



VANCOUVER FOUNDATION'S

VitalSigns

For Metro Vancouver

Community Conversations 2011



Richmond





Backgrounder:

On October 4th, 2010, Vancouver Foundation released the 2010 Vital Signs report for Metro Vancouver. Vital Signs is a community check-up, conducted by community foundations across Canada, that measures the vitality of our communities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in a range of areas critical to quality of life.

One of the key findings of the 2010 Vital Signs report was that the degree to which we feel connected to one another has the biggest impact on how we rate the quality of our lives. A strong sense of belonging and a bond of trust between neighbours greatly contributes to stronger, healthier communities.

To build on this knowledge, Vancouver Foundation held a series of Community Conversations focused on building better communities through increasing individuals' sense of belonging and social connections.

Pre-dialogue meetings were held in each community with local partners to identify discussion topics that would be of greatest interest to the community, additional community partners, potential meeting venues, suitable dates and methods and mediums for promoting the Community Conversations.

Each Community Conversation started with a series of short presentations and was followed by small group, table discussions focused on how a sense of community belonging can positively impact a variety of community issues. In addition to the general issue of belonging, each community also identified one or two additional areas for discussion. Attendees participated in the table discussion that was of most interest to them.

All six Community Conversations took place over a three week period in June 2011 in the following municipalities: Maple Ridge; North Vancouver; Richmond; White Rock South Surrey; New Westminster; Vancouver.

Table Discussion Format:

Each table discussion was facilitated by a 'Conversation Guide' who lead the participants through three questions and ensured everyone had an opportunity to contribute to the conversation. The three questions were:

1. When you picture a healthy, connected community, what stands out?
2. What is your community doing well? What is working? What do you love about your community?
3. Where are the opportunities for improvement?

In addition to the discussion, participants were invited to record, on a Post-it note, an idea for how they could personally contribute to a sense of belonging and social connection in their own community.



The final action for each table was to capture one highlight from their discussion and turn it into a lively, one-minute report-back to be shared with all event participants.

As participants were leaving, they were invited to contribute to a dotmocracy exercise which included a list of 13 community issues ranging from Arts & Culture to Safety. Everyone was given three dots and asked to place them beside the issue/s they cared most about. People could elect to place all the dots on the same issue, or could spread their dots between two or three issues of importance.

Why this engagement approach:

Through initial research and conversations with community leaders, we discovered that most communities were already holding dialogues for their region on key issue areas such as seniors, transportation, and affordability. We did not want to compete with, or duplicate, what was already being done.

Instead of using a traditional model for dialogue, we chose to look at community issues through the lens of belonging. The topic of belonging and social connections affects all residents, is a thread that ties together the issue areas identified in the 2010 Vital Signs report, and gets to the heart of what Vancouver Foundation is about – building stronger communities. Our goal was to present a fresh and vital approach to draw out solutions. Instead of looking at the problems, we looked at the possibilities.

About this Report:

The following is a compilation of the comments from the Community Conversations, grouped by community, question and issue area. The comments have been loosely sorted into categories.

In many cases, the same points or comments are listed more than once under a category. This is an indication that it was mentioned at multiple tables.

In most cases, exact wording from the scribe's notes was used. In some cases wording was changed slightly to provide clarification. In a few instances, it was not possible to determine the context of a statement or point. In those cases the comments were not recorded as we did not want to unintentionally make a point counter to the discussion. Our apologies to anyone whose comments we were not able to accurately capture.

We hope this document provides a good indication of the discussion and issues addressed at the Vancouver Foundation Community Conversations for Metro Vancouver.

Project Next Steps:

A summary of the Community Conversations was presented to the Vancouver Foundation board of directors and will be presented to the Mayor and Council in each community where a conversation



was held. This report is available on-line through the Vital Signs website and will be distributed to community stakeholders and partners who were involved in the Conversations.

In addition, information from the table discussions, along with an issue priority setting exercise, will help inform discussion around a new priority area for Vancouver Foundation's work.



Date: Saturday, June 18th – 10am – 12:30pm

Issue Areas: Affordability; Food; Belonging

Community Partner: Richmond Community Foundation

Venue: Richmond City Hall

Participant Numbers: 40

Summary of Discussions:

Richmond residents' vision of a healthy, connected community includes a diverse, multicultural, intergenerational population. It is a place with stores and coffee shops in neighbourhoods which allow people to stay out of their cars and meet people they know, both on the street and in their yards.

Participants felt Richmond is a place with great resources, services and partnerships. People praised the number of festivals, events, community kitchens and workshops available to them. It is felt to be a place where people can work and live and have access to plenty of restaurants, sports facilities, gardens and vegetable stands. Recent improvements to local transit systems were also noted and appreciated.

Volunteerism is strong in the area but people would like to see more opportunities for community engagement through food projects such as canning workshops, community kitchens and sharing meals. In addition, more needs to be done to overcome language and cultural barriers which prevent people from being more politically active and can present challenges with finding city information on initiatives such as recycling.

Housing was one of the biggest concerns mentioned. People fear they won't be able to age in place and that young people will not be able to buy homes in the city they grew up in. More co-op housing options were mentioned as an area for improvement.

Note: the table discussion on Belonging was held in Mandarin.

Dotmocracy Results

Top Three Issues Areas (with number of votes)

Richmond Cares About:

Housing: 21

Belonging & Inclusion: 14

Food: 8

Poverty: 8



What does a healthy, connected community look like?

Neighbourhood Support/Social Connections

- Residents helping and supporting each other
- Inclusiveness, open access to social groups – community connections
- Neighbourhood where people wave and talk to each other
- Access to your neighbours
- Many children playing outside
- People recognizing each other – promoting feelings of safety and trust
- Caring community
- Running into people in the city
- Seeing people in their gardens
- Seeing all levels of generations around and connected

Built Community/Urban Planning

- Sports facilities
- Community that looks clean and beautiful with good landscaping and green fields
- Convenience in daily life – groceries stores, traffic, Asian-style services
- Zoning laws that encourage street culture
- Corner stores and coffee shops in neighbourhoods so you don't have to get into your car
- Range of housing options to create a complete community
- Community stores/items in close proximity

Multicultural/Diversity

- Food as a cross cultural connector
- Multicultural
- Age and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods
- Multicultural environment



Meeting Places

Gathering areas where people can have block parties
Front yards where people can go outside
Living near a church

Other

Good drinking water
Safety/sense of safety
Less homelessness
Healthy living

What is working?

FOOD

Gathering places/Events

Steveston Community Centre
Garret Wellness Centre
Community Centres
Community Kitchens
Canning workshops
Church dinners
World Food Day
Terra Nova Park
Beekeeping show
Street hockey
Cul-de-sacs



Networks

- Merchants Association
- Richmond Food Services Society
- Community Exchange
- Garden City Land Society
- Partnerships between agencies

Other

- Community taking responsibility for itself
- Edible native plants
- Diverse wildlife
- Values

AFFORDABILITY

Facilities

- Lots of restaurants – variety
- Great soccer facilities, new fields
- Good accessibility to sports & recreation
- Always somewhere to play – basketball, tennis, hockey boxes etc
- Not a commuter city anymore
- Possible to live and work in Richmond
- Transit improvements

Diversity

- Employers hiring a more diverse workforce
- Chinese festivals – moon festival, New Years – a lot of ethnic groups come out and everything is free



Engagement

- People love to volunteer
- Lots of volunteering during the Olympics
- Strong volunteer tradition
- Acceptance that volunteerism is a good thing
- Welcoming city

Natural Resources/ Environment

- Fruit and veggie stands all over
- Agricultural land
- Access to areas to walk
- Access to fresh produce
- Can buy groceries from smaller stores/markets instead of big grocery stores
- Composting program

Other

- Not many neighbourhoods where you are afraid to walk

BELONGONG (Mandarin)

Facilities

- Lots of community facilities
- Sports facilities which draw people from other cities to Richmond
- Good shopping and restaurants

Good Environment/ Atmosphere

- Peaceful
- Community Gardens
- Multicultural society, different ethnic festivals
- People are friendly to each other/ strangers say hi to each other on the street



What could be improved?

FOOD

Engagement

Conversations about what community needs
Get people together for meals and conversation
Need a vision for what people want in their community
More canning and community kitchens
Education – how to cook and can
Put information that people can access in public spaces i.e. community centres
More partnerships between agencies
People stick to their own groups – they need to be able to collaborate
We need more information to be able to break down barriers for immigrants. Increase understanding about what other cultures like to do

Other

Rezoning – community
Use food as community across cultures

AFFORDABILITY

Housing

City needs to provide housing options for diverse groups
Need more co-op housing
For larger families, housing is taking too large a percent of income – means less money for sports, food etc.
Many young people can't afford to move out of the family home
Housing prices continue to rise
Not enough housing co-ops, it is a hard process and they are still unaffordable
Need more imaginative approaches to affordable housing from a financial perspective
Richmond could become so expensive that common workers can't afford to live here
Richmond should look at larger affordable housing options – co-op model great for connection to income



Barriers

Language

Cultural – what to prepare for a potluck – “what do white people want to eat”

With events like bar-b-ques and garden parties, a lot of people don’t come out because of language and cultural discomfort

Language is an issue

Connections

Sense of connectedness is disappearing as population grows

Lack of trust because we don’t know each other

Need to focus on commonalities vs. differences

Need welcome wagons

More space for gathering

Need to build more connectedness through family/neighbourhood relationships i.e. visiting each others homes on a Sunday

New immigrant communities – reaching out to communicate. Need to be non-judgmental

Richmond used to fund block parties – now a lot of communities in Richmond don’t come out

Have potlucks as a way to share multi-cultural food

Ironic, for ethnic groups, easy access to ethnic culture may impact sense of belonging to Canada - Important to bridge aspects of ethnic culture to Canadian culture

Other

Transit – better evening availability and on holidays

Need various sectors represented in solution building

New approach to building communities i.e. bringing families in to help grow community

Low collaboration among non-profits – results in confusing, fragmented outcomes for people

Disconnect with city staff who don’t live in neighbourhoods – need more people who provide the services living in the city



BELONGING (Mandarin)

Barriers

Language barriers contribute to a lack of involvement in politics
Lack source of language training for new immigrants
Recycling information needs to be available in languages other than English
Chinese residents face discrimination in driving

Other

Shopping is expensive. Forced to shop in the states where there is no HST and groceries are less expensive



Richmond Community Conversation – Post – It notes

June 18, 2011

What can you do to personally increase a sense of belonging in your community?

- “Advocate and educate the community about the immediate need for affordable housing.”
- “Introduce myself to my neighbours!”
- “Involve, participate, volunteer”
- “Provide more connections between Chinese and other people”
- “Ride my bicycle and smile / wave to people each trip that I take on Richmond roads”
- “To get involved in more activities in our community”
- “Create a club for a common cause and for others to join”
- “Help your neighbours to know your community”
- “Get more involved in community activities”
- “Block watch (for safety and sense of belonging)”
- “Get involved!”
- “Local neighbourhood block parties (for families of all ages!)”
- “Host a community writing / stories program”
- “Teach my children to see past ‘differences’ & set a good example”
- “Offer assistance to someone in need”
- “Welcome to neighbourhood wagon”
- “Connect and say ‘hello’”
- “I will organize a block potluck party on my lane this year.”
- “Attend similar ‘conversation’ opportunities in Richmond to become more aware”
- “Start talking to more people about the idea of ‘belonging’ and being here.”
- “Volunteer more, make friendships, donate to charities, help youth”
- “I will share an upcoming Richmond community event on my apartment bulletin board.”
- “Advocate for community building activities, supported and promoted by the City such as block parties”





“Arrange a neighbourhood potluck.”

“Participate and help in arranging block parties”

“Advocate for income-linked 30% housing – when over 30% of a low income pays for housing then quality and access become issues, e.g. good, transportation, sports, education...”

“Talk with more people outside of my work place. Ask more questions & get to know people.”

“Be a volunteer in community programs to know new people, make relations with them & connect to them.”

“Advocate for housing for families with bedroom needs of four or more”

“Continue to partner with different organizations to facilitate and encourage ‘community dialogues’”

“Go extra mile, make extra effort, begin in my family, my cul-de-sac family, my church family. 1. Things I learned, I learned in every community meeting I attend, and I will invite them. 2. Cul-de-sac – Get to know the housewife, we connect.”



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