

Engaging Young People in Kelowna's Politics

Reflections from a Kelowna City Hall Meeting

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PURPOSE

1

To share our experience in attending a city council meeting

2

To discuss barriers to young people's engagement in municipal politics

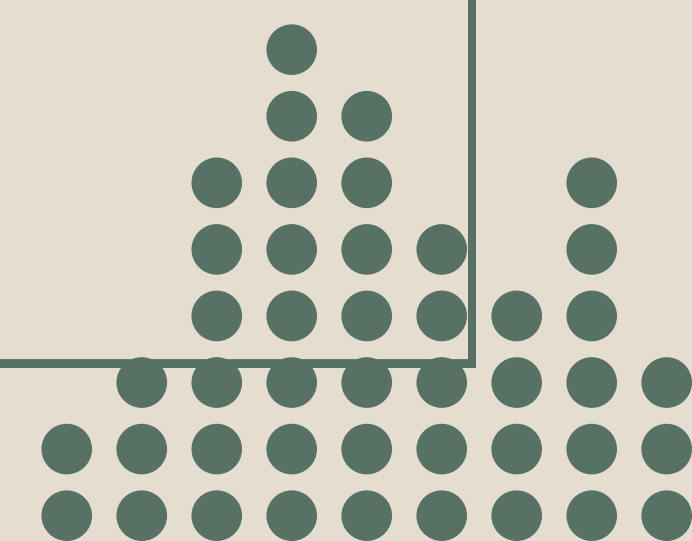
3

To highlight the importance of young people's perspectives on municipal decision-making



THE PROBLEM

Young adults (18-30) are missing from municipal politics and underrepresented in decision-making.



OUR EXPERIENCE

November 18th public hearing

Parking variances, proposed developments

95%
50+

25
men

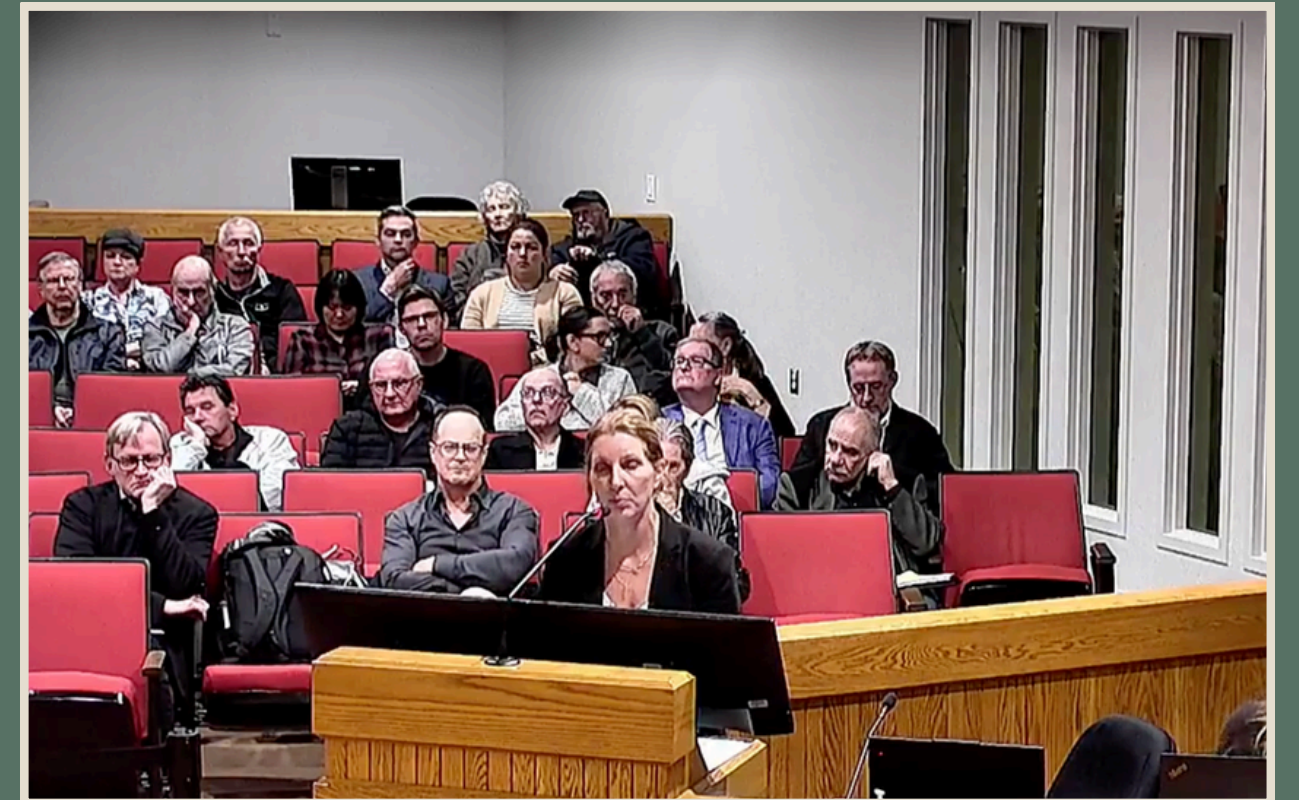
10
women

Lack of
POC

19
speakers

OUR OBSERVATIONS

- Decisions reflect who is in the room
- Attendees are prepared and passionate
- Youth voices exist, but often need adult allies



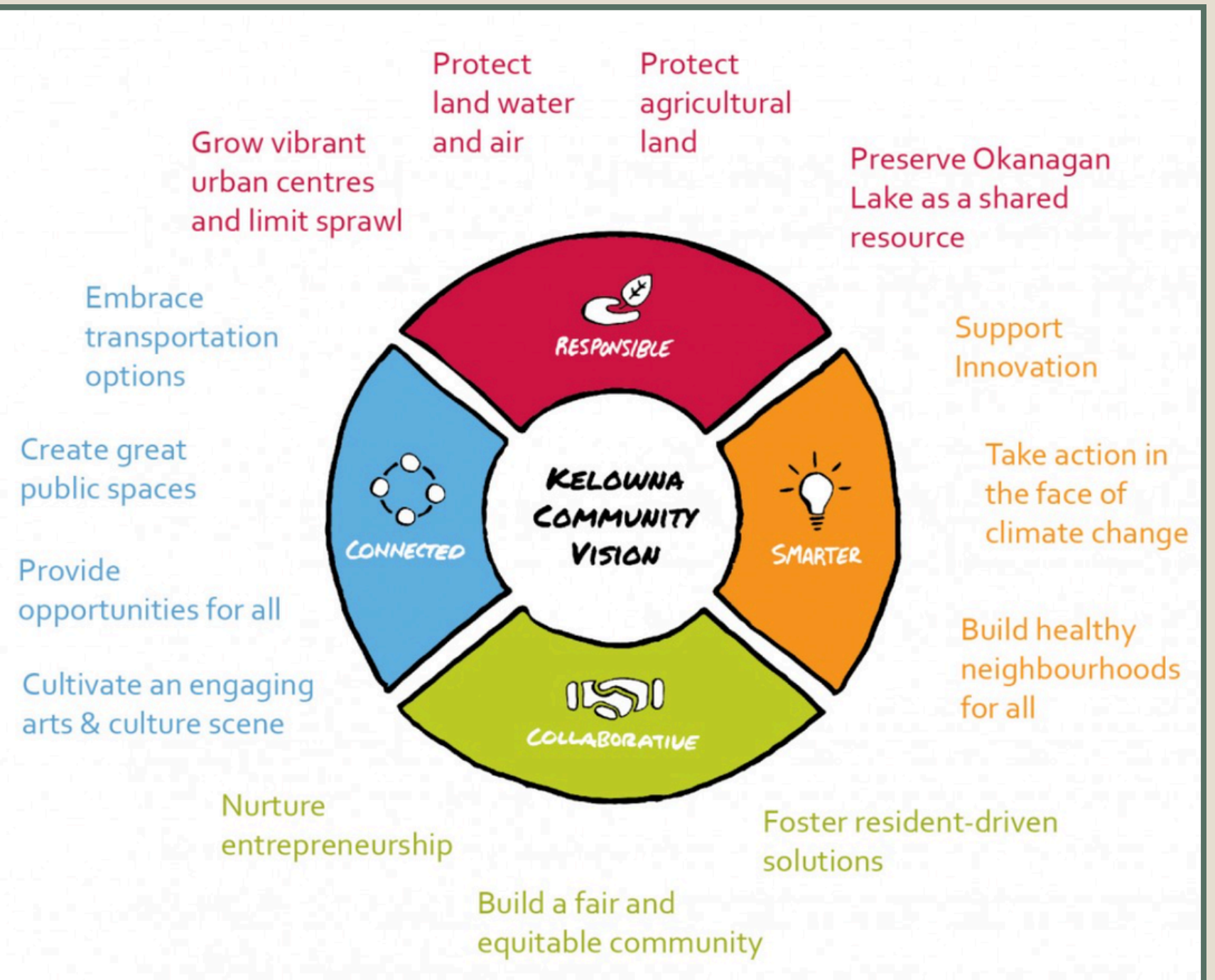
BARRIERS

- Structural
Timing & accessibility
- Institutional
Formal procedures & etiquette
- Knowledge gaps
Jargon & processes



WHY THIS MATTERS

- Young people bring unique perspectives
- Empowering young people to become long-term active community members



WHY THIS MATTERS

Long-term decision-making mostly impacts young people



- Climate
- Housing
- Affordability
- Mobility

WHAT CAN THE CITY DO?

- **Reduce barriers to young people's engagement**
- **Recognize young people's voices as essential to Kelowna's future**
- **Prioritize generational planning**
- **Support youth engagement in the context of post-secondary institutions**

OUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Your Worship and council,

We are Ombú, Alizée, and Maddison, students from UBCO. On Tuesday, November 18th, we attended a city council meeting for the first time in an effort to understand more about the municipal process and how to support youth involvement in municipal governance.

Our initial concern arose from the demographics of the people in attendance. Particularly older residents and men being the majority of attendees and speakers, as well as only a couple of youth under 30, including ourselves, present. This highlighted the noticeable gap in youth participation.

Initially, before attending the hearing, there were also many elements we were unsure of, including proper etiquette, attendance protocol, and whether there was an appropriate dress code. These are the kinds of uncertainties that can discourage youth from attempting to attend such meetings or become involved, a sentiment that was echoed by many of our peers, who also stated they would also be unsure of what to expect at a hearing.

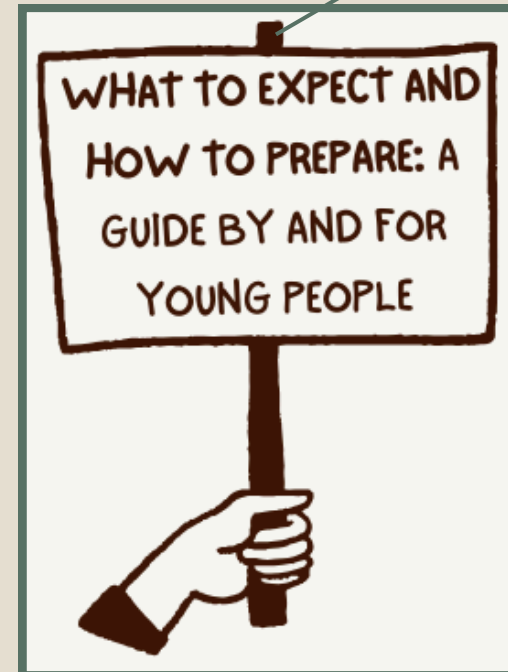
During the hearing, we noticed that several of the variances being mentioned pertained to parking concerns. We, as youth, primarily use transit and do not have comparable access to a vehicle. Because of this, we found the consistent concerns around parking unrelated to our own objectives. This was best exemplified during the proposal for the Canadian Manufactured Mass-Timber Rental Housing Demonstration Project on 1428 St. Paul, which suggested affordable housing with a car-light design, including being located near a major transit hub for the city, and being equipped with eco-passes. The project is intended to address the housing crisis and aim for low-carbon emissions goals, both of which are issues that are largely impacting youth. While many councillors had concerns about the project, we as youth would be heavily benefited and felt unrepresented by the council's concerns, even though youth would likely be the primary demographic utilising the building.

To make city council meetings and municipal engagement as a whole more accessible and representative, there are multiple adaptations and strategies that can be implemented to further youth engagement in municipal governance. Including online initiatives, social media outreach, informative infographics and posters targeted to youth populations, and even youth council initiatives aimed at representing youth goals and supporting municipal engagement.

Other municipalities have utilised youth councils as an accessible and approachable means for youth engagement, having a participatory group that regularly meets with a representative who attends meetings and advocates for youth interests on their behalf. Drawing inspiration from other municipalities, including Edmonton and Victoria, in the context of Kelowna, we feel strategies such as this could further youth involvement and representation in a way that suits both the council priorities and youth needs. In this, we also suggest that UBCO and Okanagan College could act as potential partners, both being academic institutions that foster youth academics and global engagement.

Your Worship and council,

We are Ombú, Alizée, and Maddison,



YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

ATTEND A KELOWNA CITY HALL MEETING

WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO PREPARE: A GUIDE BY AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



why? youth are unrepresented in decision-making, even though they are most affected by long-term decisions.

public hearings held monthly on tuesdays @ 4pm. attend in-person (Kelowna City Hall) or online!

meetings can last hours, but you can stay only for the issues that are relevant to you!

Meeting structure



Know before you go

Read the **agenda** from the City of Kelowna **website** (QR code below).

Do your **research**: look into **previous** or **similar projects** in the area and relevant **policies and bylaws**.

Planning on speaking?

Address your comments to the Mayor. Refer to him as **"Mayor"** or **"Your Worship"**

Have a **script** or an idea of what you plan to say. **Speak from the heart!**

Keep your comments to under **5 minutes**, and don't forget to state your **name** and **street name** before speaking.

Other ways to get involved

Write a **letter** to City Council.

Submit your **comments** on a proposal to the **City Clerk** prior to a Public Hearing.

Give your **input** on city-led projects. (QR code below).

Helpful terms

Bylaw: a law established by the city.

Variance: an official exemption from a regulation.

Access meeting agenda and Get Involved page





CONCLUSION

Regardless of age, all voices deserve to be reflected in Kelowna's present and future.

This engagement requires meaningful and intentional change in municipal decision-making and governance.

Let's shape Kelowna's future together.