

Canadian Water and Wastewater Association 2014 Utility Excellence Award
Submission: The Lions Gate Secondary Wastewater Treatment Plant Community
Outreach Program

Project Description

The existing Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant (LGSWWTP) serves the North Shore municipalities of West Vancouver, the City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver as well as the Squamish Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. The treatment plant has provided primary level treatment on the North Shore for the past 50 years.

The LGSWWTP project is part of the secondary upgrading program in Metro Vancouver. A new secondary wastewater treatment plant will be built on a new site to replace the existing primary treatment plant in its entirety.



The planning, design and construction of the new treatment plant is taking place in three project phases: Project Definition (2012 – 2013); Design and Construction (2014 – 2020); Decommissioning of the Old Plant (2021). Community outreach is planned for all phases with the most intensive activities during phase one, as described in this submission.

Description of Outreach Goals

The community outreach process had the following goals:

- Engage potentially impacted stakeholders in the design and funding of the new treatment plant
- Provide input opportunities for local residents and businesses affected by the construction and operation of the new treatment plant
- Document and summarize all input for consideration in the indicative (conceptual) design
- Promote liquid waste management awareness and the Region's Integrated Liquid Waste Resource Management Plan

To achieve these goals, Metro Vancouver used a targeted stakeholder approach to ensure that communities most impacted by the new treatment plant had a range of forums to provide input. This was particularly important given the close proximity of local residents and businesses to the new treatment plant (pictured below).



Communities and industries adjacent to the project site

Approximately 25 community events were held during phase one. In addition to two public meetings for the broader North Shore community, project staff created forums for the following stakeholder groups:

Lions Gate Public Advisory Committee - The public advisory committee included resident, business and environmental representatives. Technical workshops and meetings were held with the committee at key decision points in the project. The committee also helped to communicate project updates to their respective communities and assisted project staff in identifying outreach opportunities and methods.

Community Resource Forum – The Community Resource Forum was formed in response to community members who were not part of the public advisory committee but wanted to delve deeper into the project details than the general public. By the end of phase one the CRF had a self-selected membership of approximately 40 people. The membership received frequent email updates, notifications of key council documents and were invited to joint workshops with the advisory committee.

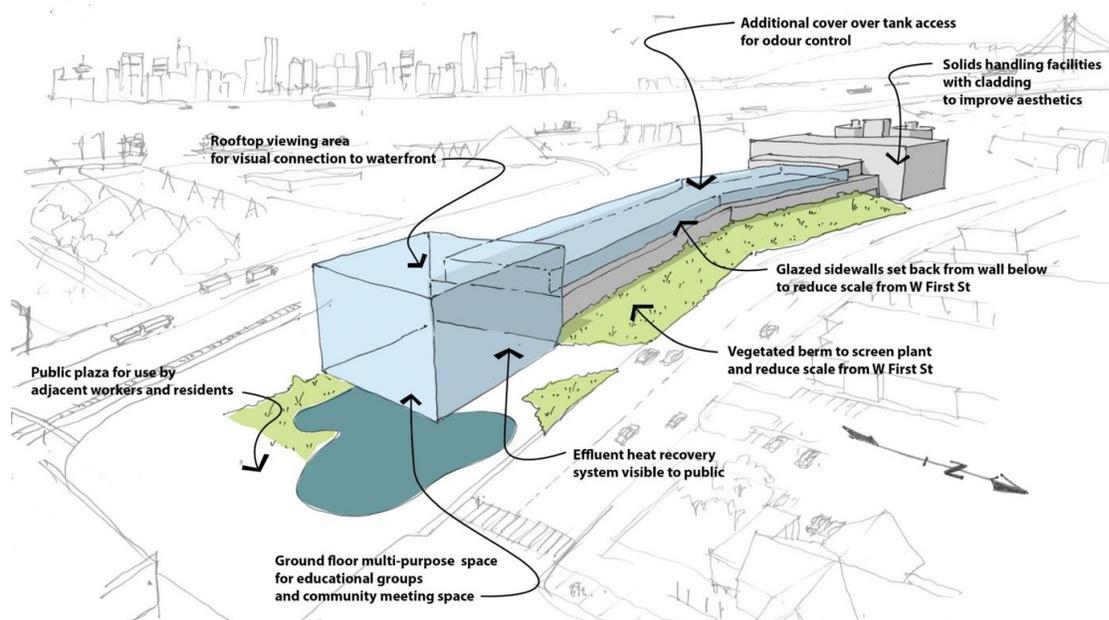
Norgate community residents and local businesses – Norgate community residents and businesses neighbor the new treatment plant. In addition to broader public meetings, Norgate community residents were involved through updates to the neighbourhood association; representation on the public advisory committee and the Community Resource Forum and workshops specifically for residents and businesses. Metro Vancouver also hosted project information booths at community events to keep the community updated and informed.

Activities to support this community outreach process included:

- A **dedicated project website** used as a portal for project information including background documents, meeting summaries, project updates, project videos, online surveys and community input opportunities
- **High quality videos** on the secondary treatment plant process and the public consultation process screened at public meetings and hosted on the project website (link below in *Additional Resources*)
- **Surveys** (online, hard copy and door-to-door) to gather input at key decision points in the project. Surveys were also used to assess the outreach process and to determine opportunities for improvement
- **Regular project updates** through emails to the Lions Gate project database

- **Interactive public meetings** with visual displays, discussion groups, workbooks and real-time polling
- A **structured-decision making workshop** with the CRF and advisory committee to work through preferred design concepts
- **Communication materials** such as project brochures, Fact Sheets, and meeting notifications that were hand-delivered to local residents and emailed to the broader project database
- **Tours of wastewater treatment plants** in Washington State to demonstrate odour control technology and community integration strategies (described below) and a tour of the existing wastewater treatment plant

The image below illustrates key aspects of the treatment plant design influenced by community input.



Did your utility excel at raising awareness of a certain project or to encourage positive consumer behaviours?

The Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade is an excellent opportunity to educate the public on the environmental benefits of secondary treatment and liquid waste management. The benefits of secondary treatment were embedded in all Metro Vancouver presentations and posted on the project website. Additionally, Metro Vancouver created short videos that described the project and the environmental benefits of secondary treatment. Metro Vancouver provided brochures on “What Happens When I Flush” and visuals of clogged sewer systems at community events as a talking point about good management of the sewer system.

The extensive outreach process succeeded in raising awareness about the Lions Gate Secondary Wastewater Treatment Plant project reflected in the high number of responses received including: verbal input, 49 online survey responses, 70 responses to the local business survey, 105 responses through feedback workbooks, 70 public consultation process survey forms, and over 600 pieces of correspondence.

Did your utility cultivate partnerships with the community residents, a public-private sector partnership or non-governmental organizations that resulted in results above and beyond expectations?

Locating a wastewater treatment plant within walking distance of an existing residential and business community has the potential to cause significant community concern. By engaging the community early on in the design process, before the technical work commenced, Metro Vancouver sought to position this public facility positively, as a community resource. To do this, outreach focused on understanding community values and integrating these into the design of the facility and addressing concerns and issues as they arose throughout the process.

At the end of phase one, Metro Vancouver hosted a public meeting to present the indicative design. At the end of the presentation a real-time poll was used to determine the satisfaction of the public attendees with the indicative design. Approximately 80 percent of participants felt that the indicative design responded to community values.

Additionally, members of the public advisory committee became advocates of the project and presented alongside project staff on findings from their tour of four wastewater treatment plants in Washington State (detailed further below). In their final report, the public advisory committee noted that “the concerns of the local community and the broader community have been heard” and went on to commend Metro Vancouver “on this innovative and interactive community engagement process”.

Did your utility overcome significant roadblocks to achieve its outreach or public service goals?

One of the key community concerns with the new treatment plant was the potential for odour. This was understandable since many of the local residents could smell the existing treatment plant on hot summer days or when the wind was blowing in a particular direction. At the first public meeting there was considerable community tension when participants saw that the new treatment plant was going to be located much closer to the community than the existing treatment plant.

Despite project staff's ongoing assurances that odour control technology had evolved since the existing treatment plant was built, and that odour control would be a top priority in the treatment plant design, skepticism in the community remained. Half way through the year, Metro Vancouver arranged a tour of wastewater treatment plants in Washington State to showcase best practices in odour control technologies, design and community integration. Two representatives from the public advisory committee, in addition to politicians and staff, went on the tour. Through physically touring these facilities and speaking with the people that worked there, participants experienced first-hand that odour control, community integration and good design are achievable.

Upon return, the advisory committee representatives presented their tour experience and findings to the broader community at Metro Vancouver project workshops and public meetings. This report back was instrumental in assuaging community concerns over odour.

Additional information:

Metro Vancouver created a dedicated **project website** as a portal for all project information included project updates, upcoming meetings, meeting and workshop summaries and links to relevant committee reports and project documents: www.metrovancouver.org/lionsgate

Metro Vancouver produced a series of short videos on the secondary treatment plant upgrade including this **video** on the engagement and consultation process for the LGSWWTP: <http://bcove.me/9j7sk0sp>