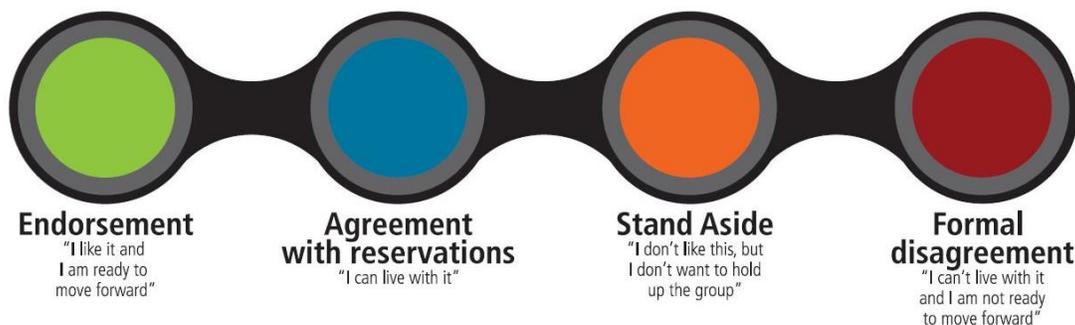# Decision-Making Tools

Throughout the project process there will be many times when the team will need to make decisions. It is helpful for all project team members to agree in writing about how the team will make decisions. The two tools that worked well for the Neighbourhood Strategy project team were the gradients of agreement and dotmocracy tools.

Gradients of Agreement Tool

The gradients of agreement tool allows people to express their position in terms of degrees along a continuum. People are not required to commit to a firm "yes" or "no" position. Using the gradients along with discussion will help the group quickly recognize the level of support for a specific topic and ensure that everyone has a chance to express their position and understand the position of others. The gradients work towards collaborative decision making where the group will make decisions based on a broad level of support. This will enhance commitment to action and the ultimate success of the decision.

Figure 1: The Gradients of Agreement

Endorsement
"I like it and I am ready to move forward"

Agreement with reservations
"I can live with it"

Stand Aside
"I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group"

Formal disagreement
"I can't live with it and I am not ready to move forward"

Tips for using this tool
- Clearly display the gradients of agreement for everyone to see at each meeting
- Use the gradients at the beginning of meetings to help identify the initial level of support
- Use the gradients after discussions when decisions need to be made

Consider the following steps
1. Clearly state the topic or proposal to be discussed and decided upon. Avoid being vague. Make sure everyone understands what is being asked before moving forward.
2. Ask each person to express their level of support. This can be done by a show of hands, individual statements by each person, simultaneous declaration by the entire team or secret ballot.

Dotmocracy Tool

The dotmocracy tool allows a team to express their position by placing dots next to information that they want to prioritize, revise or endorse. Using the dots will help the project team and/or the neighbourhood quickly visualize people's preferences and priorities. The tool may be used throughout project process, from endorsing the vision to prioritizing goals, objectives and actions. The tool may be used in team meetings and at larger neighbourhood gatherings. The dots make for a fun exercise and help ensure that all people have a voice, not just those who commonly speak out.

Consider the following steps:
1. Explain the dotmocracy tool to the project team or the neighbours present at the neighbourhood gathering.
2. Present a clear question or issue for group discussion.
3. Write ideas on flipchart paper and group them into major themes/ideas.
4. Provide people with either a single dot or several dots. Single dots can be placed on the theme/idea that the person most strongly agrees with. Different rules can be established for several dots. For instance, each person is provided 10 dots and they may assign all dots to one theme/idea or distribute their dots among a maximum of 3 themes/ideas.
5. The theme/idea with the most dots represents the information that is either top priority, requires revision or has been endorsed.

The Dotmocracy Tool was adapted in part from the Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Planning Toolkit, Tool G – Dotmocracy. View Hamilton's Toolkit at bit.ly/2hRLt6H.