

Planning Vancouver Together

Phase 1 "Listen and Learn" Engagement Summary Report

Vancouver Plan Engagement Process
November 2019 – August 2020

CITY OF VANCOUVER | Vancouver Plan

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The City of Vancouver is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, who have lived in their territories since time immemorial.

As a City of Reconciliation, the City of Vancouver has committed to "form a sustained relationship of mutual respect and understanding with local First Nations and the urban Indigenous community." This is an ongoing and evolving commitment, and one that is foundational to the long-term success of the Vancouver Plan.

Planning
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Executive Summary

While few anticipated the COVID-19 public health emergency or its impacts on Vancouver residents, businesses and community organizations, developing a long-range vision remains a critical tool for securing the city's future against increasingly complex challenges like the current disaster and those that may appear on the horizon. This report offers a scan of the phase 1 public engagement in support of City of Vancouver's Vancouver Plan process.

The engagement program outlined in this report was designed to make the way for partnerships, to expand and support public participation, and to listen carefully for people's hopes, fears, joys and struggles with a focus on those voices historically left out of municipal conversations. In doing so, we have sought to define the issues that the Vancouver Plan needs to address and how residents want to see their city evolve over the next 30 years.

The results of this broad-based public engagement will shape guiding principles, helping to anchor elements of the planning process like data analysis, forecasting and the work of policy experts in the voices and experiences of those who live, work and play here.

And while acknowledging these critical areas of effort, we began with the aspiration of developing a physical plan deeply reflective of and responsive to the human city – social, historical, cultural, underlying data and trends, economic forces and lived experiences.

We have also committed to three critical lenses on our work, anchored in Council-approved policy: Promoting Reconciliation, Equity and Resilience, as we move towards a comprehensive long-range plan for the future of Vancouver.

The Process in Brief

The overall engagement strategy in phase 1 encompassed a range of methods: digital surveys, community meetings, dialogue sessions, and in-person interviews and outreach. This mixed-method approach was designed to solicit input and feedback, and also to begin the work of building partnerships. We were particularly looking to traditionally underrepresented populations to ensure their early involvement in the process and to seek their advice so that future engagement efforts could be more responsive, inclusive and welcoming.

As an early pulse-taking, we fielded a survey on the Vancouver Plan website and via sites across the city. This strategy provided an effective tool for reaching a large number of voices in the most efficient manner, with low barrier, open-ended, experiential questions. By the time the survey closed, there were nearly 9,800 responses with close to 50,000 open ended questions answered. **This was the largest response to an open-ended survey ever fielded by the City of Vancouver.**



As a self-selecting survey intended to reach as many people as possible rather than a smaller randomized, representative and weighted sample, responses from certain demographics are underrepresented, particularly those with languages other than English, and young people under 20, despite translation and targeted promotional strategies.

However, despite the scale of this initial dataset, this report is not simply about the survey results. Just as valuable were other engagement methods including in-person interviews, dialogues and meetings with a range of communities and stakeholders, as well as findings from major public consultations of the recent past.

This broader set of inputs was included to ensure a comprehensive picture of values and ideas. In specific terms, we needed to go to communities and partners to not only ensure the participation of those with access to a digital survey or a corporate meeting, but by seeking out underrepresented populations: youth, Indigenous people, people who speak a language other than English at home, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness and those who are under-housed.

With in-person engagement on hold indefinitely, the Vancouver Plan cancelled its extensive program for deeper face-to-face dialogue and looked to new physically distant, yet connected methods to continue listening and working with communities to understand their visions for the future and their immediate near-term challenges posed by the pandemic. These newer findings, through the lens of the pandemic, are included in this report.

In total, all of this work was synthesized in the top themes/issues presented here. The analysis that has shaped these findings are outlined in the sub-appendices to this report.



Summary of Key Themes

The responses gathered in this phase of engagement present a picture of life and work in Vancouver including the core challenges we need to address, the things we need to celebrate and promote, and some tensions and tradeoffs between the priorities of the community and existing policy commitments. We also heard clearly from a range of partners and stakeholder communities about how to shape the process and future phases of engagement.

In brief, we heard that as we prepare for an increasingly complex next 30 years, we need to address the following priorities:

- **Six Core Challenges**
  - Rising Unaffordability
  - Housing Insecurity
  - Visible Public Struggle – homelessness, addiction and mental health impacts
  - The Need for Accessible and Efficient Transportation Options
  - Widening and Deepening Inequality
  - Eroding Trust and Confidence in Local Government

- **What Gives Us Joy and What Do We Need More of In Future**
  - Preserve Places of Natural Beauty – green spaces, urban forest, beaches and waterfront access.
  - Promote Spaces and Polices that Support Social Connection, Safety and Community Well-being – safe and welcoming public spaces like parks, libraries, community centres, small local serving business, culture and cultural spaces
  - Design a More Compact City – urban design that improves access (walk or roll) to daily needs like food, recreation, school, work without the need for private automobiles and during periods of reduced access to public transportation.
  - Increased Opportunity, Inclusion and Fairness for All – a more fair Vancouver with expanded economic opportunities and access to full participation and inclusion in community for those who are getting left behind.

- **How to Move Forward – Feedback and Advice on The Process**
  - Work Via Partnership
    - » Seek and Support Partnerships to deliver on the Plan
      - » Provide Greater Opportunities for Communities to Lead and Support Capacity and Resources
  - Improved Equity and Inclusion Supports
    - » Include more diverse voices in the implementation and analysis of engagement findings going forward and develop improved civic infrastructure (translation, race-forward research methods, cultural supports and honoraria, decentralized community involvement) in service of greater inclusion.
    - » Cultural, Physical Accessibility and Translation Support – the City must continue to improve its pathways for all residents to access services and share their voices – whether it means being able to get and share information in a first language or to access spaces, services and amenities regardless of disability.
  - Building Trust
    - » Addressing eroding trust in local government, a trend facing all levels of government in Canada with increased transparency, frequent reporting and clarity about levels of public influence and decision-making models.
    - » Early involvement with all audiences and partners in the development and review of findings.
    - » Providing more time for relationship and community building efforts.
    - » Developing civic literacy programs that use the plan as a teaching and participation tool.
- **Understanding Tensions and Trade-offs in the Findings**
  - A number of key themes, while deemed priorities by City of Vancouver, did not always appear explicitly as priority themes throughout the public listening phase. Examples include work on Reconciliation, critical infrastructure, resilience when addressing climate change, earthquake and other global risks.
  - Future work and analysis will help tease out these trade-offs between what we have heard and policy, governance and data-based priorities, challenges and solutions.
  - Continuing to analyse and learn from this phase of input, will assist in future framing of critical decision and trade-offs the City will need to advance through Vancouver Plan.


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1.1 Introduction

When the COVID-19 state of emergency was initiated in late March 2020, the Vancouver Plan team had just completed a phase of early listening activities – effectively the launch of an extensive program of public and community engagement. This early engagement period surfaced and confirmed many of the major challenges our residents, business owners and community leaders were facing, as well as offering unique insights into their values, priorities and hopes for the future.

This engagement summary gives a picture of Vancouver pre- and post COVID-19 Phase 1 Engagement, which in addition to identifying key areas of priority for the Vancouver Plan, also identifies public experiences important to the critical planning for near-term recovery strategies and future-focused resilience, both now underway.

1.2 Background

The Vancouver Plan team spent six months in collaboration with internal and external partners scoping the approach to a new city-wide plan process. This approach was approved by Vancouver City Council in July 2019.

Of particular relevance, was the expression of key principles to guide engagement. While some of these principles will and have shifted through the implementation of an initial engagement phase, they are important to acknowledge as the starting point for the work:

1. Be broad, multigenerational, multi-community and multi-sector.
2. Build equity into the process to ensure traditionally underrepresented voices are heard, respected, and reflected.
3. Take a city-wide perspective that encompasses neighbourhoods, businesses, non-profit organizations and institutions.
4. Support community-led conversations and expertise.
5. Be flexible, adaptive, and responsive.
6. Identify collective values and priorities.
7. Go to where people are.
8. Make particular efforts to engage children, youth and young adults.
9. Ensure many ways to be involved (in-person, digital, surveys, etc.).
10. Be transparent, accessible and fun!

For more background on the Vancouver Plan, its Council approved engagement principles and emerging approach please visit: vancouverplan.ca



1.3 “Listen and Learn” – The Early Approach to Engagement

Over a span of 10 months, Vancouver Plan staff sought out diverse voices, attempting to recognize systemic barriers to participation, and incorporating input from a broad mix of stakeholders and community partners.

We were seeking confirmation and insight into community priorities, experiences and narratives, as well as a way forward with critical process improvements after examining missing voices and the assets and knowledge they can bring.

The period of pre and early launch beginning in November 2019 and extending through August 2020 formed a process we have called Listen and Learn – an exercise providing a window into the experiences of Vancouverites today as a vehicle to explore what kind of city we want (or want to avoid) in future.

Our Approach

Rather than starting with policy propositions, we began by attempting to bring more people into this critical conversation, especially those who might experience the greatest impact over the course of its implementation. How did we do this? By

- asking existing partners, institutions, community organizations and regional authorities how they wanted to be involved and how we could best include and support their participation and that of their constituents and members;
- posing low barrier questions about the future that focus on the experiences and ideas of respondents;
- fielding those questions online and in person, where possible;
- offering this survey in four major home languages other than English, including Punjabi, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese and Tagalog;
- working with partners to support community participation by those who may not have access to these channels or may have low trust in government;
- promoting participation through media outreach, paid advertising on social media and via community networks, including paid and organic outreach in Chinese, South Asian and English media outlets;
- being adaptive and responsive to participants – starting with open-ended questions and if they didn’t work or were in the wrong format for the group or individual, then staying open and asking participants to lead the conversation and identify what was most important for them;
- committing to a fulsome review of City of Vancouver public engagement findings over the last four years in order recognize these contributions and to efficiently build on this learning;
- building on and learning from the post-pandemic outreach conducted by staff of the Emergency Operations Centre to avoid burdening communities already struggling with challenges posed by the health crisis;
- innovating new ways of connecting online including a creative charrette with children and youth using urban design tools in partnership with Urbanarium and seeking ideas via the City’s new digital engagement platform, Shape Your City; and
- building on the knowledge and capacity of Council’s Advisory Committees to validate findings.

Three critical constituencies were also highlighted throughout our preliminary planning and phase 1 engagement:

- **Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Nations:** City of Vancouver initiated a series of ongoing meetings to develop collaborative models for government-to- government work on the long-range plan.
- **Youth and Youth-led organizations:** Beginning in October 2019, the team began developing partnerships and programming with youth-led organizations, campus programs, the Vancouver School Board and community youth programmers and the youth they support. This work saw renewed focus in the post-pandemic engagement effort with innovative workshops and community collaborations with a focus on youth 20 and under.
- **Equity-seeking groups:** Meetings with equity-seeking groups advanced via City of Vancouver's Social Policy staff team, meant working closely and carefully with people who typically face barriers to equal access, including participation in public processes and discrimination. Many of the participants we reached or worked to reach experienced multiple and interconnected barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status. Partnerships with Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, Neighbourhood Houses, and other community and educational partners are helping advance this ongoing work in ways that promote reciprocal and supportive relationships.

The Shifting Program – the risks and the rethink

The plan for in person engagement from March through September 2020 was substantially impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These impacts extended beyond City of Vancouver's postponement of all in-person engagement activities and included educational institutions shift to online learning, and civic facility (community centres and libraries) closures and program cancellations. The pandemic also put a hold on project capacity building efforts and partnership agreements as organizations focused on emergency response, changed their mandates or service delivery models, or cancelled programs or shifted them online.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on individuals and organizations, the engagement program during COVID-19 took a targeted approach by focusing on communities underrepresented in the November to March activities, identifying and using new digital tools and seeking to build on existing activities and channels of dialogue where possible.

In particular, the engagement program rolled out through the summer was responsive to changing public health orders, new partnership and collaboration opportunities and the need to engage children and youth under 20, as part of the City's pandemic recovery efforts.

While there is a risk that we needed to cancel major opportunities to engage in deep face- to face dialogue with and among residents, we have worked to both find new ways to engage while respecting the challenges many are confronting.

Additional details and analysis of the child and youth engagement program, and other areas focused on under-represented communities are available upon request and online at vancouverplan.ca.

Summary of Participation

Phase 1 "Listen and Learn" Key Activities

The Vancouver Plan team reached out broadly to residents and community stakeholders and offered a variety of options for participation. From the public launch on November 17, 2019 through to August 28th, 2020.

PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT
(November 2019 – August 2020)

12,000+
engagement touchpoints



Launch Survey Online and in Person Community Interviews

9708
responses

16
community outreach visits

48,000+
open ended comments



Stakeholder/Activator Circle Workshops

90+
sessions

1200
participants



Online Idea Sharing – Shape Your City

151
new ideas

81
votes



Child and Youth City Building Workshops

200+
online and in person



Young Planners Website and Youth Survey

2500+
visits to the Young Planners page

65
submissions of the youth survey

- **we received nearly 9,800 responses** to an online and in-person survey;
- **we reviewed the consultation summaries** from 21 City-wide policy engagement processes that were launched or renewed in the last four years;
- **staff met with a range of academics, current stakeholders, regional and provincial government partners, and community organizations** as part of the 'Activator Circles'. The intent of these sessions was to provide an overview of the project and to seek early input on the engagement process from a variety of groups. In total, staff held 80 meetings with external organizations that included 1,000 in-person interactions, many of which took place in community;
- **staff relaunched public engagement** on the City of Vancouver's new digital engagement platform, Shape Your City with two questions and a suite of translated resources; and
- **we worked to reach a range of underrepresented communities** with extensive child and youth outreach, reaching out to Council's Advisory Committees , and learning from the activities of the Emergency Operations Centre Recovery outreach teams.

ACTIVITY	SUMMARY	RESULTS
Survey **Online and community interviews** **November 14, 2019 - March 17, 2020**	• Online - a self-selecting, open-ended survey to encourage sharing current state of life/ work in Vancouver, priorities, joys and difficulties, hopes and fears for the future, as well as any general advice or ideas. • Community Outreach – dialogue sessions fielding the survey at community centres, religious sites, and with low income and homeless residents, children and youth and others underrepresented in the online participation.	• 9076 completed online surveys • 707 intercept interviews (with survey questions) • 9783 completed surveys total • Nearly 50,000 open ended questions were coded. • This yielded a codebook of frequently repeated and tracked themes and sub-themes.
Activator Circles and Community Dialogues October 2019 – March 17th, 2020	• Staff sat down for dozens of meetings and workshops with a range of stakeholders and partners ranging from intergovernmental partners to small not for profits, as well as interested individuals and "thought leaders".	• In total, staff had 80 meetings that included 1,000 in-person interactions, many of which took place in the community. • Each session produced notes and themes that were coded for themes and entered into the overall coding framework.



ACTIVITY	SUMMARY	RESULTS
Consultation Review **2015 - 2019**	• Staff reviewed the consultation summaries of 21 City of Vancouver and Park Board-wide policy initiatives that have completed or been updated in the last four years.	• Representing an estimated 200,000 touchpoints • Each area has produced key finding or priorities, which have been themed and entered into the overall coding framework.
Shape Your City.ca/ vancouverplan	• Staff relaunched public engagement on the City of Vancouver's new digital engagement platform, Shape Your City with two questions and a suite of translated resources. • The questions and responses were publicly visible on the page, and users had the option to post comments on other public forum posts or submit questions anonymously.	• Between June 24 and July 25, 151 ideas were submitted and 81 comments were made on ideas.

ACTIVITY	SUMMARY	RESULTS
Child and Youth Outreach	• A survey was incorporated into the Young Planners main page. One question focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and the needs and children and youth, while the other asked what issue did the respondent think was most important as Vancouver plans for the future. • Two digital charrettes seeking ideas and input from youth under 20 in collaboration with Urbanarium August 7th and 14th. • In person workshops offered in partnership with ACCESS (Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society), Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, and Urban Native Youth Association • UBC Centre for Community Engaged Learning Led a peer-to-peer model with a range of faculties and student organizations leading the engagement.	• A total of 65 responses were received. • 70 participants aged 20 and under took part in the online workshops • 68 participants took part in • face to face discussions drawing/ making workshops about their neighbourhoods today and the neighbourhoods they want in the future. • On campus and digital engagement with the UBC community included one in-person dialogue session in mid-February (44 participants), an online dialogue session in late March (92 participants) and a series of information booths that featured student surveys and an interactive “Wall of Letters” installation that asked short and open-ended questions (102 submissions).

ACTIVITY	SUMMARY	RESULTS
Council Advisory Committees	• Food Policy Council, June 4, 2020 • Child and Youth Advisory Committee June 25, 2020 • 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee Committee, July 16, 2020 • Child and Youth Advisory Committee, July 25, 2020 • Council of Advisory Committees Session, August 10, 2020 • People with Disabilities Advisory Committee, August	• 14 participants • 15 participants • 8 participants • 15 participants • 40 participants • 15 participants
Emergency Response Community Outreach COVID-19	• Five public town hall sessions held in multiple languages to connect with communities who experience barriers due to culture and language access. • Extensive interviews with NPOs about their communities and impacts of pandemic • Report by the EOC Recovery Team on community impacts on residents.	• Approximately 100 participants and interviews

1.4 How We Analyzed What We Heard – Our Methodology

The approach used to analyze and synthesize the listening from these activities grew from both the principles of engagement and from the evolution of public discourse over the period of the activities.

What Was the Goal?

- Surface and confirm a set of themes, priorities and areas of challenge/ trade-offs to help shape future engagement, policy and scenario exploration;
- Engage the aspirations, hopes, challenges and ideas of residents, youth, businesses, First Nations and Indigenous communities, partner institutions, and civic and regional organizations; and
- Begin to map opportunities for a convergence of thinking on public-facing regional, policy and planning work already underway, including identifying which existing and concurrent work should be referenced.

November 2019 – March 2020: Pre-Covid-19 Analysis

In order to code the nearly 50,000 open-ended comments fielded through the online survey and 80 meetings meetings, interviews and consultation summaries, the team used a qualitative analysis method known as iterative thematic analysis that generates a canvas of issues, suggestions, experiences, opinions and convictions by observing patterns in the responses and tracking how often they repeat.

What Was In Involved in This Analysis?

- Creating the codebook: Our team of staff and consultants used the survey results as a baseline to create a "code book" - a set of repeating themes that helped organize the commentary into baskets and to give some clarity as to how often they repeated.
- Each of nearly 50,000 individual responses were read and individually coded into repeating themes and sub-themes.
- We also included the themes that emerged from meeting reports and the consultation review into the "codebook", creating new codes when unique themes or sub-themes appeared.
- Question: how were the consultation summaries/review considered?
- These three "datasets" combined to give a comprehensive picture of values, priorities, and ideas for the future.
    1. Survey and Intercept Results
    2. Meeting Reports
    3. Consultation Review
- Detailed observations from these sources, code and detailed activities are available in a report form and upon request.

While the online survey provided the largest data set for exploration and review, the Vancouver Plan team committed to incorporating a range of inputs, including those that would amplify quieter voices with less access to or interest in digital access. Also critical to note, is that we did not treat this enormous trove of stories, opinions and experiences as quantitative data, but as a tool to highlight trends and point the way to deeper exploration and learning. It was not a representative or randomized sample. We asked a range of demographic questions and committed to constantly tracking, as much as possible, who was taking part as a way to ensure we could commit to inclusive and equitable engagement.

April – August 2020 - Post-Pandemic Listening and Theming

The Vancouver Plan public engagement process, while altered to account for the need to protect public health and meet social distancing guidelines, relaunched in June 2020. The findings in this report and additional public engagement conducted online and via community partners meant that we could continue our work building a plan that prepares Vancouver for an increasingly complex future.

What we heard fell into two categories:

1. The immediate and short-term experiences and challenges; and
2. The look ahead to longer-range thinking informed by the need to prepare for an uncertain future.

These findings were summarized into themes, and in large measure, underlined the pre-COVID findings. These themes and activities are explored in greater detail in a detailed report and available upon request.

How Will We Use These Findings Going Forward?

These initial findings will help shape the plan by:

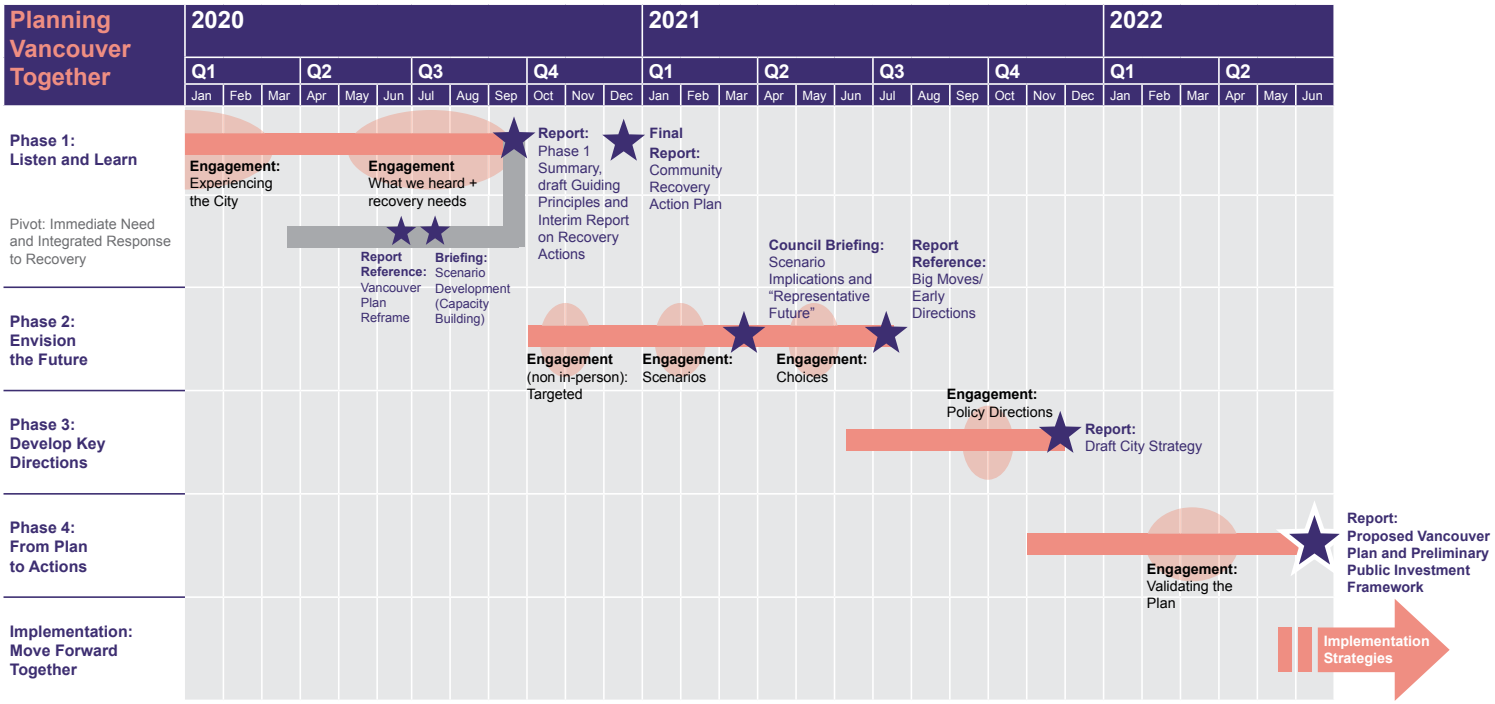
- Informing draft guiding principles;
- Highlighting and confirming common challenges, cherished experiences and places, and emerging trade-offs; and
- Critical advice for improving both this process and how communities participate in municipal government.



THE VANCOUVER PLAN TEAM COMMITTED TO KEY PRINCIPLES IN THE ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS.

Principles Guiding This Summary of Findings

- Maintain the depth and diversity of the source material, respecting all voices throughout the process;
- Be adaptive by accommodating responses that diverge from the structured questions and welcome new forms of input;
- Enshrine transparency by bringing initial findings back to the public and Council at regular intervals;
- Respect and ensure the confidentiality of participants;
- Allow for data presentation that considers how emergent themes tie to historical and ongoing sociopolitical factors in Vancouver.





1.5 Key Findings

Based on the review of nearly 12,000 individual engagement touchpoints, we can share a set of emerging themes that fall into three categories:

1. Six Core Challenges
2. What To Promote and Celebrate Now and In Future
3. Advice and Improvements for the Vancouver Plan and for City of Vancouver.

1. THE SIX CORE CHALLENGES

One of the sobering results from this phase was the fact that prior to the public health crisis the majority of respondents who participated in our survey felt that life in Vancouver is getting worse for them. (57%) Respondents across all demographics are feeling the impacts of the housing and affordability crisis and are worried about what it means for both their futures and the collective future of Vancouver. Many urged the City of Vancouver to take proactive and significant measures on housing and affordability issues now and not wait until the completion of a plan.

Subsequent engagement work found the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have deepened the major challenges identified earlier in this process from housing insecurity to the widening inequality gap reported by many Vancouverites.

Connecting the range of comprehensive public and community inputs listed above, we were able to identify and synthesize six core challenges. Effectively, these six complex challenges form the problem statement that Vancouver Plan must address, according to public and community input.



1. Rising Unaffordability

Whether it was low-income seniors in Chinatown telling us they could no longer afford to buy groceries in the neighbourhood or parents at a Vancouver School Board advisory session sharing their struggles to afford transit to and from school for their kids, this core challenge – also expressed as cost of living – is one of the cross-cutting themes that emerged across all of our engagement efforts.

A majority of **respondents observed** the city is becoming even less affordable over time and that this is impacting growing segments of the community.

There were numerous parallel conversations that intersected with cost concerns including ***difficulties finding affordable childcare***, food, the cost of transportation, a ***desire for higher wages***, fears that increasing unaffordability will cause ***Vancouver to lose its character, cultural scene, key workforces, and demographic diversity***, as well as feelings of ***social disconnection*** and growing inequality. We heard variations on this response based on age, disability and gender, and housing tenure, which require further exploration and dialogue.

Prior to the COVID public health emergency, many stakeholders felt that although the economy was diverse and growing with relatively low unemployment, many residents were still having trouble making ends meet and were concerned for their future. The COVID crisis has amplified these concerns and further exposed the vulnerabilities in Vancouver's economy.

- There have been inequitable impacts in terms of who lost their job as a result of the pandemic (women, immigrants, young people and POCs) and who is at risk in the near to longer-term.
- The disaster has also highlighted the challenges when it comes to food security and other basic needs (internet access, primary care, mental health supports, community-supported childcare, school and seniors programs), often delivered by not for profit or community hubs that are themselves vulnerable or closed during the crisis.
- Affordability was identified as a key concern for commercial tenants and small businesses and not for profits in particular and the emergency is reinforcing the need for new policies to support businesses to adapt to physical distancing and to future-proof their operations.

"The incredibly high cost of living and growing wealth gap. I often wonder if we can keep up, especially when we have kids. We want to start a family in the next year. Will I be able to afford childcare so I can continue to work? Will their schools be as good as the public schools I enjoyed?"

"When I graduated high school, I was able to move out and live in the West End on my salary just working for a bank. My oldest daughter can barely scrape by to live on her own and she has a decent job. Day-to-day life shouldn't mean struggle and strife."

"The cost of living (housing, groceries, gas, etc.) is out of control. In order to afford to live in this city I work 70+ hours a week and regularly find myself wondering if I can even call that living."

"Things are becoming much more unaffordable. There is more stress worrying about housing prices, food prices, increased congestion on the road, too many big retail chains at the expense of small family run businesses etc."

"Most people I know are barely scraping by or are in need of assistance from the Gov't because the cost of living is far higher than can be realistically managed."

2. Housing Insecurity

As "Vancouver's defining issue" – it's little surprise that housing – access to, affordability and security of – is an overarching concern/ challenge. Whether hearing from renters uncertain if and when eviction notices were coming or owners who shared their concerns for friends, neighbours and family members in a state of uncertainty about their housing situation, the issues remain central across all conversations.

Powerfully, we heard about the material and emotional impacts on people's lives. Responses also encapsulated related concerns about the relative unavailability of certain housing forms (non-market rental housing, places large enough for young growing families), insufficient housing security for renters (in terms of tenant rights, it being a landlord's market and threats of "reno-viction"), perceptions of the influence that developers and the role of transnational investment have had on housing security and affordability. Fears of displacement are a cross cutting theme across all our engagement efforts and appears throughout the housing commentary.

- The shocks and stresses of the pandemic highlighted the existing vulnerabilities of those with precarious and unaffordable housing and pointed to the need for new housing models (rental, affordable, social, and coop) and rental protections that could provide greater security.

"It's always a struggle to stay here, and so many of our friends are leaving. It's difficult to feel a sense of community when everyone is leaving or planning to leave because of cost of living and unstable housing.

"I'm just sad that I'll probably have to move away eventually if my rent rises too high while my wage doesn't or my apartment building falls to developers. I don't feel that there's anywhere else in the city that I would be able to move to that I could afford."

"We don't own our home and even though we have been long term renters in a neighbourhood we love, we live in constant worry that we could be forced to move at any point. Our daughters friends and school are all wonderful, but I'm not sure we'd be able to find anything affordable should we have to move."

"Clients + neighbours struggling with trauma + poverty. I generally feel secure, but renting (not owning my home) makes me feel vulnerable."

"Clients + neighbours struggling with trauma + poverty. I generally feel secure, but renting (not owning my home) makes me feel vulnerable."



3. Visible Public Struggle

A strong sub- theme emerged regarding people visibly struggling on the streets of Vancouver with apparent homelessness, addiction, and/or severe mental and physical health challenges. It is important to note that addiction, homelessness, and severe mental health struggle are separate challenges that can overlap ,but in no way necessarily do so. They are grouped here because respondents spoke to them together, reacting to the visibility of these interlocked struggles in Vancouver

The Downtown Eastside neighbourhood was frequently referenced in these statements. Notably, the lion's share of these comments came from people observing visible public struggle not people experiencing it. This theme included calls for improved social nets for poverty, mental health/trauma, and addiction, more affordable housing, and more work towards resolving the overdose crisis. Many commented on how social inequality seems to be getting worse.

There was also a mix of commentary on what this struggle symbolizes for Vancouver that ranged from the city not taking care of their own to stigmatizing comments, including threads of commentary linking visible public struggle to crime, safety, garbage or sanitation issues and a reputational issue for Vancouver that could chill tourism.

The staff team spent time interviewing advocates and those who identified as experiencing homelessness and struggling with addiction and poverty at sites in the Downtown Eastside and one program in Kitsilano, where respondents discussed the stigma of trying to access services and support, daily struggles for basic needs, shelter and appreciated being included in the conversation.

In the COVID-19 period, we heard from those leading recovery efforts and not-for-profit organizations that those dealing with insecure housing or homelessness have had limited access to safe places to socially isolate and quarantine when necessary.

Deaths due to the opioid crisis began to climb as the COVID-19 epidemic isolated people from their support networks, reduced important front-line community services and closed the U.S. border — which contributed to more contaminated street drugs by restricting the major trade routes. The calls for safe supply and its ongoing provision were part of what we heard from community organizations.

In addition, the crisis also highlighted the shortcomings of planning and engagement efforts and related infrastructure needed to support those most vulnerable to the health crisis, related disorder and safety concerns, and other future shocks and stresses to the city and its systems.

"Addictions, suicides, and homicides spike along with homelessness."

"Homelessness, street disorder and mental health issues and economic pressures on those populations will make people more desperate and the city more violent."

"The homeless population increasing because of excessive living costs and lack of mental health care."

"That we take a more hardline approach to dealing with homeless in this city"

"Homeless population really weighs on me heavily. Our lack of interest in providing proper sociological resources to help the downtown east side."

"The gap between rich and poor grows, people are suffering terribly in Oppenheimer Park and there is no answer for how to address their needs for housing and healthy supports for their addiction…"



“Traffic is horrendous almost everywhere as the city has grown incredibly while infrastructure has more or less stayed the same in and around Vancouver.”

4. Moving Around Vancouver Efficiently

A highly- ranked theme across the survey was the challenge of traffic congestion and difficulty moving around the city efficiently. People shared various complaints and frustrations with traffic, perceptions it is getting worse, and comments on how road/traffic infrastructure may be contributing.

This theme included divergent ideas on what is to blame (increased population density, too many parking spaces, bike lanes, insufficient freeway/bridge infrastructure, too much emphasis on cars in the first place etc.). Across the online/ in-person surveys, there was a strong theme related to car traffic and transit congestion, as well as notes about the need for improved and expanded transit systems and infrastructure, including commentary on public transit and active transit options, particularly walkability and biking infrastructure.

COVID-19 onward findings included more discussion about the need for improved options in the midst of safety concerns and access to public transportation and private automobiles. A call for both more compact neighbourhood design, allowing residents to walk, bike or roll to access core services, as well as expanding and continuing to close residential streets to local traffic to promote active transportation.

Notably, young people called for more options to move around including free transit, more and safer options to walk and bike, smaller neighbourhoods (8 - 10 minute walksheds) and increased public transit service (buses and SkyTrain);

“Traffic is horrendous almost everywhere as the city has grown incredibly while infrastructure has more or less stayed the same in and around Vancouver.”

“Long commutes to get to work or to social events. Lots of traffic, hard to get around.”

“More people and traffic and formerly quiet neighbourhoods.”

“The increasing congestion on the roads leading to increase pollution and health challenges.”

“Car congestion and getting around gets worse every year yet roads are being REMOVED by the City. I know it’s not the feedback you want to hear but it’s a huge reason why people are not happy. Not everyone can bike, walk or SkyTrain to their place of employment.”

“Supportive infrastructure for active and sustainable transportation.”

5. Widening Social and Economic Inequality

While this theme was as a closely related thread within some of the commentary on affordability and housing challenges, it offered observations of how pre-existing socioeconomic disparities in quality of life and life chances for Vancouverites are being exacerbated by these challenges and we noted concerns that the wealth/ opportunity gap is increasing.

In conversations with communities that identify as racialized, and reviewing previous consultation work (Housing, Poverty Reduction, Chinatown Transformation, Northeast False Creek, Culture-Shift) there was discussion of how racist and exclusionary policies of the past, have left us with deep and stubborn inequities as a city. There was a strong thematic thread that while Vancouver's economy was strong, many feel left behind and want to see improvements that support young people, those new to Vancouver, working people and small business owners and operators rather than those who have a secure foothold through secure employment and home ownership.

Again, the impacts of the pandemic have deepened the inequality gap reported by many Vancouverites, in particular:

- Racism and Stigma— the pandemic amplified/ brought new focus to systemic issues of racism faced by Black and Indigenous folks and People of Colour, poverty, homelessness, access to safe drug supply, homophobia and transphobia, and accessibility (for seniors and those with disabilities) for many residents.
- Food Security and Delivery of Basic Needs/ Community Services– disasters highlight challenges when it comes to food security and accessing other basic needs (internet access, primary care, mental health supports, community-supported childcare, school and seniors programs), often delivered by not for profit or community hubs that are themselves vulnerable or closed during the crisis.

"This city will continue to be a predatory playground for developers and the ultra rich, while immigrants, people of colour, artists and every person that is interesting and diverse will be pushed out. This city will continue to become a lame homogenous mess. People in the DTES will continue to be pushed out by the expanding "gastown" area, and the city will stand by and watch as they get pushed to the margins until they die there from lack of care."

"That Vancouver will become increasingly exclusive and that the city will only be welcoming to upper income residents. That the green spaces will be crowded out by too many high rises. That art, creativity, public services, small businesses, and access to high quality public schools will be squashed and instead the only things that will thrive will be the real estate industry and high-end stores."

"That people will be isolated from each other. That my kids will move away due to lack of affordability. That lack of affordability will decrease diversity."

"That the wage gap will continue to rise. That we will not have the infrastructure to survive the climate crisis. That poor and marginalized folks will suffer extensively and the wealthy will continue to look away. That white supremacy will continue to infect our schools and our political systems."

6. Deteriorating Trust and Confidence in Local Government

Low and diminishing levels of trust in government is a growing trend in jurisdictions across North America. We heard through the online survey, interviews and dialogue sessions that residents, committee members and stakeholders are concerned with the quality of democracy in Vancouver with a particular focus on City of Vancouver's processes including:

- A lack of transparency regarding planning and public engagement findings or a failure to involve key communities or players early enough in processes to have an impact;
- A lack of satisfaction with development processes as reflecting community input or concerns;
- Over-consultation or a lack of coordination among organizations; and
- Calls from groups who have been marginalized or underrepresented in city processes to improve both the opportunities and inclusiveness of outreach as well as supports to ensure that it is a reciprocal and non-transactional.

"You won't listen anyway. This is just a ******* form so you can say you did a public consultation before doing what you were going to do anyway."

"The city's track record has been terrible. Jamming more and more luxury development into the few "non-single family" areas of the city has been a failure."

"Really, actively listen to the voices of people who have not historically been consulted in processes like this and actually take their advice when developing the plan. Hold public meetings at times when people with jobs can still attend, and make them child-friendly (in fact, including children in the planning process in a substantive way would be amazing). Don't just hold consultations to tick off a box—actually incorporate diverse perspectives (gender identity, race, disability, life stage and lifestyle, age, socioeconomic status, etc.) into the decision-making process."

"When conducting this portion of the planning process, please do your best to speak to youth, as they will be the one's that ultimately live-out The Vancouver Plan's development."

It's not just about compositional diversity (hiring more BIPOC, 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, people with disabilities, neurodivergent folks, etc.). It's also about organizational transformation. Cultural shifts.

"That the young and newcomers have input in decision making."

"When conducting this portion of the planning process, please do your best to speak to youth."



2. WHAT TO PROMOTE AND CELEBRATE IN FUTURE

Throughout our conversations, whether online or in person, we listened not only for challenges, but also for what gave respondents joy, and their ideas for what to promote, preserve or to build to address pressing challenges or build a stronger future. This assets-based approach helps us understand what we must work to promote and preserve as a City – what differentiates us in the minds and experiences of respondents.

1. **Protect and Preserve Natural Spaces, Parks, Beaches and Gardens**

There was an unmistakable, cross-cutting theme when it comes to what brings people happiness in Vancouver: its natural beauty. hopes that Vancouver's natural environment will be preserved and protected.

We heard that respondents overwhelmingly find joy outside, whether at Vancouver's parks, and beaches or simply from its close proximity to the mountains and ocean. And they expressed a corresponding hope that Vancouver's natural environment will be preserved and protected.

These two categories ("Parks, gardens, beaches" and "Nature/beauty") ranked significantly higher than all others regardless of age, gender, tenure or language suggesting an important commonality between Vancouverites and those that visit or work in the city.

"Being close to nature: forests and ocean nearby. Vancouver is not only itself beautiful, but I love being able to access beautiful places relatively next door."

"Seawall and Stanley Park."

"Being out in nature! Vancouver is one of the most beautiful places I have ever lived."

"The ocean, green spaces, living in a walkable and cyclable city."

Addressing climate change and the natural environment were themes for young people under 20, including the desire for new energy sources, new parks and trails, actions to address sea-level rise, daylighting streams and more equitable access to the water.

"Being out in nature! Vancouver is one of the most beautiful places I have ever lived."



2. Celebrate Spaces that Promote Social Connection and Well-being

Social connections – to friends, family and community – also ranked highly as a source of joy with support across all demographic categories.

In terms of where "connection happens", we saw themes about preserving and promoting walkability, "community centres", "libraries", safe and welcoming public spaces and vibrant, thoughtfully designed public spaces and neighbourhoods, as places of connection in Vancouver.

Participants also name Vancouver's cultural scene broadly, as important to them: its restaurants, food, small businesses, bars and music venues, art and cultural events, and conversely a theme about "culture drain" or worry about loss of artists, cultural spaces, venues, places to make and create and to be part of culture was present in dialogue, meeting, consultation and survey results.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for more and safer public spaces with improved accessibility - places where people can get time outside, meet and connect with friends, family and neighbours and to support physical and mental health and well-being.

Some related themes around safety, social isolation and health and well-being are worthy of more exploration, and may provide more insight into those places and spaces/ experiences that promote social safety, connection and well-being across all demographics.

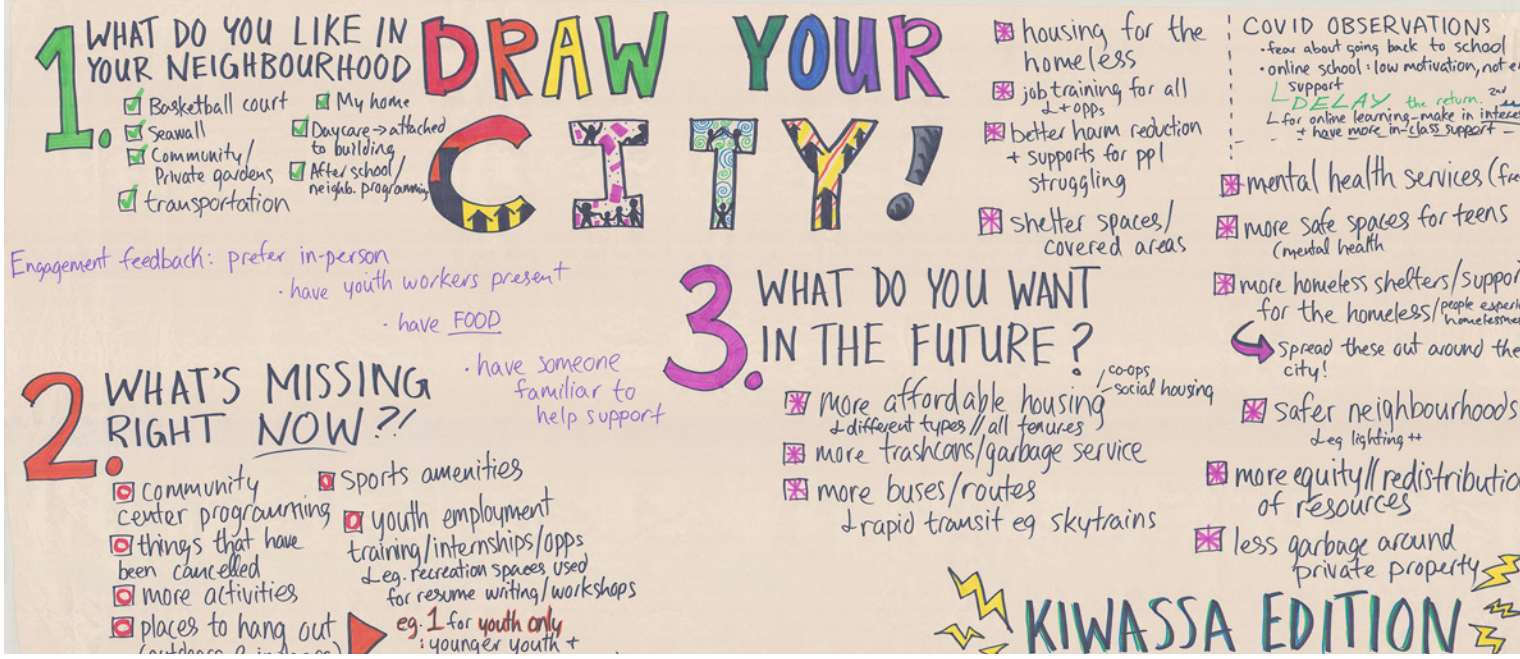
"Seeing friends. Walking in nature. Enjoying new and trusted coffee shops and bakeries in walkable neighborhoods. Going to independent book stores. Being able to get out on cold and rainy days."

"The people, I love my job at VGH, the beach, looking at the mountains, EVO, Skytrain, riding bikes in the summer, gardens, the feeling like this is a resilient city."

"Natural surroundings. Diverse, tolerant population. Presence of universities, libraries, cultural institutions. parks, public spaces."

"Natural surroundings. Diverse, tolerant population. Presence of universities, libraries, cultural institutions. parks, public spaces."





3. Design a More Compact City

– urban design that improves access (walk or roll) to daily needs like food, recreation, school, work without the need for private automobiles and during periods of reduced access to public transportation.

Participants in community design charrettes, Council advisory committees, and via the COVID-19 onward surveys, highlighted an interest in more compact design with access to groceries, neighbourhood serving business and recreation.

The voices of young people, those who experienced barriers getting around the city and accessing services and support coupled with the opportunity to share ideas and build new models following the experiences of the pandemic, brought out the idea of more compact neighbourhood design.

4. Promote More Opportunity, Inclusion and Diversity

Across all inputs, we heard both a celebration of social connection as well as a desire to see Vancouver become more welcoming and inclusive across the socio-economic spectrum in order to maintain its character, vibrancy and diversity.

This mirrors a corresponding fear of rising inequality – economic and social – now and in future.

The expression of fear of displacement of residents who don't feel welcome or see Vancouver as a place of opportunity or affordability, a perception deepened by the experiences of the pandemic.

Throughout our listening, we heard themes related to stigma related to age, racism, poverty, gender expression and disability as limiting factors for an inclusive future Vancouver.

We also heard about the importance of an inclusive economy in Vancouver, the importance of access to improved wages in the midst of unaffordability challenges, difficulties for small business, limited professional mobility and advancement, and challenges related to work life balance.

Interestingly, when sharing positive comments, respondents discussed personal successes and financial circumstances/ housing tenure as a reason (career, income, social network, home-ownership etc.)

"That the people who are making your coffee, helping you buy those shoes, serving your lunch can afford a future here. And I'm not talking about living out in New West to SkyTrain to downtown to work for minimum wage."

"That their destinies are bright and not determined by the wealth they were born into. That they don't have to leave due to unaffordability. That the planet isn't ruined."

"That the city becomes affordable and not filled with empty towers. Creative people staying and making the city better and more fun. That small bakeries and shops can still be in business after 100 years, longevity is important!"

"More mix of cultures, people acknowledging the traditional territories of the coast salish people and respecting their traditional ways of stewarding the land, building communities. More music, dance and culture. People standing up against the income inequality that is ruining the beautiful parts of Vancouver."

"My hopes are that my grandchildren can still afford to buy a house and remain in the lower mainland. I hope they are proud to live here."

"My greatest hope is that the city can be affordable and accessible to everyone - especially our most vulnerable people, who suffer greatly here, but have nowhere else to go. Not the definitions of "affordable" or "accessible" that ticks a box in a policy guideline - as it is now - but affordable and accessible in a way that is sustainable in the long term for low-income and working class people. A new social contract between the city government and those who live here who have great wealth - land owners, developers, and large corporations."



"My hopes are that my grandchildren can still afford to buy a house and remain in the lower mainland. I hope they are proud to live here."

3. GUIDANCE & PROCESS ADVICE GOING FORWARD

Lessons Learned and Process and Policy Improvements Going Forward

The Vancouver Plan team recognizes that it needs the help, talent, and inspiration of all the diverse voices and lived experiences of Vancouverites to create meaningful and actionable plans that will address the city's current and future needs.

At this early stage in the process, we asked questions not only about experiences but how we could engage more broadly and how would groups themselves like to be involved.

Some of the key early feedback came from trusted partners and community stakeholders – whether the Vancouver Planning Commission, members of the Vancouver Immigration Partnership, Translink and Metro Vancouver, faculty and students at SFU and UBC, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade or umbrella organizations like Vantage Point that represents not for profit organizations, and a range of neighbourhood houses across Vancouver.

These critical partners, among many other possible partners, flagged a need to align and connect into regional planning initiatives; to support local leadership with resources and culturally appropriate models for outreach, and better coordinated engagement by the City to sidestep long-standing "consultation fatigue".

Suggested Process Improvements Moving Forward

1. **Think and Act in Partnership**

A key piece of advice we received from current and potential partners was the strategic need to work regionally, and to work in partnership with other levels of government, community partners and advocates. It was clear that we are interdependent regionally and locally, and simply structurally could not address all the challenges on our own. The plan calls for collaboration and knowledge from community and from other levels of the public and private sector. We need to ensure that the correct supports and governance agreements are in place to ensure respectful and fruitful collaborations. This means we will highlight the knowledge and leadership among partners, both in the development and delivery of the Vancouver Plan.

2. Improving and Evolving Our Outreach

To improve our outreach to be more inclusive and more reflective of Vancouver's diverse population, the Vancouver Plan team will continue to respond and adjust our practice according to feedback we have received and best practices as they continue to evolve.

The COVID 19 pandemic has exasperated inequalities and revealed more complex and systemic inequities around language barriers, access, resourcing, and capacity. The approach moving forward will need to be sensitive and compassionate to the current context as we continue to improve how we engage with harder to reach populations.

Some of the feedback we have heard on engagement practices pre-COVID 19, includes but is not limited to the following:

- Decentralized and local-based engagement - engage with community on that community's terms and in the locations that are most convenient for them
- Respect and compensation for time given – adequately resource engagement and compensate individuals through honoraria or subsidies
- Engagement techniques and tactics – to improve accessibility of community engagement, it is recommended that different tactics and techniques be used to help facilitate reaching a more diverse and representative public
- Transparency and showing the work – transparency requires clearly reporting back on engagement findings and processes, providing adequate information, and using multiple tools to communicate
- Communication best practices – work should be informed by a variety of communication tools to build trust and to ensure the public is informed about ongoing plans and initiatives



3. Address Specific Gaps in Audiences and Approach.

Moving forward, we will prioritize and increase our efforts to reach and involve the following audiences:

- Youth (under 20s)
- Ethno-cultural/non-English speaking communities, including racialized communities within these demographic segments
- People with disabilities
- Gender non-conforming folks

A continued evolution and improvement of inclusive outreach should include

- Going to where people are means...
  - Continue to try to include more conversational tactics (vs. a paper or online survey which may not be as culturally relevant/accessible for certain groups) led by community members or leaders from each language community. This could include one-to-one interviews or small group discussions, with appropriate participation supports.
  - The intercept surveys were a good example of going to where people are, including some culturally relevant places for certain ethno-cultural groups. As much as possible moving forward, Vancouver Plan funds could be used to directly resource community-led or grassroots-led dialogue.
  - Build in more time for testing/quality control to ensure consistency in survey translation including peer-review of translation drafts needed to validate translations; i.e. sense check, remove technical jargon. This would require building additional time for validation on top of translation.



- Collect data on race more directly and respectfully...
  - Understanding the perspectives of racialized residents will be foundational to a 'just and resilient' city, and as such we should provide opportunities for people to voluntarily self-identify and for multi-racial responses.
  - Expect racist responses and fear from those concerned about privacy and data collection. Continue to be explicit about how the City will or will not use the data, as always share privacy policies and work with digital platforms that support the City and Provincial privacy and data storage guidelines.

4. Addressing The Trust Gap

Trust and confidence in local government was an emergent theme throughout the listening phase, particularly when we asked for explicit advice from respondents. However, we heard conclusively from our partners, stakeholders and residents-at-large that there are immediate improvements we can make to improve public trust, transparency and the quality and reach of the Vancouver Plan process.

Addressing eroding trust in local government, a trend facing all levels of government in Canada with increased transparency, frequent reporting and clarity about levels of public influence and decision-making models.

- Early involvement with all audiences and partners in the development and review of findings.
- Providing more time for relationship and community building efforts.
- Developing civic literacy programs that use the Vancouver Plan process as a living learning opportunity.

5. Understanding Tensions and Trade-offs in the Findings

- A number of key themes, while deemed priorities by City of Vancouver, did not always appear explicitly as priority themes throughout the public listening phase.
- Future work and analysis will help tease out these trade-offs between what we have heard and policy, governance and data-based priorities, challenges and solutions. For example
    - Reconciliation efforts appear in the public engagement survey results, yet they do not appear as a significant priority or focus among respondents. They do, however, show up in focused engagement efforts on key City-wide initiatives. City of Vancouver is committed to this work and is continuing dialogue with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh partners as to how they choose to lead or participate in the shaping of the future plan;
    - Lack of Readiness for Climate Change, Earthquakes and other Global Risks was not a rising theme in the survey or intercepts, but did appear in dialogue with stakeholders and focused interviews with young people expressing concerns for climate change and Vancouver's preparedness as a coastal city, implications of climate change on their lives and livelihoods, and possible environmental disasters.

The City's Corporate and Capital plans outline priorities related to the operation of core services and maintenance of critical infrastructure and facilities. While this early listening phase highlighted facilities, parks and transportation infrastructure, there was less mention of less visible infrastructure and capital investments, which leads to the need for more education about the needs and costs of core services. Continued analysis and learning from this phase of input, will assist in future framing of critical decision and trade-offs the City will need to advance through Vancouver Plan.



1.6 Conclusion

While this report features the earliest phase of our engagement effort, it is worth noting that both the breadth and depth of the outreach and the response from participants benchmarks against larger and equally complex long-range city-wide planning efforts in North American cities.

What is critical to note:

- We have spent many years as a City asking residents, business and community partners about their values, priorities and how we can improve their lives. With this report, we feel that there is no ambiguity about the challenges residents are facing, the things they value, and the ways we can improve our relationships, outreach and transparency. This clarity and platform for action is invaluable.
- Detailed analysis of our methodology, coding and specific reports are available as reports and will be made available to the public at vancouverplan.ca.
- We will use the learnings and signals provided in this report to help shape and improve ongoing engagement, to iterate and layer in new learning during this time of crisis, and to ensure that we can continue to listen and learn in new ways during the course of this significant effort.
- When we go back to community, it will be with information about what we are learning through our policy research, and with specific asks to input into the trade-offs we will need to make to forge a strong vision.

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