

**Public Power in the Planning Process:**  
**an Evaluation of Access, Deliberation, and Accountability in the**  
**Decision-Making Processes used to create the Lansdowne**  
**Partnership Plan**

**By**

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## Executive Summary

*Public Power in the Planning Process* is a discussion of the decision-making process used in the creation of the Lansdowne Partnership Plan, which deals with the redevelopment of an urban park in Ottawa. It analyses three stages of the process (from June 2009 to November 2010), using three different frameworks for the evaluation of collaborative planning processes, and aims to achieve two purposes: first, to shed some light on the intricacies of a controversial planning process and second, to examine the effectiveness of the evaluation frameworks.

### The Case Study

Lansdowne Park was used as an agricultural fair ground and exhibition park, was the location of a hockey arena used for one of Ottawa’s professional teams, and a stadium formerly used by a professional football team. The City of Ottawa had begun a design process when it received a proposal from a group of local developers (the *Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group - OSEG*), to revitalize the park. The City then began a lengthy and controversial process to design a revitalization project in partnership with OSEG. The process was however criticized by local residents, which resulted in the creation of the citizens group Friends of Lansdowne Park. This report examines the roles played by the City of Ottawa and Friends of Lansdowne Park over the course of this decision-making process and focuses on key turning points from 2009 to 2010.

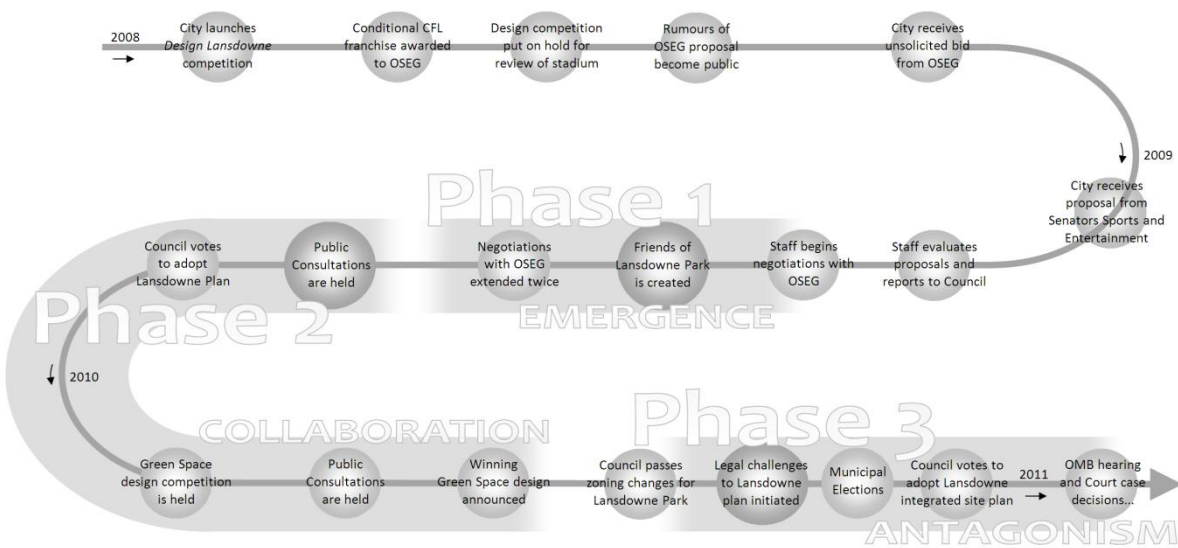


Figure I: Process Timeline

**Methodology**

The research was based on a review of available documents on the process from a variety of sources, including the City of Ottawa’s website and online archives, the Ottawa Citizen newspaper, and the website of the Friends of Lansdowne Park. Based on these documents, key events and positions were identified. The process timeline was divided into three key phases (emergence, collaboration, and antagonism), which then formed the basis of the analysis. The process is evaluated using analytic frameworks designed for collaborative planning processes. Christensen’s (1993) framework for stakeholder analysis was used to identify the key stakeholders and their resources, interests and action channels. The main component of the analysis is based on the framework developed by Agger and Löfgren (2008), which is designed to evaluate how democratic a collaborative planning process is. The framework identifies five main criteria based on democratic norms, three of which were used in this report. Finally, the process was also analyzed using the Ladder of Citizen Participation model developed by Arnstein (1969).

**Analysis**

The report’s analysis is divided into five sections; one each for the democratic principles of access, deliberation, and accountability, a section illustrating the key stakeholders, and a section placing the three phases of the process on the Ladder of Citizen Participation.

Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation is a simple tool to rank participatory planning processes on a scale of citizen empowerment. The first phase of the process scores near the bottom, at the informing level. The second phase scores as placation, as City Council made an effort to tack a more legitimate process on to an already formed plan. The first two phases rank as forms of tokenism, while the third phase is too complex to be ranked using this model.

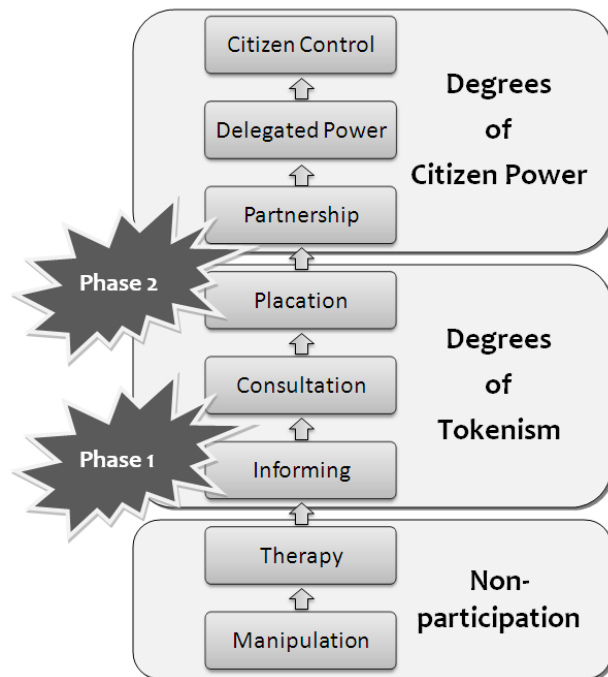


Figure II: Ladder of Citizen Participation

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Access</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the first phase, the process was not particularly transparent. The City of Ottawa held negotiations with the developers in private and the Friends of Lansdowne Park emerged as a way for opponents to communicate more effectively.</li> <li>• More information about the plan was made available by the City during the second phase. The Friends of Lansdowne Park disseminated information on its website. The official public consultation process was open to participation by all residents.</li> <li>• Only a limited number of stakeholders were able to participate in the legal proceedings of the third phase.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Deliberation</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The communication within the process was not a conversation, but simply the presentation of information and opinions by the City and the public. The consultation process was designed to gather information from the public, not to answer questions or respond to criticisms.</li> <li>• Public meetings were chaotic. Participants did not treat one another with respect. The levels of tolerance and respect decreased throughout the process, reaching a low in the third phase.</li> <li>• One of the important concerns of opponents to the plan was the fact that the partnership was not formed through a competitive process. However, the City tried to focus discussions on the content of the plan, ignoring the public criticism on this issue.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Accountability</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elections are a formal way of holding politicians accountable. Elections were held during the third phase of the process, and the mayor and a number of Councillors lost their seats. Key votes were held before and after the election by these same Councillors, removing the chance for public censure in the form of votes to have an impact on the decision-making process.</li> <li>• The Friends of Lansdowne Park was dependent upon its volunteer membership for support, and required public support for its fundraising activities in order to carry out the legal challenge in the third phase of the process.</li> </ul>   |

**Conclusions**

1

Based on the criteria developed by Agger and Löfgren (2008), the analysis indicates that the process was not fully democratic. Indeed, it fell short on all three criteria.

Access was limited, particularly in the first and third phases. There was minimal deliberation, as information was transmitted uni-directionally. Finally, though measures for accountability were in place, they were not used until after the important decisions had already been made.

2 Theorists of collaborative planning processes highlight the important gains which come in the form of intangible results. These include change and adaptability, trust, relationships, political capital, and learning. The analysis examined these aspects of the decision-making process and indicated that the process for the Lansdowne Partnership Plan degraded trust and relationships and increased tensions between stakeholders.

3 There are many areas for future research on Lansdowne Park. First, future research should include extensive interviews with key stakeholders. Second, it should investigate events over a broader timeline, in order to include events from early 2007 until 2012 or later for a better understanding of the effects of the process on trust and relationships and to include the cancellation of the beginning of the design process and the implementation of the plan. A third area for suggested future research is the evolution of the plan, and its relationship to the interests and actions of stakeholders. Finally, future research should include all five of Agger and Löfgren's criteria: the development of adaptiveness and the development of political identities and capabilities.

4 The three analytic frameworks achieved different levels of success as evaluation tools for the chosen case. Agger and Löfgren's (2008) framework for the democratic analysis of collaborative planning processes allows a variety of processes' aspects to be analyzed based on democratic values. The framework is applicable to the chosen case study and adaptable to multiple situations and contexts, and can be used for the analysis of a variety of very different cases. The use of democratic principles makes the perspective of the analysis clear, grounding it in commonly understood norms. Christensen's (1993) framework for stakeholder analysis seems rather simplistic and rigid. It works very well, however, when combined with another more detailed analytic framework. The Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969) is a simplistic, though well recognized, model. In the case of the Lansdowne Partnership Plan, the first two phases worked well with Arnstein's (1969) framework, while the third phase did not. The Ladder of Citizen Participation is not recommended for more complicated, nuanced, or multi-faceted problems.