

“A Tale of Two Cities” Organizing for Community Benefits

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Metro Seattle – An Extraordinary Boom

- Seattle is first among urban markets for office investments, fourth for multi-family and retail
- Currently in the planning process for Seattle:
 - 20,000 multi-family housing units
 - 3.5 million square feet of retail
 - 1 million square feet of office space
 - 45% increase in new hotel construction

Not Enough Good Paying Jobs

- 30% of all jobs in Washington State don't provide a living wage for a single person
- 80% don't provide a living wage for a single parent of two
- There are 12 job seekers for every living wage job
- More than 25% of the population earns less than twice the poverty level for a family of four

Housing Costs are Out of Sight

- Housing costs are too high for most service and retail workers – the median house payment is nearly 40% of household income
- 8,500 homeless people in King County
- Forbes Magazine:
“Seattle is the least affordable of major cities, based on wages and cost of living”

Typical Role of Local Government in Land Use

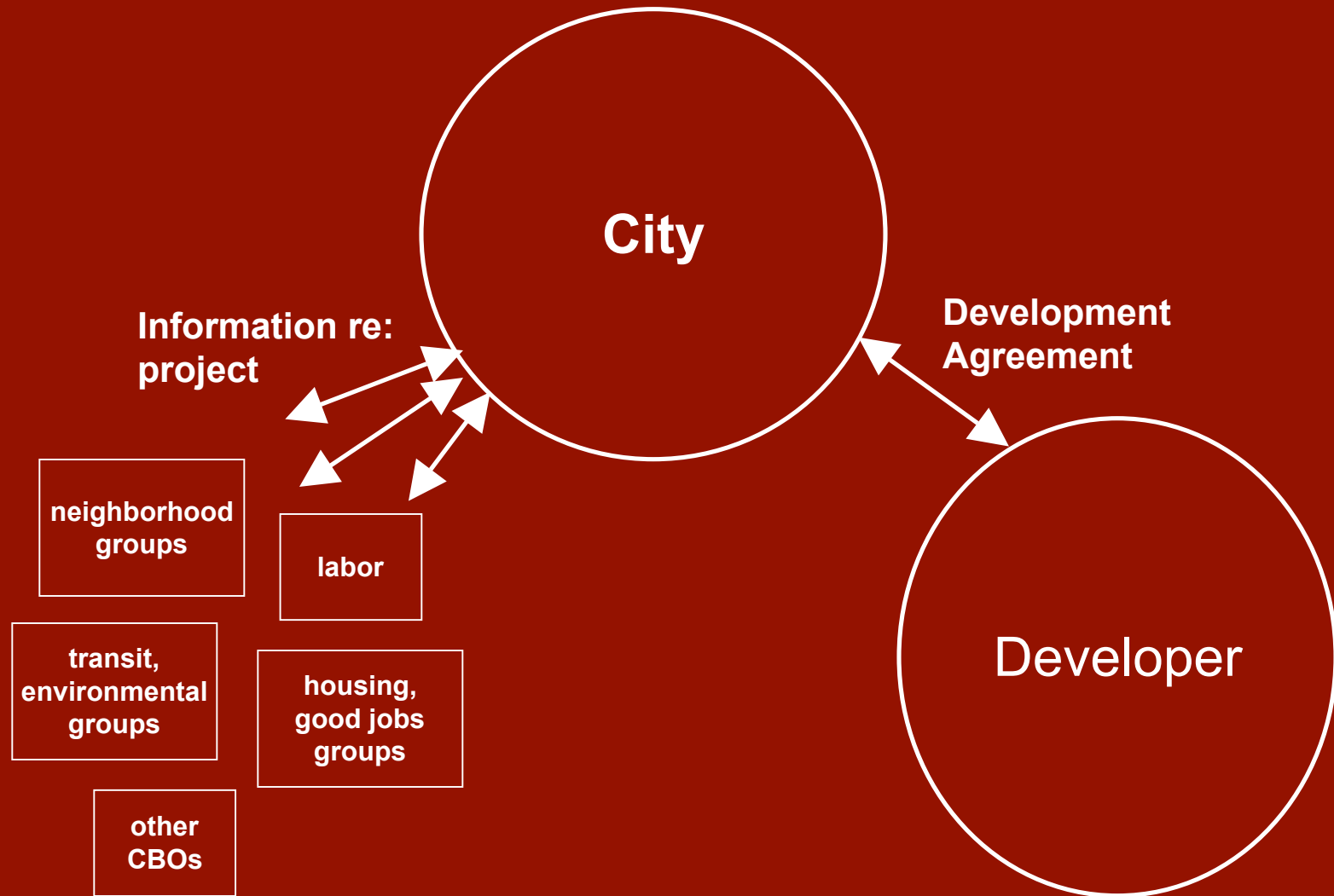
- Overarching municipal goals: living wage jobs, affordable housing, clean environment, diversity, etc.
- Plans and zoning for each neighborhood
- Design standards and codes for new building projects
 - Some public input for projects via Design Review processes
- Conditions for project-related public money

→ But local community and broader interests are not always addressed

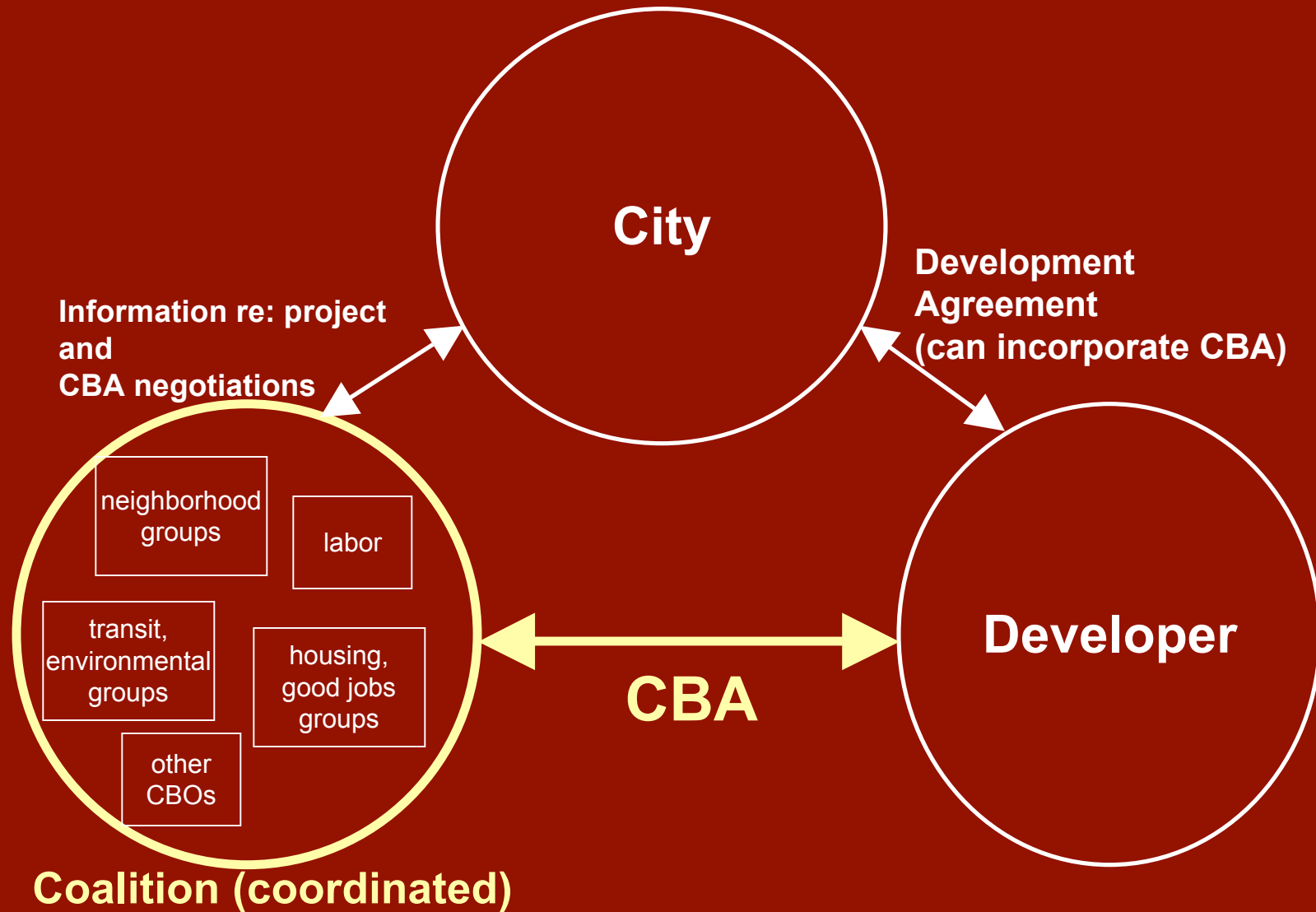
Traditional Tools for Responsible Development

- Research on development and local government
- Coalition-building: labor, neighborhoods, ethnic, faith, environmental, transit, sustainability
- Grass-roots organizing and action
- Policy changes – local and state levels
- Political involvement – voter education
- Project involvement – public design processes

Traditionally, Community Stakeholders are outside of process



CBA makes Community Stakeholders part of the process



Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)

- A Community Benefits Agreement, or “CBA,” is a legally binding contract, negotiated between stakeholder community groups and a developer
- CBA can address a broad range of labor and community needs, such as job quality and local hiring
- Includes safeguards to ensure that affected residents share in the benefits of major developments
- In exchange, the stakeholders will support the project

Who wins with a CBA?

- Workers, Labor:
 - Good Jobs (wage and benefits standards)
 - Job Training
- Faith and Community Groups
 - Local Hiring of the Under-employed
 - Contracting with Women and Minority Firms
 - Affordable Housing
- Environmentalists
 - Green Design and Sustainability
- All Stakeholders
 - Important Local Issues

Dearborn Street / Goodwill CBA Campaign

PROBLEM: Massive, auto-centric shopping mall in Downtown Core

➤ Economic Impacts

- ❑ Small local business district in Little Saigon
- ❑ Outlying business districts
- ❑ Accelerated gentrification
- ❑ Low-wage, no-benefit retail jobs; no guarantees of local or minority hiring

➤ Social impacts

- ❑ Cultural homogenization via national chains; retail consumer experience only
- ❑ No affordable housing for workers and families

➤ Environmental impacts

- ❑ Traffic, noise, air quality issues
- ❑ Sustainability not goal; environmental footprint not considered

Dearborn Street / Goodwill CBA Campaign

Goals of Goodwill CBA Campaign

- Reduce size and scope of project to protect neighborhoods and outlying business districts; targets for local ownership
- Integrate surrounding Little Saigon into project and stabilize via Business Improvement Area (BIA)
- Design and usage concessions (pedestrian character, open space, street fairs, uses beyond retail, ...)
- Employment standards (construction and operation)
- Affordable and family housing
- Environmental sustainability and transit objectives

➔ not there yet

Additional Info

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- Tracking Development in Metro Seattle
- Building Coalitions
- Goal: Win of policy makers' support for CBAs and institutionalize community benefits policies in local government
- Project by project – assist negotiating CBA

Community Benefits Agreements (CBA)

<http://www.communitybenefits.org/>

- look for link for publication:

Community Benefits Agreements: Making Development Projects Accountable