.

Poverty, unemployment and underemployment are all too prevalent issues in most communities. Yet raising them can be controversial. Community social planning should ensure that they are raised. It should also ensure that all views are heard and considered with respect to desirable solutions.

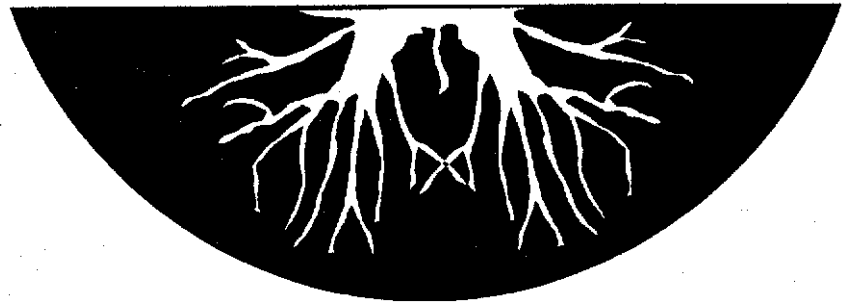


PUTTING
COMMUNITY
SOCIAL PLANNING
INTO PRACTICE



Section 4

GETTING STARTED: SETTING UP A CSP ORGANIZATION



- Determining whether there is a need
- The steps to set up an organization





While there is no standard approach to establishing a community social planning organization, a number of general suggestions are offered below.

Is There a Need?

Are there community issues that are not being dealt with, or dealt with effectively? Do they have a social component? Are there economic and environmental issues whose social impacts are not being considered? Do social issues receive consideration in their own right?

Does the community:

- have good sources of information for informed understanding of issues?
- have effective methods for identifying community needs and priorities and acting on them?
- have resources that facilitate problem-solving and wide-spread citizen participation in civic affairs

Test these questions with yourself and others.

Seven social planning activities

Ask if there is a need for any of the seven activities of community social planning previously identified:

- advocacy
- social policy analysis, criticism and recommendations
- informing and educating
- conducting applied research
- community organizing
- community problem-solving
- demonstrating innovative approaches (See pages 3 & 4)

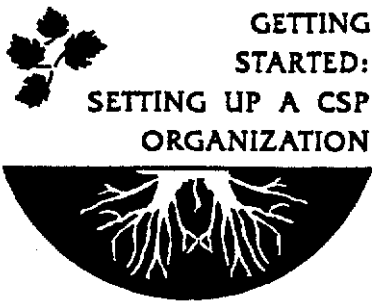
Determine your needs:

Are there community issues that are not being dealt with, or dealt with effectively?

Do they have a social component?

Are there economic and environmental issues whose social impacts are not being considered?

Do social issues receive consideration in their own right?



Core values

Explore for consensus about the core values of a community social planning organization: social justice; equity; participation and inclusion; respect for and celebration of diversity; building consensus and shared values for the well-being of the community as a whole; equitable distribution of public resources; community decision-making; voluntary, self-help initiatives; maintaining a healthy public service system (see pp 4 and 5).

At the same time pursue these same questions from the perspective of what's working well. What can be learned about the community's strengths, assets and resources from these experiences?

It may be found that a community may have many elements of good community social planning already in place. **A new organization may not be needed.** Rather, an existing organization(s) may take the leadership in creating a more conscious presence for the community social planning process, and for adding or strengthening those elements which may be lacking.



Whose Support is Key?

If it is concluded that a new community social planning organization is required it is important to identify and get on board those in the community whose support and participation can make or break the idea.

Consider this check list of key interests:

- Citizen's groups
- Community service organizations
- Local government
- Labour
- Business
- The media
- Religious organizations
- Economic organizations
- Environmental organizations
- Arts community
- Aboriginal and First Nations organizations
- Ethnic and visible minority organizations
- Disability organizations
- Anti-poverty groups



Involve Key Players in Validating the Need

Build consensus and support for the proposed organization through involving the key actors in the process of documenting and substantiating the need for such a body. This is a process of building ownership and commitment rather than of selling an unfamiliar idea.

Determine the Type of Organization Required

In light of the assessment made about the community's need for community social planning, consider the kind of organization which may be most appropriate. Is it one of the five types of organization presented earlier or combinations thereof?

- independent community social planning council
- United Way and Member Agencies
- Community multi-service organization
- municipal government
- neighbourhood council

Building on Existing Arrangements and Resources

Where possible, try to develop the new organization in ways that respect and utilize any existing organizations and processes that can contribute to community social planning. Setting up a new body to compete with others who may already



have involvement in some aspect of community social planning is simply counter productive. On the other hand existing organizations have to avoid "turf protection" for its own sake.

The goal is for all the concerned parties to share their strengths and work cooperatively. Moreover the demonstration of a willingness to pool some resources actually strengthens the ability to gain new resources.

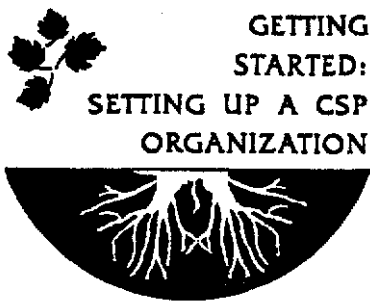
It is important to be clear about the people skills and resources the new organization will need as well as the financial and material, and what it will have to call upon from the community.

Set Achievable Objectives

The fledgling organization should at the outset establish a program of activities which it knows it can accomplish in order to gain visibility and to demonstrate that it can do something. These might be very simple:

- a community services directory
- a community forum on a local issue
- publication of an information bulletin on a social/ economic/environmental theme
- hiring of a local student through student employment grants to investigate local employment opportunities for young people or the housing needs of seniors.

These achievable objectives of course should be set within the context of the Mission Statement that has been set for the new organization and its longer term goals and aspirations.



Create a Proposal Document

The mission of the organization, a description of its sponsors and supporters, and its proposed structure, resources and program of activity together with an implementation plan should all be contained in a proposal document. This document can be a powerful planning and selling tool for political and financial support.

Build a Phased Commitment

Often (and understandably) most people and organizations are unable to fully commit their time and resources to an idea. They want evidence that there is a need, that it will work, and that others are on board.

For this reason it is beneficial to build commitment to a community social planning organization in stages. Get agreement about the need for such a body. Form an interim planning group. Get agreement in principle about what such a body might do. Develop a proposal document and work plan. Get agreement about these. Recruit key people who are willing to give leadership through to the point at which the organization is officially established (emphasize that they can make a separate decision as to whether or not to carry on into the permanent phase). Seek seed money to launch some of the achievable activities even while the organization is still being finalized.

The goal is to build an increasing sense of ownership and stake in the new organization as people gain experience and confidence through each phase of its development. This will create on-going commitment past the organizing phase.

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The Resource Question

Dollars are not easily found for community social planning. It is very important to have a financial development strategy from the outset.

1. Determine the bottom-line, minimum financial resources required
2. Identify potential funders whose mandate and responsibilities could benefit from community social planning
3. Identify potential funders whose mandate includes support to one or more aspects of the social planning process
4. Identify potential funders for undertaking contract applied social/economic/environmental research in the community
5. Involve the most promising funders from the outset in the planning and development of the proposed organization
6. Use the Proposal Document as the formal written prospectus to present to potential funders
7. Develop with the Proposal Document a financial plan that indicates what the organizing parties are committing (in cash and in-kind) and the potential sources of funding that are being approached (funders like to know there are several financial partners involved)
8. Try and build commitment in principle to long-term funding from key funders

The quest for adequate, safe, secure funds is on-going. It is definitely made easier however if financial planning and development are an integral part of the work of the organization from the outset.

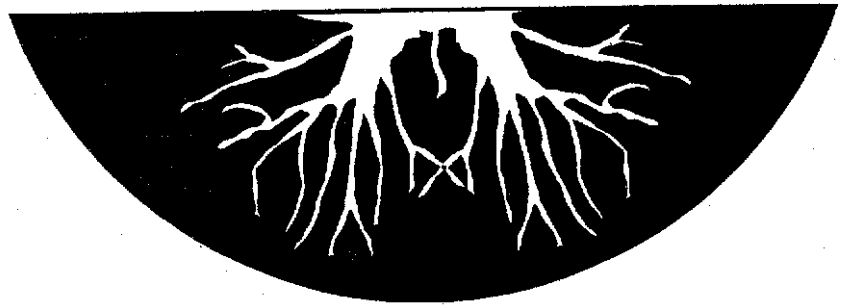
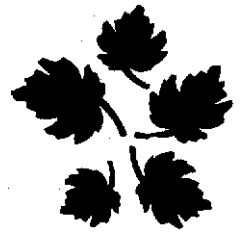


**GETTING
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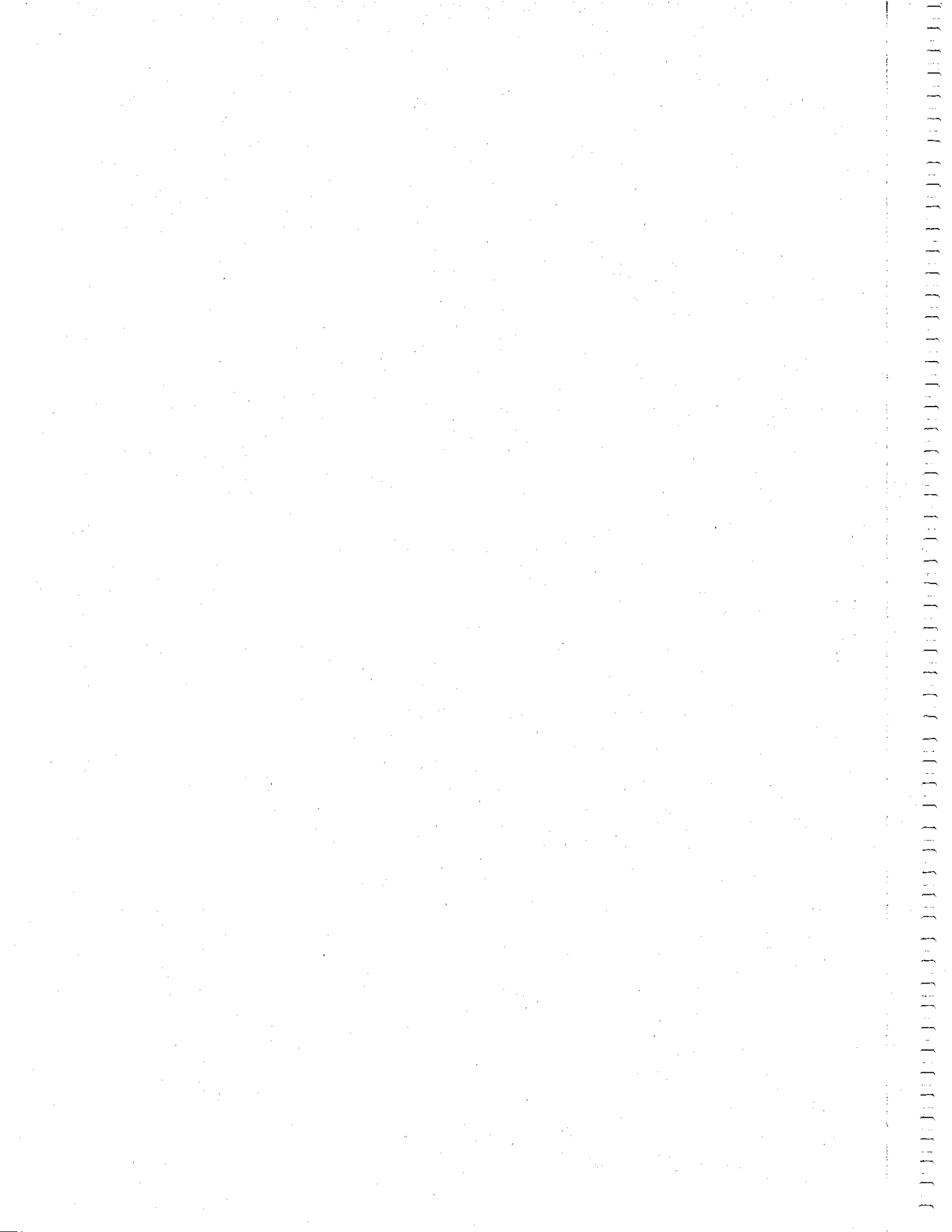


Section 5

COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING AT WORK



 Some examples from
around British Columbia





1

A Community School Looks at Its Neighbourhood

An inner city elementary school borders on an industrial waterfront, business and commercial area. Many school families live in modest circumstances.

The school is a designated community school with a full-time community school co-ordinator and extensive parent and community involvement in school life.

The school sponsored a community "charette" or participatory action planning exercise. Participants spent a day identifying local priorities that would improve the area. They worked out strategies for action.

A major priority was to recover some of the waterfront for people's leisure enjoyment before the fading industries were replaced by privately owned luxury residential development. An action group was formed at the charette.

The action group then took on a life of its own. A public information campaign was launched to protect some of the waterfront for public use. A member of the group became a City councillor. All three levels of government were lobbied, and eventually support was forthcoming.

The community now has public access to a rejuvenated waterfront, one that incorporates business, residential and green space zones.

The community school served as the catalyst for the waterfront access action, but did not sponsor or control the citizen's group once it was launched.

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Adding Social Priorities to the Official Community Plan in a Semi-Remote Resource Community

A small, semi-remote resource community was due to up-date its Official Community Plan. The Clerk-Treasurer (senior district administrator) persuaded Council to incorporate a social development element in the review. An external consultant was engaged by the District for this purpose.

The consultant worked with the community over a nine month period, visiting about every 6 weeks. A citizen working group was organized to oversee the process, and to report on progress to the District Council.

Through the local paper and radio residents were informed that a community survey would be conducted. It would focus on the social quality of community life. A "talking booth" was set up in the shopping mall and people were invited to share their views - what they liked and what needed improvement in the community.

The survey itself was by telephone. Volunteers used the telephones in the District office after hours to call people randomly (advertisements said; "if you don't get phoned, call us!"). The results were reported in the paper and at a major community workshop to which all the community's clubs and service organizations had been invited, along with the general public.

The workshop gave further order and clarity to the emerging priorities. The draft report was then prepared for the District Council. To help ensure that the report received wide-spread community attention, a volunteer recognition night was sponsored by the District. Community organizations and individuals were invited to nominate people to be recognized for

The participatory planning process generated both public involvement and support, the support of the Council and a plan of action ready for implementation as opportunities presented themselves.



their contribution to community life. A special presentation evening was held in which the Mayor presented certificates to the many people that were recognized.

The presence of the community volunteers, plus their friends and relatives was also an opportunity to "report back" to the community on the final results of the participatory planning process. Supports for young families, meaningful activities for youth and educational opportunities for women were three major priorities.

The citizens' working group was able to follow-through immediately on the priority of supporting young families, and it launched plans for a "family place." The District donated land and some operating funds. The local MLA provided provincial lottery money towards the facility to which funds were also added by a major community foundation in the province.

The participatory planning process generated both public involvement and support, the support of the Council and a plan of action ready for implementation as opportunities presented themselves (e.g., the monies from the lottery and community foundation).

A Novel Approach to Improving Family Counselling Services

A regional district had a multiplicity of small and mid-sized non-profit agencies offering family counselling services. Yet evidence suggested that services were inadequate to meet the needs. Funders found themselves approached by agencies for more resources, yet were unclear as to how to make good decisions in support of effective service provision.

3



The funders asked the non-profit community social planning council in the District to examine the situation and prepare guidelines and advice to assist them in allocating resources for family counselling services (non-government funds for family counselling were very small).

The council's approach was to engage the counselling agencies in a developmental planning process. The participatory umbrella was cast wide, to include very small self-help organizations and agencies with professional staff engaged in accredited counselling services. The goal was to come up with a collaborative plan for the funding and provision of family counselling services in the District.

Work went on for two years. The Council's Executive Director (a part-time position) acted as the planner/facilitator. A planning group composed of a representative cross-section of agencies provided in-depth leadership. Activities included:

- building understanding and trust among participants with respect to quite different philosophies and approaches to family counselling
- examining a variety of service models in other settings
- undertaking a demographic review of families in the Region and projections for the future
- preparing an inventory of existing agencies and services and publishing a free directory of family counselling services for distribution in a weekly newspaper

The innovative feature of the cooperative model was that of respecting the integrity of the existing agencies while strengthening the overall standard and availability of service in the region through a formal cooperative structure.

At the start of the process there had been some assumptions that the end result might be a recommendation that fewer agencies be funded, but with additional dollars (gained from not funding the others). Some feared that there would be a call to amalgamate the smaller agencies into one large organization.

The final report, produced with the involvement and support of the key agencies was quite different. It called for the creation



of a "Cooperative Family Services Association." This association would be composed of all those existing agencies who wished to join. Its purposes would include:

- a) the provision of a core package of family counselling services throughout the Regional District
- b) a common education and training program for staff and volunteers
- c) a common personnel benefits program for staff
- d) a common service logo
- e) a common approach to funders

The report was released to the funders and then a public press conference was held. Representatives from counselling agencies, from police and school officials argued the importance of good preventive family counselling and family life skills education.

The innovative feature of the cooperative model was that of respecting the integrity of the existing agencies while strengthening the overall standard and availability of service in the Region through a formal cooperative structure.



4

Putting a "Sock" in a Rendering Plant

In this inner city community there was an active Area Council composed of locally elected citizen volunteers. This Council acted as a community forum, as an advocate and as a community planning body for issues as diverse as campaigning for a community services centre, against a proposed freeway that would have bisected the area and, in this example to support a group of residents trying to reduce the stench of a rendering plant in their area.

The residents had held some informal living rooms meetings and done some research on the plant before approaching the Council. The Council agreed to support their cause and assigned its community development worker to assist.

Organizing among neighbours continued but the major focal point became a senior social studies class in the local secondary school. With the active involvement of their teacher, the students launched an action research program. They investigated all aspects of the rendering business and of this particular operation. The company agreed to them touring the plant and responded to the students' questions. Not satisfied, the students prepared arguments as to what should be done to "put a sock in it" to eliminate the smell.

The neighbours and the students secured a hearing before City Council. The plant operator was also present. He argued that the company had already taken measures to reduce the smell and that they were endeavoring to be good corporate citizens. Council acknowledged this, but accepted the arguments from the neighbourhood and ordered the company to install additional scrubbing equipment to further reduce the odour.

The Area Citizens Council lent legitimacy and resources to the residents of the area affected by the smell. It did not take control of the issue from the residents, but rather helped them act on it for themselves.

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A Community Forum on a National Social Issue

Poverty is a national social issue as well as a local reality in many communities. The long-term solutions require senior government action. Yet the pressure for change must begin with the community.

A national non-profit social development organization held a series of public meetings across the country to build support for reforming Canada's income security system. One of the local hosts was the community social planning council in a BC interior community.

The local council organized a community forum on poverty. A special effort was made to involve people living on low incomes. People on social assistance, local business people, farmers and other concerned citizens discussed and debated the issues as presented by a speaker for the national organization.

A remarkable consensus developed among many of those present about the importance of acting on poverty and about the merits of the national policy proposals that were presented.

Local issues are often connected to larger national or even global concerns. Public information, education and action at the community level can contribute to public policy formulation by senior governments.

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6

Helping Youth Organize

A suburban community was experiencing a "youth problem;" vandalism, loitering and general public apprehension about aimless young people. The young people, and those who worked with them, were complaining that no one was listening to their concerns.

The social planner for the local municipal government met with a number of young people and youth workers. It was agreed that there should be a coordinated effort among community agencies and workers to support young people in acting on their needs and priorities.

A community youth forum was organized by young people, with support from the social planner and community organizations. It proved to be powerful vehicle for airing youth concerns and building community understanding. An agenda for action emerged to create an on-going youth forum, directed by young people supported by a coordinated youth agency committee.

The municipal social planner acted as a broker and facilitator to bring young people and community stake holders together to develop a youth agenda, led by youth.

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Municipal Leadership in Child Care

The need for affordable, quality and accessible child care is well established. Getting action is often something else. Three municipal governments assigned their social planning staff to develop strategies. Their work suggested that the municipalities could do much more to facilitate child care services.

In two adjoining municipalities it was decided to work in partnership with major employers, as much of the need for child care was related to working parents. The two Mayors struck a task force of employers and community representatives. A social planning research organization was engaged to conduct a survey on the need for child care among employees of major businesses. The results confirmed the need and the municipal governments are developing strategies with businesses to establish employment-based child care.

The planner in the other municipality took an advocacy perspective. This involved launching a number of consultative activities with developers, local neighbourhoods, the provincial government and community advocates to get child care firmly on an agenda for action. Small amounts of development dollars were granted to encourage local initiatives.

Thus, the consultative process itself was a community development undertaking — reaching and bringing together a diverse range of groups and demonstrating potential lines of action. This led to a more comprehensive approach to child care. The end result was the adoption by city council of a sweeping series of recommendations to financially support the planning, development and provision of child care in the city, including some services to be operated by city hall itself.

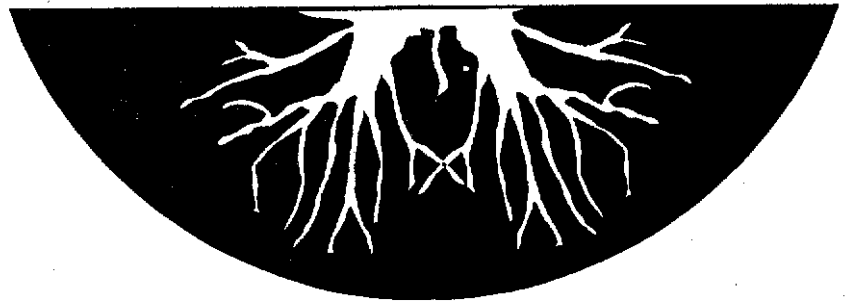



COMMUNITY
SOCIAL
PLANNING
AT WORK



Section 6

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING



 In which puzzling matters
are settled once and for all





How does community social planning fit with other community development programs and activities?

Community development is a process that comes in a number of guises. They include "community planning," "community economic development," "community recreation," "Healthy Communities," "Safer Communities" and many others.

Approaches and methods that are similar to those of community social planning are being used by both public and private agencies in the planning and provision of services.

There is no copyright on community development. Each community development program and process has come out of its own historical context and situation. Each should be encouraged to borrow freely from the other.

Community social planning: What's in a name?

The name doesn't matter — being clear about what your organizing for is important. There are however some characteristics which are essential to an organization doing social planning:

- a) Citizens take part in planning, decision-making and action
- b) Those most affected by the issue are directly involved
- c) The organization is not driven by a single issue or interest
- d) The social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects of life are linked
- e) Builds bridges amongst diverse community interests



What are the origins of community social planning?

A culture of caring, contributing, benefitting and celebrating are the hallmarks of community social planning at work.

Seventy-five years ago, when Canada's social security programs were in their infancy, groups of charitable social agencies began meeting to share information and plan service activities together and to cooperate on fund-raising. The United Way agency started in this period.

By the 1960s the foundation of Canada's social programs was in place. In some parts of the country United Way organizations developed for themselves, or supported independent community social planning organizations focussed on community development, not social service coordination.

At the same time, citizen participation, and support for self-help groups was broadening the scope and mandate of community social planning. Emphasis was placed on getting at the root causes of issues like poverty, unemployment and family stress. Community social planning grew to encompass the entire range of human care services and public social and economic policies that helped or hindered social advancement for disadvantaged groups.

Also in the '60s the first community social planning departments were established in municipal governments in Canada, notably in Vancouver and Halifax.

The tough economic times of the '80s emphasized the importance of linking economic issues and policies to social planning and social policies. Community social planning gave leadership to the emergence of community economic development as an important element in community well-being.



The '90s is the decade of the environment. Environmental issues have economic consequences, which in turn have social consequences. We need now to integrate our social, economic and environmental planning and decision-making.

Through the years, community social planning has maintained its primary belief that social investment in people and in communities provides the greatest guarantee for the quality of life we live.

Is there more interest in community social planning today?

These days there is a great deal of interest in the social health and well-being of communities and the people who live in them. Personal and community life seems more complex. The senior governments are cutting back on social programs. There is growing recognition that many of the solutions and the methods for acting on them have to be found in the community. Local governments are finding themselves much more involved in social affairs, despite uncertainty about their role and responsibility.

Community social planning helps the community take charge of those responsibilities that are best suited to local action, while at the same time advocating that senior governments fulfil their side of the partnership by meeting their own responsibilities for community well-being.



Who can participate in community social planning?

Everyone who cares about their community and its people can participate in community social planning.

There are jobs in this field, and these are growing in number, but in practice and in principle it is an area of voluntary action, where people freely choose to give of their time and talent to their community. For this voluntary effort to be effective on any continuing basis however, community social planning organizations usually need the assistance of paid workers. As well, many local governments need the presence of social planning staff to sustain the social agenda, and to ensure citizen participation in municipal affairs.

Taking part in community social planning offers people infinite opportunity to act on their interests, to put their existing skills to work for community benefit, and to acquire new skills.

Who are the organizational partners in community social planning?

Community organizations, self-help groups, government, labour, business, social agencies, economic development organizations, arts groups, educational organizations, anti-poverty groups, health agencies, religious bodies, environmental groups, equity groups* can all find common cause in community social planning.

* "Equity Groups" refers to ethnic and visible minorities, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability groups.



These groups come together because of shared concerns about a community issue. They will not hold identical values or purposes. In coming together, however, they do agree to search for solutions in which each can contribute part of the answer. Community education and arts organizations can be particularly powerful allies in building public awareness and understanding of community issues.

Where does the money come from?

There is no pot of gold for community social planning. Those working as volunteers and staff in this field become skilful "social entrepreneurs" in obtaining resources. The greatest challenge, particularly for community social planning organizations operating outside of municipal government or United Way funding is to find core operating funds as opposed to project money. The core dollars are needed to ensure an organizational structure that can secure and manage project funds.

Common sources of funding include:

- government special project funds (tied to specific program priorities of the provincial or federal governments)
- administrative charges from managing projects (setting an administrative fee)
- memberships and donations
- consulting planning and research work
- local government (by establishing its own social planning position, by giving a grant to a community social planning organization or by raising revenue from development)



- Canada Assistance Plan (now difficult to obtain, but if municipal, provincial and federal governments are in agreement, certain types of community development activities can be supported on a sustained basis)
- lotteries and bingos (through the Provincial Lotteries Branch)
- United Way

The aim is to have several income sources, so as not to be dependent on just one should this source be lost.

How does community social planning relate to recent government initiatives?

As this text goes to press communities in BC are learning about a number of recent provincial government initiatives in community work and community based services. The Ministry of Social Services is hiring community development workers. The Inter-Ministerial Child and Youth Committees are sponsoring the development of local community planning and coordination models for services to families, children and youth.

The Ministry of Health has announced that its "New Directions" program will create regional boards of health, local community health councils and community health centres. The Ministry of Economic Development, Small Business and Trade is setting up community and regional offices to support local economic initiatives. The Commission on the Resources and the Environment is involving communities in planning activities that will affect land use, the resources industries and employment in British Columbia. There are numerous other examples.



One community recently organized an all day workshop just to bring all the different federal, provincial and local initiatives together. What they all share is a declared commitment to bring the community in to the decision-making and work of government. Many also talk about the importance of more coordination and integration of programs and services.

The principles and methods of community development and community social planning are being articulated and cautiously applied by these new programs.

All of this is very heartening. It recognizes that it is not possible for senior governments or municipal government to do it all - citizens have to be brought in. Our ideas about governance have to broaden to incorporate the community more directly in planning and decision-making about public policies, and in the management and implementation of public programs.

Similarly we need to rethink how public resources and services are organized if they are to more effectively support community priorities. Coordination and integration of provincial programs — along with community programs that receive provincial funding — are important prerequisites for community management, whether in the human care services or in local economic development.

What does all this mean for community social planning? In the long run it may mean the development of new forms of community governance. Locally elected boards may have the authority, within a framework of provincial priorities and standards, to develop, manage and fund a range of community-based public services. Such boards could well perform the seven social planning roles outlined in this booklet. They could also fund another body, such as the independent community social planning council, to perform these planning roles and focus their own work on the funding and provision of local services.



The opportunity for change right now is exciting. Understandably there is also a lot of confusion and apprehension. This is all the more reason why communities should have their own community social planning agenda. They shouldn't wait for the dust to settle. Rather, through community social planning they should develop their own plans as to how these various government initiatives can best serve local needs.

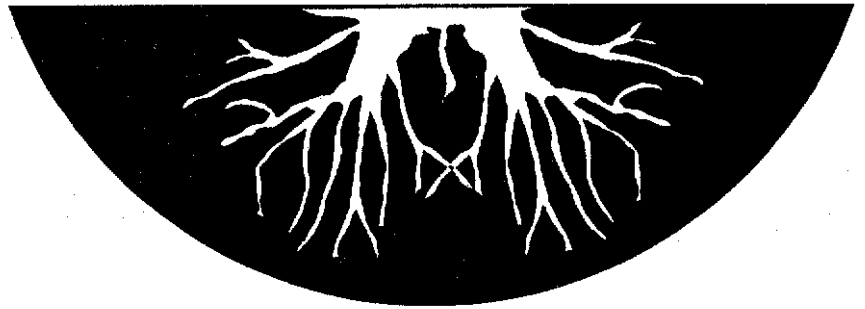
Rarely have there been such resources for local community development and planning. Communities should tap into these resources to build their agenda and then be better able to work as full partners with government in the development of new local service systems.

Community social planning will endure, whatever it happens to be called at the moment, and in whatever forms are suitable to the times. The secret is in never permitting it to be claimed or owned by any one interest or sector in government or in the community, for that can pass.

The Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria is now 57 years old. There have been very tough periods, but this independent social planning council has survived and made a difference to the communities it serves. It has done so because succeeding members believe the Council, as an independent body, is uniquely situated to hold a mirror up to the community - and the community accepts the warts and beauty marks in the reflection as necessary to understanding itself and what must be done to improve the quality of community life.

Section 7

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & CONCLUSION



- Community Development Skill Program
- SPARC Publications
- Directory of Social Planning Organizations
- Social Planning Round Table
- Planning for Change Chart





Community Development Skills Program

This program is a new resource that SPARC is developing for communities and community groups. Its purpose is to provide community development training to community members. This may involve assisting groups and communities in building their own community development or social planning organizations. Or, it may assist groups in developing effective strategies for planning around a specific issue or interest.

The program has the following components:

1. *A Citizen's Guide To Community Social Planning*
 - how to set up a community social planning organization
2. *Community Development Self-Assessment Guide*
 - how to identify a group's skills and learning needs in community development
3. *Supplementary Learning Guides*
 - brief descriptions and learning exercises for each phase of the community development process
4. *Customized Community Development Workshops*
 - based on the learning needs identified by the group, a workshop is designed to meet the specific requirements of the group
5. *Facilitators Guide(s)*
 - an aid to facilitators in community development skills workshops
6. *Community Development Reference Guide*
 - a listing of relevant print and non-print resources for community development
7. *Issue Specific Guides*
 - how community development can assist action on specific issues or themes eg; affordable housing; the arts and community development



SPARC Publications

In addition to publications produced for the Community Development Skills Program, SPARC produces a range of other publications that are concerned with community social planning and social policy issues. Current releases are carried in **SPARC News: Community Affairs in British Columbia** mailed quarterly to members.

Directory of Social Planning Organizations

Contact SPARC for a directory of social planning organizations in British Columbia

Social Planning Round Table

The Round Table is a provincial body, facilitated by SPARC, that brings together volunteer and paid social planning practitioners. Its activities include:

- sharing information and facilitating communication
- identifying training and skill development interests of social planners and assisting in the development of educational programs
- advocating for public policies that strengthen community social planning in British Columbia



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Planning for Change Chart: Group Development & Community Action

A

Unorganized Issue

- environment work conditions
- housing
- poverty
- discrimination
- lack of service
- etc.

No Organized Group

varying degrees of community awareness some individuals concerned, but no organization

B

Preliminary Investigation

identifying & contacting concerned people
gathering basic information
confirmation re: issue's existence

C

Organizing

research & documentation
defining issue precisely
establish vision (goal)
establish objectives
developing a support base
identifying strategy options:

- educating
- lobbying
- proposing
- negotiating
- protesting

 analysis (social, economic, political)

D

Plan of Action

final analysis of situation
choose a strategy with method based on:

- priorities
- what is likely to succeed
- resources required
- what might happen if strategy fails (cost)

 set workplan and timetable

E

Taking Action

- informing
- educating
- lobbying
- protesting
- proposing
- negotiating
- collaborating
- monitoring

 ...doing some or all of the above according to the plan of action

F

Assessment

was the plan of action successful? why?
what strategies in the plan worked well, were less successful or didn't work? why?
If the goal(s), objectives, priorities were not realized, what went wrong?
how accurate was the original definition of the problem and its subsequent analysis?
how effective was the group in building external support?

G

Continuation of Action

determine if new goals & priorities are necessary
are new strategies required?

worker intervention

Ad Hoc Gathering

exploratory meeting: "who's not here who should be here"
agreement to respond to the issue
sharing of personal interest/skills/agenda
formation of an interest group & expression of members' commitment

Formalization of Group

consensus re: objectives
consensus re: shared values
leadership roles designated
assignment of tasks to group members
communication procedures set up

Group Commitment to Action

formal consensus of group to strategy
commitment to group
changes be required
confirm accountability of group members to one another & to the goal
assignment of responsibilities
ensure group is open to expanded participation

Group Action & Solidarity

individual members fulfilling their responsibilities
maintaining group solidarity & internal support for each member
effective communication
group involvement in any significant strategy changes

Group Examines Its Effectiveness

did individual group members fulfill their responsibilities?
was communication effective in the group?
did members remain united & only make important changes after the full involvement of all members?
was leadership effectively handled?

Decision: Group Disbands or Renews Itself

If Renewed, then:
need for continuing creation of opportunities for involvement & expanding membership
movement of leadership to ensure in-group does not develop

group development stages



CONCLUSION

Dear Reader:

It is hoped that you have found this Citizen's Guide to Community Social Planning useful.

Community social planning is a challenging concept. It requires vision and imagination on the one hand and practical organization, action and persistence on the other. Perhaps more than anything it is about supporting and nourishing a democratic society.

Andrea Spindel, a former SPARC Executive Director (1977-1981) has written:

Change and uncertainty, I have learned, must be embodied in our lives and allowed to help and not hinder either personal or organizational growth. SPARC is change.

The task of community social planning is to help people make sense of change and to influence it in ways that are socially beneficial.

A former SPARC President, Mary Knox (1975) has said that "SPARC is not so much an organization as a way of thinking." Community social planning is indeed a way of viewing the world which shapes how we act. This holds true for any community organization whose concern is with assisting people to take charge of their own lives and to act on their dreams for the well-being of the community.

Your comments about this Guide will be most welcome. Either use the pull-out sheet attached or prepare a separate note. Also attached is information about SPARC's other resources in community social planning.

Your membership in SPARC will be a practical way to be kept informed about our work and about the work of others in community social planning. A membership form is enclosed or may be obtained from SPARC. Your financial support helps us support you and other colleagues in this important field.

With every good wish for your community work,

Volunteers and Staff at SPARC

For more information on these activities & resources:

Write us at:
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