

COMMUNITY INFLUENCE

CASE STUDY: TORONTO'S BID FOR THE 1996 SUMMER OLYMPICS

URBAN.Boston
and NAACP
Boston Branch

Freedom House
Dorchester, MA
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GROUNDWORK

- History of successful organizing:
 - Parent involvement in educational decision-making
 - Community-based campaigns to preserve neighborhoods
 - Actions to stop construction of expressways, incinerators, and high-density, high-rise developments

- Highlights importance of supporting and maintaining organizing infrastructure

WHO

- Community groups old and new:
 - Bread Not Circuses Coalition (composed of some of the groups listed below)
 - Canadian Folk Arts Council
 - Citizens for a Safe Environment
 - Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations
 - Metropolitan Toronto Waterfront Coalition
 - Supportive Housing Coalition of Metropolitan Toronto
 - Women Plan Toronto
 - People United for Self-Help
 - World Society for the Protection of Animals
 - BASIC Poverty Action Group
 - Parkdale Tenants' Association
 - Artists/Environment Forum

TIMING AND CONTEXT

- Late 1980's, after the City of Toronto announced its plans to bid for the 1996 Summer Games
- TOOC (Toronto Ontario Olympic Committee) established in 1985

- Changing politics and city promoted second, more critical look:
 - Service cutbacks
 - Increased poverty
 - Increases in rents and food prices

TWO STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

- Bread Not Circuses Coalition
- City Hall

Bread Not Circuses

- Shift focus:
 - Away from mega-projects and unchecked development to challenges of poverty and homelessness, and need for democratic participation
- Raised Toronto residents' awareness of potential problems associated with the hosting of the Olympics:
 - "Bread Alerts": weekly information flyers
 - Flyers at marches, rallies and demonstrations unrelated to the Olympics
- Endorsement of Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and York region in September 1989

ELEMENTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

□ City Council:

- TOOC recommendations had to be approved by City Council before they were implemented
- Olympic Task Force
- Three-step strategy:
 - Council articulates statement of principles: “Olympic Commitment”
 - Amended bid submitted to public scrutiny in a social impact assessment and a series of public meetings
 - TOOC, Canadian Olympic Association, and senior levels of government asked to guarantee the terms
 - Hold off final approval until steps successfully completed

OLYMPIC TASK FORCE

- ❑ Created by senior bureaucrats at City Hall
- ❑ Vet major features of the bid before they went to the IOC
- ❑ Composed of department heads and chaired by the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation
- ❑ 1989: Hired a public participation consultation

OLYMPIC COMMITMENT

- September 21 and 22, 1989
- 30 objectives to be met if the bid were to proceed:
 - series of evening public meetings
 - descriptive information (multilingual)
 - public meeting of the Executive Committee
 - commitment to achieving a representative organizing committee
 - intervenor funding
 - full social impact study focusing on ethnocultural groups, people with disabilities, the homeless, young people, the sporting community, the native community, people on fixed incomes and the business community
 - requirement that all housing be “affordable” by provincial standards; 60 percent of it “social housing” for persons with low incomes
 - required that no resident be displaced because of visitors to the Games
 - maximize the number of union jobs
 - involve corporate sponsors in any financial risks
- Not enforceable; relied on moral suasion

INTERVENOR FUNDING

- 1989
- Proposed by Bread Not Circuses
 - Argued that critics of the bid had almost no funding
 - Request initially refused in June and July, but was part of the City's September endorsement of the Olympic Commitment and the public participation plan that was approved in October
- \$100,000 fund
- Research areas:
 - Housing
 - Tenant protection
 - Environment
 - Waterfront
 - Financial issues
 - Labor issues
 - Multiculturalism and race issues
- Drawback: community groups critical of the bid did not receive funding

SOME OUTCOMES

- Public debate shifted to issue of poverty and lack of democratic participation, at a time when the official community consultation processes and education campaigns were thought of as inadequate
- Planning and government guarantees undertaken in response to public participation process
- Extensive public review process served as model for other cities
- If Games had been awarded, valuable lead time would have been gained and a broad public consensus supporting what needed to be done would have been in place
- Process contributed to future planning for the city

BOSTON TAKEAWAYS

- Questions:
 - What should the City of Boston's Olympic Commitment be?
 - Should the City of Boston fund community orgs to research and make recommendations on areas of concern to specific communities?
 - What does community process for planning and development in the City of Boston look like?
- **Let the City of Boston know that it is important to partner with our communities in a direct and sincere way, and that real community engagement is essential to not only a successful bid, but successful planning and development in the future. Contact Mayor Walsh now.**
 - **Mayor Walsh: 617-635-4500, mayor@cityofboston.gov**

SOURCES

- Lenskjy, H.J. (1992) More than Games: community involvement in Toronto's bid for the 1996 Summer Olympics, Barney, R.K. and Meier, K.V. (eds.) *Proceedings of the Second International Symposium for Olympic Research*. London, Ontario: Centre for Olympic Studies, University of Western Ontario, pp. 78-87.
- Kidd, Bruce (1992). "The Toronto Olympic Commitment: Towards a Social Contract for the Olympic Games" *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 1: 154-167.