Questions for discussion on Group Projects – for lecture #8.

1. All the groups proposed rather elaborate public involvement processes. Do you think that elected public officials might be put off by such proposals? Aren't the elected officials the ones who are supposed to speak for the community? Doesn't the kind of "come-if-you-please" public participation process proposed by the four groups negate our commitment to representative democracy?

2. All the groups seemed to operate on the assumption that neighborhood priorities should trump city-wide needs and priorities. How can that be the right way for cities to plan? Where in the process are residents asked to help set city-wide priorities rather than local priorities? How can stitching together a set of neighborhood plans yield a coherent vision of the city as a whole?

3. All the groups seemed to assume that general policies and goal statements can be translated into specific spatial designs and resource allocations. But, aren't the goals and priorities that come out of the public involvement process likely to be too general to translate into one and only one set of designs or resource commitments? And, if that's right, doesn't it mean that the professional planners and designers are really the ones making all the key decisions?

4. No one talked about capacity building or public education as a collateral or parallel process to public involvement. Can we really assume that community folks have the background and skills they need to formulate and articulate their views and needs? What kind of public education effort might be helpful in this case? What kind of media strategy would be appropriate?

5. There was not much focus on interagency or intergovernmental collaboration. There are other city agencies besides the BRA with federal funds and regulatory authority. They could either be supportive or get in the way. Why wasn't there more focus on involving them (and maybe regional and state agencies and officials) in the urban redevelopment process?

6. Is it really reasonable to assume that "a good process will produce a good outcome," or do planners have to be ready to propose their own plans or solutions in case the process (of public involvement) doesn't work?

7. Several groups imagined a role for an "advocate planner" within the city run public involvement process. Can you imagine being that person --paid by the city to work on behalf of neighborhood interests and sometimes

against the city's interests? Is that really a feasible and sustainable situation?