



**Community Associations in the
District of North Vancouver:
A Discussion Paper**

Introduction

Community associations are grassroots organizations that generally come into existence to address a specific issue, for example to promote an event, take a stand on a civic issue, or to respond to some perceived adverse event affecting or potentially affecting an area of constituents. This area may or may not be well defined and may evolve or adjust over time as clarity is brought to the reason for forming the association, or as new issues arise.

Being self-created and self-guided, community associations are fundamental democratic institutions. By definition, this implies the right of citizens to become involved and evolve the nature of the group as is the will of the majority. History tells us that democracy is a struggle which is not always organized, efficient, or pretty; the nature of community associations should prove no different. Thus, we would expect community associations to develop, dissolve, suffer rancorous debate, or be effective lobbyists.

Given this ever-changing landscape of civic interest and involvement, the question for local government is to what extent should it engage community associations and what mutual benefits could result from this engagement. This brief discussion paper will not address the value of community associations; instead, it will accept their existence as a given and analyze the range of engagement options.

History

Community associations, or other groups such as ratepayer or neighbourhood associations, have probably existed since incorporation of the municipality in 1891. More recently, since 1995 the District has had a policy of recognizing community associations. This policy establishes eight criteria; groups who annually meet the criteria are listed on the District's webpage and are eligible for funding under the Healthy Neighbourhood Funding policy. These two policies are attached for reference.

The policy on recognition is a passive one for the District – associations bring themselves to the attention of the District by applying for recognition. Recognition is maintained by annually submitting specified documents such as minutes of an Annual General Meeting and a list of officers and directors, among other information. Follow up is done by the Clerk's Office and associations no longer wanting to be recognized are removed from the list of recognized associations published on the District's webpage (please note, however, that in order to maintain a *status quo*, no such action has been taken since early 2011 when the review of community associations was ordered).

The District has had a recent history rich with community associations: currently there are eighteen recognized associations. Some of these are more active than others and some access funding through the Healthy Neighbourhood Fund. Both the District's Sustainable Community Development Department and the Development Planning Section advise community associations of opportunities for input on community plans and development applications pursuant to the current Public Notification Policy; however, doubt as to the true representative nature of the input provided remains a concern.

In early 2011 Council was made aware of a new community association which appears to have emerged as the result of some dissatisfaction with the operation of an existing association. As a result, a review of the District's policy was deemed to be appropriate and to take place following the 2011 general municipal election. This discussion paper may form the starting point for that review.

Discussion

To provide context for the District's review, thirteen Metro Vancouver communities, including the two other North Shore municipalities, were surveyed on whether or not they recognize or engage community associations. The following table shows these results.

Municipality	Existing Policy?	Formal Recognition?	Formally Engaged?	Informally Engaged?	Grants/Funding Available?
Burnaby	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Delta	No	No	No	Unknown	Unknown
Coquitlam	No	No	No	Yes	No
Langley City	No	No	No	No	Yes
Langley Township	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
Maple Ridge	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
New Westminster	Yes (Guidelines)	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
North Vancouver (City)	No	No	No	No	No
North Vancouver (District)	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
Port Coquitlam	No	No	No	No	Yes
Richmond	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
Surrey	No	No	No	Yes	Unknown
Vancouver	Vision Groups <i>not</i> Community Associations	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
West Vancouver	No	No	No	No	No

Role of FONVCA

In any discussion about community associations within the District of North Vancouver, the presence of the Federation of North Vancouver Community Associations (FONVCA)

must be recognized. Each of the engagement options identifies a role for FONVCA in fulfilling its stated mandate. It is acknowledged that FONVCA is an independent body over which the District has no authority; however, suggestions are made as to its potential role given the degrees of engagement of community associations available to the District.

The mandate of FONVCA is “to improve the quality of life in our neighbourhoods.” The FONVCA webpage further states that it is a forum for the common concerns of member associations and its purpose is to strengthen these organizations through the sharing of information and experiences. These are reflected in the potential role it may play when considering the degrees of engagement and the associated level of District involvement with each.

Degrees of Engagement

This discussion paper envisions five conceptual options available to the District for engaging community associations which are summarized in the attached table. These options, generalized and presented as five to help define the spectrum of choices, range from no recognition or engagement to formal recognition and highly integrated in consultation processes.

Option 1

The option of not engaging community associations leaves them to conduct their business as they self-determine. When advocating for, or lobbying on, a particular civic matter, the association is free, as is any other organized body, to make representations to Council via the standard avenues.

Under this option there would be no District policy on recognition of community associations or any policy on availability of grants.

With the District not engaging community associations in any way, this would present an opportunity for FONVCA to take a leadership role and allow it to thoroughly fulfill its mandate and purpose. FONVCA would operate under its own procedural rules (perhaps developing a charter and bylaws which recognize a parliamentary authority, and possibly registering as a society under the B.C. *Society Act*) and establish a policy for recognizing community associations. This policy may also go as far as to specify reporting, accountability, and procedural requirements. Accordingly, FONVCA could maintain a current list (by monitoring compliance) of recognized associations to whom it could provide a forum for strengthening them through discussion and sharing of information and experience. It would then be in a position to provide general guidance through facilitation, advice, and mediation. Ultimately, FONVCA could act as an advocate for community associations (not act on their behalf on a particular referral but be a promoter of the concept of community associations).

This option allows community associations to develop and support one another within the existing association structure in the District. The associations, like any other District

resident or organized group, still have full access to Council through the normal means by which they may address issues of concern.

Option 2

An option of minimal engagement of community associations is a passive one which would see associations voluntarily provide contact information to the District. Receipt of the information would be acknowledged but, with no policy on recognition, there would be no fixed submission requirements or compliance follow-up.

A policy addressing community association grants would allow minimal funding to some of the associations on a first come, first served basis. This would be for the limited purpose of advertising association meetings. This policy would have to articulate eligibility criteria which should be crafted so as not to be misconstrued as any form of recognition or standing.

With the District being in possession of contact information from an association sufficiently organized to bring itself to our attention, staff in various District departments may choose, at their discretion, to provide information to associations and invite comment on a range of applications, plans, or proposals; if comment or other input is received, staff will make their own determination as to the credibility and true representativeness of that information and use it, or not, accordingly.

This level of engagement provides an excellent opportunity for FONVCA to provide a leadership role in the same manner as noted under option #1: it could maintain a list of members for whom it would provide the forum for information sharing, and advise, guide, facilitate, and mediate as well as advocate.

This option allows an association to organize itself and voluntarily bring it to the attention of the District. The availability of basic funding from the District will also assist associations in their development. District staff may choose to provide information to, or solicit comment from, these associations and use that information to the extent they feel comfortable. This provides an additional opportunity for residents and associations to provide input on District business while respecting their ability to self-organize.

Option 3

Limited engagement of community associations would see policies (or one combined) on recognition and grants. This option best reflects the current state of affairs.

The recognition policy would establish criteria and define annual reporting requirements by which ongoing recognition would be maintained. Active follow-up by District staff would be required to ensure the required submissions are sufficient for compliance with the policy. This would allow the establishment of a list of recognized associations (and the neighbourhoods they serve) for which the District would hold current contact information.

Being a recognized community association would be the basis for eligibility for funding under the grant policy. Grants would then be available on a first come, first served basis. Staff administering the policy would attempt to ration the available funding to the best of their ability but ideally it would be funded to the extent that most associations would receive some level of support. Use of the grants would be restricted to advertising for association annual general meetings and limited group development, such as block parties or neighbourhood bar-b-ques.

With a current list of recognized associations, which presently is eighteen, District staff could refer applications, plans, and proposals for comment. No policy will require referrals which would be at the discretion of District staff (this would be a departure from the current practice where the Public Notification Policy requires referrals). With no way to verify the broad representativeness of the comment provided, staff undertaking a referral will have to satisfy themselves of the value and usefulness of the input. If the input is used by staff, its source will be acknowledged when and where used.

With the District establishing policy on recognition and annual reporting, this would remove that element from the role of FONVCA (under the two previous engagement options). FONVCA's mandate and purpose would still be relevant but their leadership role would focus on guidance, advice, facilitation, and mediation to associations as well as advocacy on their behalf.

This option recognizes community associations and provides grants to assist with their development. The maintenance of a current list of associations provides the opportunity for District staff to solicit association input where they feel it is appropriate. This affords functioning associations an opportunity to comment on District business through the receipt of referrals, and the subsequent use of input by staff, if they are able to demonstrate their true representativeness; this will support the value of their input.

Option 4

Actively engaging community associations would require a more prescriptive recognition policy to establish credible representation of each association. While it is proposed that there would still be no policy requiring District staff to consult associations, comfort around association accountability and processes would give confidence in soliciting input and relying on it as representative of the association's constituents.

In addition to establishing recognition criteria, the recognition policy would go so far as to also set forth accountability and procedural requirements. Verification of compliance with these requirements would be part of the annual reporting requirement and would be audited by District staff for sufficiency.

Recognition criteria could be similar to the current District policy and be largely based on an application providing details of the name and purpose of the association, the area it serves, how it will structure itself (elected executive or as a society), how membership will be determined, and a list of contact information.

Annual reporting requirements could include updated contact information, current number of members, annual general meeting minutes, minutes of regular or periodic meetings, minutes of executive meetings if held separately, annual financial records, a copy of its constitution and bylaws, and copies of any written complaints to the executive and written responses thereto.

Accountability procedural requirements could include District approval of association bylaws upon initial application, the subsequent approval of bylaw amendments to ensure procedural fairness is protected (this would include notice of meetings, minute taking, quorum, ability for input by membership, action being put to the membership for voting, executive election procedures, prohibition on *in camera* meetings, and a written complaint system with required written responses from the executive), all general meetings being open to members and the public, executive meetings (if held separately) to be open to all members, and annually providing all meeting minutes.

Ongoing annual recognition would be contingent upon complete compliance with all elements of the policy. District staff will actively follow up on annual submissions and provide an audit for compliance with requirements but will not become involved in consulting, writing, or amending submissions, or with the procedural or operation details of the association. Simple follow up for completeness is currently done under the existing policy but the audit function will be a new task that will have staff time and District budget implications. This element will require further investigation as to time and cost involved.

A grant policy could use recognition as the eligibility criteria. The level of District commitment to this fund would be such that those associations wanting assistance will have access to it, subject to a reasonable upper limit per association. Use of the funds would be permitted for annual general meetings expenses (advertising, facility rental), other meetings costs (general meetings, executive meetings, open houses, guest speakers), and group development (block parties, bar-b-ques).

With recognized associations providing satisfactory proof of representation and accountability, District staff may more confidently rely on the input provided to referrals and solicitations. District staff may then, at their discretion, provide information to associations on applications, plans, and proposals for comment. Associations will be acknowledged for their contribution and when and where this input is used, it will be duly recognized.

As with the previous level of engagement (option #3), FONVCA's leadership role would be limited due to the District administering the list of recognized associations; however, its mandate and purpose would still be relevant and their leadership role would focus on guidance, advice, facilitation, and mediation to associations as well as advocacy on their behalf.

This option does not provide a new avenue of input for District residents through their community association but does bring credibility to an existing one, credibility to the

extent that input can be confidently relied upon by staff who likely will then make more frequent referrals.

Option 5

The highest level of community association engagement would be to require their consultation in District business.

The best way in which to do this would be through a comprehensive community association policy. Elements of this policy would include recognition criteria, reporting, accountability and procedural requirements, a grant process, dedication of staff resources, the possibly of the requirement that associations register as a society, and a statement articulating the kinds of District business on which it will be required that community associations be consulted.

The recognition, reporting, accountability, and procedural elements of the policy would be as detailed under option #4. Possibly requiring associations to register as a society under the B.C. *Society Act* would help formalize them but also assist in the reporting requirements as the Act requires annual reporting; the District could bring its requirements in line with this.

The policy would dedicate part of a District staff member (as part of other duties) to act as a coordinator and liaison. Coordination would be administering the policy – maintaining the list of recognized associations, their current contact information, receiving annual submissions, auditing those submissions for sufficiency, following up on those for completeness, monitoring compliance under the *Society Act* (if required), and administering the grant process. The liaison element would see the staff member actively involved in supporting associations through provision of guidance, advice, facilitation, and mediation as well as advocating on behalf of community associations. This role of community association liaison will be a new task that will have significant staff time and budget implications; these will have to be further investigated to determine the extent of time and cost involved.

In raising community associations to this level of accountability and organization (so as to be required by policy to be consulted on District business), the corollary would be to except grants to assist them in this. Funding would be available for all recognized associations. Permitted use of the funds could include annual general meeting expenses (advertising, facility rental), other meetings costs (general meetings, executive meetings, open houses, guest speakers), group development (block parties, bar-b-ques), and capacity building within the association (skill development workshops, etc.). A significant budget would need to be allocated to meet these needs, an amount ultimately determined by the number of associations being recognized.

Consulting community associations on specific items of District business would be required by policy. This would see them actively involved in particular processes, some of which may vary by the type of business but likely would involve a formal referral, reference material being provided, staff presentations, discussion with staff, and

provision of written input. Association input would be required to be acknowledged, considered, and addressed (as being incorporated or dismissed). As a contributor to a process, the association would be entitled to know the outcome.

Given that the District would fund a coordinator and liaison under this option, the role of FONVCA would be minimal. While its mandate remains relevant and it would serve as a forum outside of the District structure for the sharing of information and experience, a competent and trusted staff liaison may develop an effective relationship with the associations such that an outside forum may not be necessary; however, FONVCA will remain free to fill a need as circumstances may determine.

This option of engaging community associations creates an avenue by which they, if recognized under the policy, have a mandatory say in certain types of District business. It is a serious commitment by both parties but one which acknowledges and supports the association's role in the community and allows the District to benefit from direct and representative public input on important items of business.

Conclusion

A range of options for the recognition and engagement of community associations within the District of North Vancouver are presented in this discussion paper.

Circumstances have prompted a review of the District's policy on community associations; such a request does not necessarily infer a change of policy as the review may confirm the current policy is appropriate. Nonetheless, these options are presented for Council's review and consideration. Consideration of different levels of recognition and engagement should address the mutual benefits of the relationship, existing or enhanced community resources to support associations, and the ability of the District to devote limited resources to administering different levels of engagement.

A review of community associations by Council would be an appropriate opportunity to fully address the myriad of issues District staff and community members have on this important matter.

Degrees of Engagement

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Level of Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none • no policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledged • no recognition policy • CA grant policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognized • policy on recognition and grants • policy defines reporting requirements (present policies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognized • policy on recognition and grants • policy defines reporting requirements plus accountability and procedural requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognized • policy on recognition and grants • policy defines role of CAs, allocates funding and staff resources, in addition to reporting, accountability, and procedural requirements • possibly register as a society
Degree of DNV Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • passive • CA information provided voluntarily • receive CA contact information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receive all information required by policy • active follow up on submission of required information • not recognized if not in compliance with policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receive all information required by policy • active follow up on submission of required information • audit compliance with accountability and procedural requirements • not recognized if not in compliance with policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dedicated staff resource to act as liaison (as part of other duties) • staff liaison actively involved in supporting CAs: maintains list of recognized CAs and contact information, monitors compliance with policy submission requirements, audits and verifies accountability and procedural requirements, monitors Society Act requirements (if applicable), advocates on behalf of CAs, advises CAs, and mediates within or between CAs
Mutual Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information sent out to CA contact at staff discretion • if input provided is given limited credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information sent out to CA contact • input is acknowledged when used • representativeness of input not verifiable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information sent out to CA contact as a consultation • input provided is relied upon as valid and representative • input used and source acknowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CA is required to be consulted by policy • CA is actively involved in process • CA receives staff presentations • CA input is taken into consideration
DNV Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited • for some CAs • first come, first served for funding • limited to advertising community meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding contingent upon being recognized • first come, first served for funding • staff try to ration funding • funding for most CAs • funding for AGM advertising and limited group development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding contingent upon being recognized • funding for AGM meeting costs and advertising, group development, and other meetings • available to those CAs that want it • staff try to ration funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant funding • funding for staff resource (a small part of an existing staff member's duties but a new duty to be funded) • available for all recognized CAs • funding contingent upon being recognized • funding for AGM meeting costs and advertising, group development, and other meetings • funding for capacity building within the CA
Role of FONVCA	<p>Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses own recognition policy covering criteria and reporting, accountability, and procedural requirements • maintains list of members and monitors compliance • operates under its own procedural rules • provides guidance, advises, facilitates, and mediates • advocates for CAs • mandate relevant • a forum for CAs to share information and experience 	<p>Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses own recognition policy covering criteria and reporting, accountability, and procedural requirements • maintains list of members and monitors compliance • operates under its own procedural rules • provides guidance, advises, facilitates, and mediates • advocates for CAs • mandate relevant • a forum for CAs to share information and experience 	<p>Advisory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides guidance, advises, facilitates, and mediates • advocates for CAs • mandate relevant • a forum for CAs to share information and experience 	<p>Advisory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides guidance, advises, facilitates, and mediates • advocates for CAs • mandate relevant • a forum for CAs to share information and experience 	<p>Minimal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mandate relevant • a forum for CAs to share information and experience



The Corporation of the District of North Vancouver

CORPORATE POLICY MANUAL

Section:	Social & Community Services Planning	10
Sub-Section:	Community Liaison – Non Governmental Organizations	4790
Title:	Community Associations – Criteria for Official Recognition	1

POLICY

The District of North Vancouver recognizes and supports those Community Associations which meet the following criteria:

1. Has a mandate which includes improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood.
2. Its membership is open to all persons residing in a geographic area whose boundaries are described.
3. The Association will register with the District Council the names and phone numbers of all officers and directors and will update this information when changes occur.
4. District Council will inform the Association of any other group in the described geographical area which is making representations.
5. There will be regular communication of the activities of the Community Association with the members.
6. There must be a duly advertised and open Annual General Meeting.
7. There is a written outline of how records of the Association are kept.
8. There is a written outline of the process by which residents may bring concerns to the Association.

REASON FOR POLICY

To recognize and support those community associations which meet the established criteria.

AUTHORITY TO ACT

Delegated to Staff

PROCEDURE

Community Associations are to submit their application to the Clerk's Office, which will maintain a list of contacts.

Approval Date:	May 1, 1995	Approved by:	Executive Committee
1. Amendment Date:		Approved by:	
2. Amendment Date:		Approved by:	
3. Amendment Date:		Approved by:	

**DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER
REGISTRY OF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS
APPLICATION FORM**

1. Community Association _____

2. Boundaries of Neighbourhood(s) Served _____

3. Number of Residents Served _____ Number of Current Members _____

4. President/Chair _____

Address _____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ Date of Application _____

5. Please list the names and telephone/fax numbers of all officers and directors:

NAME	TELEPHONE	FAX

6. Please attach a copy of your Association's mandate/constitution or objectives.

7. Please attach a copy of the minutes of the last AGM (if not attached, please indicate why not) _____

8. Do you regularly communicate with your members?

Ø Yes How often? _____

Ø No Why not? _____

If yes, please attach a sample communiqué.

9. Briefly outline the process residents use to bring concerns to your Association.

****Please Note: The information provided on this form will be considered public**



The Corporation of the District of North Vancouver

CORPORATE POLICY MANUAL

Section:	Social & Community Services Planning	10
Sub-Section:	Community Liaison – Non Governmental Organizations	4790
Title:	Healthy Neighbourhood Funding Guidelines	2

POLICY

The District of North Vancouver will provide funding to support Healthy Neighbourhoods in accordance with the Healthy Neighbourhoods Funding Guidelines as indicated in the attachment to this policy.

REASON FOR POLICY

1. To assist existing community/neighbourhood associations, who meet the District's Criteria for Official Recognition, develop their memberships and increase involvement of residents in improving the quality of life in North Vancouver District neighbourhoods; and
2. To support the development of new neighbourhood associations in areas where none currently exist.

AUTHORITY TO ACT

Delegated to Staff

PROCEDURE

Application Forms will be submitted to the Social Planning Department.

Approval Date:	July 8, 1996	Approved by:	Executive Committee
1. Amendment Date:		Approved by:	
2. Amendment Date:		Approved by:	
3. Amendment Date:		Approved by:	

HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS FUNDING GUIDELINES

DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER May 1997

PURPOSE OF THE FUND

1. Assist existing community/neighbourhood associations, who meet the District's Criteria for Official Recognition, develop their memberships and increase involvement of residents in improving the quality of life in North Vancouver District neighbourhoods; and
2. Support the development of new neighbourhood associations in areas where none currently exist

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Healthy Neighbourhood Funding will contribute funds towards:

- a) Meeting space if no free meeting space exists;
- b) Activities which increase communication with all residents of Neighbourhoods served by Community Associations, such as newsletters, community forums, and signage;
- c) Due to the limited nature of the fund (\$10,000), a maximum of .13 per capita would be available for each community association for one year and **associations with overlapping populations would be expected to jointly apply for Healthy Neighbourhood funding**; and
- d) Community associations may jointly apply for funds to support communication activities which serve more than one neighbourhood or community.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

As more residents become aware of their local association and how to become involved, it is expected that (1) the membership of community associations will increase and (2) more residents will become involved in various activities of their association.

Based on these two expected outcomes, the Healthy Neighbourhood Fund will be evaluated during its first year of operation. Organizations using the Fund will be asked to keep track of their memberships and levels of involvement.

ADMINISTRATION OF HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

Once the application for Healthy Neighbourhood Funds is approved, the community association will be asked to submit invoices for eligible expenses to the Social Planning Department. Once invoices are approved, they will be paid directly by the District.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Community Associations will have to meet the District's "Criteria for Official Recognition of Community Associations" as outlined on the Application Form. New associations will be given one year to meet the "Criteria for Official Recognition."

**APPLICATION FORM
HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND**

1. Community Association(s) _____

2. Neighbourhood Boundaries Served & Population Estimate _____

3. Number of Current Members _____ Date of Application _____

4. President/Chair _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____ Phone _____ Fax _____

5. Please describe items/activities for which funding is being requested and how they will address one or both of the following: (a) meeting space; (b) increased communication within the neighbourhood(s) with all residents.

6. What are the costs of the items/activities? What amount is being requested from the Healthy Neighbourhood Fund and what will be contributed by the Association?

ITEMS/ACTIVITIES _____

TOTAL COST _____ **LESS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION CONTRIBUTION**

(Describe if in-kind, e.g. distribution of newsletter) _____

AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND _____