

# Resident-Based Community Boards

*“Resident-Based Community Boards Facilitate Community-Based Decision-Making”*

What They Are, What They Do, and How They Work

## 1) What is a Resident-Based Community Board?

- A legislated agency of a municipality
- An autonomous agency funded by the municipality like other existing city boards (e.g. Board of Health, Toronto Preservation Board, etc.)
- An independent, non-partisan volunteer board consisting of up to 50 members
- Each municipal Ward area would be served by its own Community Board
- The Board is comprised of local residents, community organizations, business owners and any person with a significant interest in the ward, who work together to ensure the public interests of the community are fulfilled
- Because Community Boards are official, legislated agencies, they provide formal input and direction to city council to be acted on
- In Toronto, the authority to establish city boards exists through the City of Toronto Act (2006), Section 141 - 147

## 2) What They Do

- Oversee the delivery of municipal services in their geographic area
- Address concerns/complaints from residents and businesses
- Provide formal input to the local Ward Councilor and City Council that directs their actions and policy formulation to protect the public interest
- Work closely with city agencies, city staff and other officials (when appropriate) to address local concerns and find solutions for the community
- Eliminate the conflicts-of-interest which often exist with Ward Councilors when dealing with private interests that conflict with the public interest
- Transfer the Board activities out of the local Councilor's office and away from Councilors' staff duties
- Provide effective governance for taxpayers at the local level

## 3) How They Work

- The Board holds regular neighbourhood meetings where community members raise concerns and identify issues
- The Board also provides information to the community on important matters
- The Board facilitates information gathering and discussion of issues to formulate resolutions of community concerns and policy
- The municipality provides funding for a Board Manager and support staff, and provides a meeting space in the community
- Through the Board Manager, city staff provides all relevant information required by the Board to serve the community
- After public consultation and deliberation the Board makes a decision on solving an issue, and declares a resolution that provides direction to the Ward Councilor and City Council to act on
- Community Board meetings are open public meetings

4) The Manager

- Is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the Community Board Office and manages a one or two-person support staff
- Reports to the Board and will address the needs of the Ward's constituents
- Will carry out the directives of the Board, and follow up and report on the status of actions taken as a result of Board resolutions
- Works closely with Board members and city staff in a supportive manner which promotes a work environment that emphasizes cooperation, teamwork and consensus
- Establishes the budget and manages Board finances
- Represents the Board at community meetings and with government agencies
- Works with other Community Boards on common issues

5) The Members

- Members are largely nominated by the local community
- Are evaluated to qualify for Board service and are appointed by City Council for a fixed term
- Must follow standard procedures and act accordingly when conducting Board business
- Conflicts-of-interest will not be tolerated to ensure the public interest is served
- The local Councilor sits as a non-voting member of the Board

6) Advantages

- Eliminates the need for communities to organize and raise money to fight the same issues over and over again at the OMB/LPAT
- Removes conflicts-of-interest from the Ward Councilor's office when dealing with community issues
- Replaces the Ward Councilors' existing community consultation functions – with funding being shifted from the associated reduction in the Ward Councilors' staffing needs to funding the Community Boards

7) History

- Community Boards have effectively operated in New York City for 50 years
- Were implemented because of urban visionary, Jane Jacobs, who was also a resident of Toronto for some time

*Resident-based Community Boards will ensure the City of Toronto practices good governance, defined by the United Nations and others as governance which is: accountable, inclusive, transparent, equitable, participatory, responsive, consensus-oriented, effective, efficient, and follows the rule of law.*