



VANCOUVER FOUNDATION'S

VitalSigns

For Metro Vancouver

Community Conversations 2011



White Rock South Surrey





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.



WHITE ROCK

Date: Monday, June 20th , 6:00pm – 8:30pm

Issue Areas: Affordability and Community Engagement

Community Partner: White Rock/South Surrey Community Foundation

Venue: White Rock Public Library

Participant Numbers: 55

Summary of Discussions:

White Rock South Surrey residents' vision for a healthy, connected community includes having places like farmers' markets and events for people to gather. They want to be able to recognize people, be greeted on the street and live in a safe and sustainable community with all the needed amenities and accessibility for all.

White Rock South Surrey received praise for its beautiful natural environment, small town feel and for its generous residents who are willing to help each other out. It is an area with good resources and amenities and a safe area with a strong police force and community policing. The many events, markets and festivals are also popular with residents.

It is, however, an area where more could be done to reach out to new residents and those working outside the community. It is also felt more support could be given to low income residents, the homeless population and seniors. Participants mentioned the perception of wealth in the area, but cited affordability being an issue for many, especially seniors.

Youth was also an area of concern, with many participants feeling that with limited opportunities and gathering spaces for youth, the engagement level is low and boredom is an issue.

Not everyone was in agreement on how development should proceed or to what extent. There is also a feeling that work must be done to break down the walls between White Rock and Surrey, to increase partnerships and opportunities for regional planning.

Dotmocracy Results

Top Three Issues Areas (with number of votes)

White Rock Cares About:

Belonging & Inclusion: 22

Health & Wellness: 14

Poverty: 13



What does a healthy, connected community look like?

Gathering Spaces

- Places to go and celebrate
- Outdoor gatherings
- Farmers Markets
- Places for gathering to happen
- Community events
- Farmers markets
- Free city events

Social Connections

- People working together
- Inclusiveness for all
- People talking to each other
- Being together
- People walking and talking
- People wanting you to join them
- Acknowledging people in the street
- Welcome wagon program
- Nice warm energy
- People know you – sense of connection to the community
- Greetings – saying hello, conversation starters, smiles
- Recognition and familiarity at stores and services
- Friendly
- Offers of generosity among neighbours
- Volunteerism



Services/Programs/Resources

- Directory and availability of services
- Sustainable community – food, services etc and accessible to all
- Facilities, libraries
- Small town feel with big town amenities
- Selection of services – food, clothing, shopping
- Focus on services for a wide range of ages and needs
- Resources that allow people to stay in place
- Ability for community to look after its own
- Fixed income seniors – being able to afford to live
- Excellent schools

Getting Around

- Central
- New transit system
- Walkability
- Access to other areas
- Arranging for bus service that picks up seniors for events

Health & Safety

- Safe place
- Feel safe
- Central medical centre
- Hospital
- Good medical services
- Safety
- Sense of trust
- Peaceful
- Healthy environment, beautiful town



Other

Low income & equality equaling a higher level of trust
Young families
More young families
Commitment to making it a good community
Happy memories developed overtime
Cherish and value community
Farms - local

What is working?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Events and Gathering Places

Movies at the beach
Music and theatre
Cafes & pubs
Open mic nights
Farmers' Markets
Legion
Farmers' Markets
Festivals – great way to bring in non residents and local residents
The New White Rock Community Garden
White Rock Community Centre
Community Houses – i.e. Alex House
Do parties well here

Social Connections

Welcome committee
Small community feel
Collaborative community tables



Engagement

People believe in and want their community to grow
Progressive community
Volunteerism – people go out of their way to contribute
Generous community
Volunteer commitment is high
One off acts of kindness
Sense of community which contributes to social fabric
Great opportunities for participation – volunteering and community leadership
Schools working together
Open public consultation process
Lots of groups working hard
Volunteer hours through the schools are good

Environment

Recycling & composting weekly
Beautiful
Walkability
Peaceful
Walkable community
Great beaches
Good water supply
Small town feel
The ocean

Services/Programs/ Resources

Multi-lingual resources and services
Good diversity of shops and services
Leisure program has accessible services
Peace Arch News is a great community resource
Great community partnerships with service organizations
At least three places residents can go: St. John's; Grace Point; Star of the Sea; Alexandra Hospital



AFFORDABILITY

Engagement

Amazing volunteers
Opportunities for engagement

Social Connections

Can ask people for help
People are approachable
People are generous
Friendly
People make eye contact

Programs/Resources/ Services

Newspaper announcements
Access to organic food
Schools
Facilities – theatre, community centre
Resources and amenities
Alexander House
Libraries and summer programs
Library is important to seniors

Safety

Community policing
Safe
Safe neighbourhoods
Safety
Safety – graffiti is dealt with right way; good street lighting; strong police force; excellent volunteers with community policing
RCMP (expansion)
Fire Department serves community



Events/Gathering Spaces

Arts, sports, library
Farmers' Markets
Affordable local events
Green space
Festivals
Dunsmuir Gardens (Crescent Beach)
Ocean Park Community hall events
Free music at the beach in summer
"Small Rituals" coffee shop

Environment

Expansion is protected by water
Landscape
The ocean
Serenity
Small town

Other

Accessible
Community of Lights
Socio-economic mix



What could be improved?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement

Intergenerational opportunities

Access to opportunities and information about ways to engage in the community

There is a good network of community volunteer leaders leaving their work – who's stepping into their roles?

What are the opportunities for lower income families to contribute to the community and be engaged?

Many people work outside the community – need to engage them in with their local neighbours and city

Engage senior/retired population to volunteer

Tap into work already being done – asking new residents what helps them engage

Opportunities to connect with people living here but working elsewhere

Partnerships

Create partnerships with the city of Surrey

Breakdown the wall between White Rock and Surrey – create a community vision, not a city driven vision

Gathering/ Meeting Places

Block parties – bringing people together

Park development

Meeting places needed

Services/ Programs/ Resources

Lack of information/dissemination

Becoming creative with current space to increase access to programs

Increase multi-lingual resources/information

Develop a broad community communication resource beyond and in addition to the Peace Arch News



Children & Youth

Engaging children/youth in the arts
Youth voice to be heard
Youth engagement
Youth education
Youth engagement - work with schools to develop more community based initiatives opposed to individual school activities
Youth gathering spot – involve them in the planning of what it looks like
Youth volunteering on-line is a new trend, but ‘in person’ volunteering develops social skill etc.

Needs

Balancing long-term residents interests with development interests
Increased advocacy for needs
Look beyond averages to explore the needs
Festering community issues – disagreements and different views on what White Rock ‘should be’
There are needs in White Rock – how can we advocate for these needs?
How do we care for the range of skills, ages, cultures, financial means and priorities?

Diversity/ Culture

Increase cultural celebrations, arts, food, and inclusivity
More cultural diversity

Other

Assumption of wealth
Parking costs at the beach
Cost of living and taxes
Transportation is an issue
Make Johnston Road closed to traffic



AFFORDABILITY

Diversity/ Welcoming Newcomers

How do we reach out to new people in the area?
Language barriers
Greater understanding of new cultures
More cultural & multicultural festivals

Programs/Services/ Resources

People don't know about all the services being offered
Services for women & children but what about men?
Need more seniors services
Improve seniors centre
Peninsula calendar
Support and encourage NH centres
Encourage life skills/life literacy

Affordability

Some seniors are living on the edge of poverty
Hard for seniors on fixed incomes
More medication coverage – especially for seniors
Make living affordable – rental assistance/supports for families
Provide more rental units geared to income

Engagement

A lot of people work outside of the community which caused people to not support community businesses
Youth, seniors and homeless feel invisible
More opportunities for intergenerational activities
More dialogue



Youth

Bored kids get into trouble
Kids have lots of money but no sense of community
More youth outreach
Opportunities for youth are limited
Young people are not getting involved in the community

Built Environment/ Infrastructure

Improve traffic flow
Regional planning for White Rock and South Surrey
Transportation – more feeders
Dangers of nimbyism (Not in my backyard)
More community gardens

Other

Develop a voice of the Peninsula



White Rock / South Surrey Community Conversation – Post – It notes

June 20, 2011

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

“Take time to listen”

“Take more time to chat with service providers, stores, etc. In the course of my errands – build connections in everyday activities.”

“Know my neighbours”

“Attend community events”

“Become more active in the community”

“Get involved – help create our community’s vision.”

“Help organize an elementary school chess club.”

“Meet the neighbours, go to the park, bike everywhere”

“Share my knowledge of community resources with more people.”

“Be friendly – smile”

“Ride my bike + walk more instead of taking my car.”

“Converse more with people I don’t know & rub shoulders at Safeway. Be friendlier, be more neighbourly.”

“Volunteer”

“Involve more neighbours in our local BLOCK WATCH”

“Become involved in more community activities”

“Take time to understand”

“Figure out a way to work together to solve problems (pay parking at the beach!)”

“Attend community events. Volunteer at community events. Encourage my friends and neighbours to do the above!”

“Help people! Don’t wait to be asked!”

“Participate in volunteer activity like ‘Dog Park clean-up Day’”

“Organize neighbourhood get together”



“Invite my neighbours for a BBQ this week. Go to farmer’s market”

“Go to farmer’s market.”

“Engaging neighbours in a local beautification project. Multicultural”

“Participate in a neighbourhood tree planting program”

“Participate at the local community events”

“Join the Ocean Park Facebook”

“Continue to be open and welcoming to everyone I meet!”

“Start Conversations”

“Be friendly & welcoming – say good morning to a stranger”

“Work more actively with WRSSCF”

“Increase information networking for help, sources for immigrant non-english speaking ethnic groups”

“Start a movement to lobby for a ‘Semiahmoo Municipality’

“Get to know my neighbours”

“Take the time to really get to know my neighbours”

“Do not rely on the Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Bureau, realtors and religious organizations to inform newcomers of the extensive community resources that are available and consider billboards, banners, newspaper ads, fridge magnets etc so that newcomers will not be missed.”



Vancouver Foundation would like to thank:

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