

# Urban Forum Pilot Project

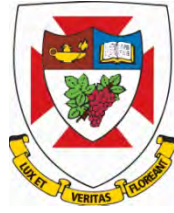
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**The Institute of Urban Studies**





THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WINNIPEG

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**URBAN FORUM PILOT PROJECT**

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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. The Institute examines inner city, environmental, Aboriginal and community development issues. In addition to its ongoing involvement in research, IUS brings in visiting scholars, hosts workshops, seminars and conferences, and acts in partnership with other organizations in the community to effect positive change.

## URBAN FORUM PILOT PROJECT

### PURPOSE

The objective of this project will be to design, establish and implement a system of two-way information flow to enable policymakers in government to understand the perceptions and reactions of people on a range of policy proposals and programs, to provide, through improved information, greater use and effectiveness of government programs, to transmit needs and concerns of people in their efforts to cope with a changing urban environment. Built into this system will be mechanisms to ensure co-operation between the different jurisdictions of government and a means of developing consultation. It is felt that the urban forum concept properly designed and implemented would lead to more effective programs and policies by means of greater citizen, group and tri-level involvement, in the formulation and acceptance of programs and policies.

The Institute, as a result of working in this field for the past two years, has developed a degree of knowledge, expertise and technical competence in the field of communications and more specifically in the field of applying communication technology to the needs of citizen participation and policy-making. This experience includes:

- community development work using one-half inch video tape equipment.
- a large three day public conference on community television.
- the formation of a citizen's group on community television.

- the training of 400 interested community people in the use and potential of VTR equipment.
- a one-month project of explaining Winnipeg's new form of urban government to people through the use of VTR programs over cable television, in shopping centres, schools, and church basements.
- extensive research in the entire field of communications, including policy and information papers for the Manitoba and Ontario provincial governments.
- support for a community-based, non-profit corporation dealing with community communications which arose out of Institute work and training of community people.
- a library of some 50 video-tapes on topics ranging from urban planning, housing conditions in Winnipeg, incorporation requirements, zoning to a wide range of tapes depicting Winnipeg and its citizens.

Building on this experience, the Institute will undertake to develop an experimental pilot project which will demonstrate how government and people might become more intricately connected in the formation of urban policy using modern means of communication, and tied to efforts of community organizations. This program will show how citizens can aid government policymakers by providing them with clearer, undistorted information on citizen needs and how the citizen can come to understand government policies and react to them more effectively.

The project will concentrate on three distinct areas within the boundaries of the City of Winnipeg. These particular areas were chosen because of the following characteristics:

- each of these areas is a Community Committee Area, that is, a defined unit of the new local government.
- each one has some established groups with sufficient maturity to make participation in a forum possible in the short run.
- The Institute has spent time and energy in each of these areas and has developed contacts, resource people and clear demonstrations of needs.

--with the new municipal structure and its emphasis on citizen involvement and information flow, provincial and municipal government participation can be included.

--each of these areas has diverse economic, social, physical and cultural characteristics.

1. St. Boniface Community Committee	2. Ft. Rouge Community Committee	3. Centennial Community Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-large French-speaking community</li> <li>-French language radio station</li> <li>-French language newspaper</li> <li>-French-English community newspaper</li> <li>-definitely defined new suburban housing development around edges of old city</li> <li>-core of industrial working-class people in older areas of St. Boniface</li> <li>-fairly large industrial area</li> <li>-large English speaking established residential area</li> <li>-industrial areas causing air and water pollution problems</li> <li>-some areas in need of revitalization</li> <li>-used as the base of operations for the Unicity Community TV project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-very concentrated area of luxury high-rise apts.</li> <li>-large area of older established upper-middle class homes</li> <li>-large area of middle and lower middle-class homes</li> <li>-blue collar worker and professional populations</li> <li>-religious and cultural focal point for a large Italian community not all of which live in area</li> <li>-no Citizen's Advisory Group as yet formed due to diametric views of interested people</li> <li>-very heavy traffic arteries in middle of area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-deteriorating area approximating urban renewal area II</li> <li>-clearly defined concerns of housing and health problems</li> <li>-high mixture of ethnic population</li> <li>-areas badly in need of revitalization</li> <li>-people have demonstrated their desire to help themselves</li> <li>-large native population who are partially organized</li> <li>-has been the focus of Institute work for over two years.</li> <li>-existence of Midland Railway as major re-development site in area</li> <li>-serious issues related to the planning of the CPR railway yards, which is joint federal, provincial, municipal responsibility</li> </ul>
<p><u>Resources and Contacts</u></p>	<p><u>Resources and Contacts</u></p>	<p><u>Resources and Contacts</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Windsor Park Information Center</li> <li>-Cultural Centre</li> <li>-Societe Franco-Manitobain</li> <li>-146 member Citizen's Advisory Group (500 people attended first Community Committee Meeting)</li> <li>-Parent-Teacher Assoc, unique to St. Boniface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-interested professional people</li> <li>-organized Italian Community</li> <li>-large number of churches</li> <li>-Ft. Rouge Information and Resource Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-organized Italian Community</li> <li>-Indian &amp; Metis Brotherhood</li> <li>-People's Committee</li> <li>-Citizens Steering Committee</li> <li>-interested people from community committee meeting</li> <li>-Lawrie Cherniack, councillor in the area</li> <li>-IUS organizers known in area</li> </ul>

METHOD

Given the Institute's level of awareness of communication techniques utilized in Winnipeg and those currently being perfected, the methodology of a pilot study would focus on developing an overall design for the collective use of the communication elements. The present municipal government structure of community committees and the accompanying citizen advisory committees is an added benefit to the development of an urban forum in Winnipeg.

A. 1. Assessment of Present Communication Systems and Networks in Winnipeg

Initially a full assessment of the available communication systems and networks in Winnipeg would be made. This would aim at establishing present inventory and use of equipment and potential for forms of community utilization in the urban forum. This would involve:

- contacts with broadcasting undertakings, eg. radio and television stations explaining the purpose of the urban forum.
- contact with media departments of schools, universities, community colleges.
- further negotiations with cable companies and other close circuit installations.
- discussions with major newspapers, community newspapers and bulletins, ethnic press.
- assessment of patterns of distribution and type of information contained in newsletters, information sheets presently being distributed by groups such as Canadian Planning Association of Canada, Community Welfare Planning Council, etc.

## 2. Analysis and Establishment of New Communication Modes.

For some time the Institute has been researching the development of new communication technology and its use and time will be spent in the initial stages to:

- investigate the establishment of community radio stations on low-frequency broadcast as well as community radio via cable facilities.
- further experiment with the practical utilization of VTR equipment; for example ministers could be provided, on a regular basis, with videotape analysis prepared by citizens of specific policy programs being implemented; videotape and/or audiotapes of weekly reports gauging public opinions in a selective area.
- examine the role new forms of community newspapers could play in the process of on-going evaluation and survey techniques.

## B. Group Involvement

Underlying the success of the pilot project will be the active participation of citizen groups which are well organized and therefore require minimal staff input. The majority of the groups, organizations and associations in the designated areas have had previous contact with the Institute.

- The groups will be enlisted to act as resources to the pilot project by helping to familiarize the areas with the concept of an urban forum.
- Citizens will be enlisted to generate discussion through the various communication technologies - community television, radio, ethnic press, radio and television.
- Citizens, trained in the use of VTR, can do their own taping and program planning to disseminate government information and provide feedback to government with regard to particular policies and programs.

C. Programs for the Pilot Project of the Urban Forum

(I) The program possibilities range from closed-circuit programming to community video theatre. These activities would be dependent on the availability of technical facilities and skills although it is anticipated from our previous experience that most of these programs are feasible. The pilot project staff and facilities will plug into the community committee citizen advisory group meetings and information networks.

Combined efforts between citizens and project staff would be germane to achieving :

- Closed Circuit Coverage: Attempts made to present tapes to citizens not linked to cable systems by use of cable drops and monitors in schools, churches, community centres, etc.
- Information Centres: Use of existing community facilities to serve as focal points for taping interviews and dissemination of written, audio and video information.
- Community Video Theatre: Already experimented with, the program would involve the preparation of information newsreels on governmental programs and policy which are presented at community locations at pre-fixed times to allow the citizens to meet, discuss the material presented and elucidate their opinions.
- Commercial Outlet Displays: Use of displays in shopping centres, plazas, parks to draw citizens and to gauge their opinions, ideas on governmental programs and to enlist their involvement in the urban forum.
- Use of existing media to present information and ideas and to record response.

(II) From these different outlets and communication exchanges a flow of ideas, information, concerns and responses would be produced. These would be distilled and monitored, and techniques developed to connect them to government officials



at different levels. Thus, if the federal government is contemplating action on a new low-income housing policy, presentations can be made through the different outlets and responses received. These responses may come in the form of video or audio tapes, digest of community meetings, direct interaction over a radio hook-up, etc. Another example might be if all of these levels of government began to develop a program for the development of the Midland site, then a series of presentations and responses could be developed.

Thus, the core of the experimental portion of the project is to develop actual ways in which a forum concept will work, utilizing different techniques of communication and group involvement.

#### Evaluation Designs

A system of on-going evaluation will be built into the design of the project in the initial stages. Periodic checks will be made to measure the success and determine if any changes in direction are required.

The evaluation design will include a thorough evaluation process at the final stages of the pilot project. This evaluation will aim at determining the effectiveness of different techniques, the resources required, and the actual impact of such a program on people and on policymakers.

#### D. Resources

The resources available to such a pilot project at present are:

##### 1. IUS Staff

- one full-time researcher
- one full-time community organizer
- one full-time technical person

2. University of Winnipeg Media Department

- includes a new fully-equipped television studio
- students from the University who are willing to become involved on a voluntary basis

3. Government Officials at the:

- local level (new Unicity councillors, one of which was an IUS staff member and many others with whom the Institute has done work).
- provincial level (government ministers from whom the IUS has and is still doing contract work).
- federal level (CMHC Regional Office, National Film Board whom we have used as a resource in terms of both equipment and personnel).

4. Numerous established groups that the Institute has had dealings with:

These include:

- The People's Committee For a Better Neighbourhood Incorporated - a non-profit citizens corporation begun by the IUS in 1969 has since moved, rehabilitated and is managing an apartment block being used for low-income housing.
- Kinew Housing Corporation - a non-profit corporation managed and operated by native people. It was set up jointly by the IUS and the Indian and Metis Friendship Center and has successfully purchased over 30 homes in various parts of the City.
- Self-Help Housing Group - a group of inner city residents who are seeking, with the assistance of IUS, through the establishment of a non-profit corporation to purchase new or older homes in an urban renewal area.
- Community Health Clinic Groups - based on its work with citizens groups in Urban Renewal Area II, the Provincial Government asked the Institute to organize citizens in the area to achieve better health care and to research health needs in the area. Many people have been contacted, cadres and study groups have been formed.
- Winnipeg Community Communications Incorporated - a non-profit citizens corporation which arose from the training and education in the area of communications, which was conducted by the Institute. At present, this group is intending to bring true community communications to Winnipeg, through use of Community Radio, Television and Newspapers.
- Red River Community College - with whom IUS has worked during the video-tape summer training program and during the Unicity project.
- Local Media - the IUS has had many beneficial contacts with the local media, including cable companies and can expect a certain amount of co-operation and assistance from them.

## Schedule

The entire project can be divided into three phases:

### Phase I: Design, Preparation and Negotiation

- evaluating performance of existing information services and media.
- negotiating with these services and media.
- investigate new communications modes as a method of supplementing and complementing the existing media.
- active participation and involvement of groups and individuals.
- experimentation with other uses of VTR and newspapers and audio tapes.

### Phase II: Establishment of Networks and Systems

- establish what has been designed. One option is to enlist students under Opportunities for Youth to work on this during the summer.
- experimental trials can be conducted to assess effectiveness of different techniques, undertake a series of trials.
- work out arrangements to include the forum within the parameters of the Community Committee System.

### Phase III: Implementation of Network and System

- would include a process of continuing community education to ensure a fuller use of the new systems of information flow.
- ensure that there would be an efficient and effective system for the storage, dissemination and retrieval of all types of information.

### Phase IV: Evaluation

Costs: For one year of operation - second year conditional upon the performance in the first year. (See attached sheet).

PROJECT COSTS

PERSONNEL

Project Director	\$ 9,000.00	
Media Co-ordinator	\$ 7,000.00	
Organizer	\$ 7,000.00	
Researcher (part time)	<u>\$ 5,000.00</u>	
	\$28,000.00	\$28,000.00

Secretarial, administrative	\$ 2,000.00	
Supplies, telephone		
Printing, information	\$ 3,000.00	
Equipment costs, main- tenance	\$ 500.00	
Transportation	\$ 500.00	
Consultants, Evaluation	<u>\$ 1,000.00</u>	
	\$ 7,000.00	<u>\$ 7,000.00</u>
TOTAL .....		\$35,000.00

Additional overhead costs, such as time of Director, Research Associates, facilities and space, equipment, typewriters, etc. are covered by the Institute of Urban Studies.