



**City of Vancouver**

**Seniors Dialogues:**

Individual Dialogue Event  
Summaries

May 2013



**Submitted to:**

Social Policy Division  
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City of Vancouver  
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## Introduction

In 2012, the City of Vancouver completed the City of Vancouver Seniors Dialogues community engagement process. The purpose of the project was to engage with older adults, caregivers and community agencies that support seniors and caregivers in order to collect feedback on how the City can ensure its facilities and services are age-friendly.

The overall findings from the City of Vancouver Seniors Dialogues project are summarized in the *City of Vancouver Seniors Dialogues Summary Report*. This report complements the *Summary Report* by providing a summary of the feedback received from community members at each of the individual Seniors Dialogue events. In total, six Seniors Dialogue events were held:

- Gordon Neighbourhood House (Monday, October 29th, 2012)
- Marpole Place Neighbourhood House (Monday, November 5th, 2012)
- Trout Lake Community Centre (Friday, November 9th, 2012)
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre (Tuesday, November 13th, 2012)
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House (Wednesday, November 14th, 2012)
- Vancouver City Hall (Friday, November 16th, 2012)

Some of identified opportunities fall outside of the City's jurisdiction. In these areas, the City has a role in advocating on behalf of older adults in Vancouver, and facilitating partnerships with other levels of government and various community stakeholders and service providers. The main report includes an analysis of which opportunities fall within City jurisdiction.

Each dialogue event used a World Café format where participants were invited to share their perspectives at conversation tables focused on particular topic areas. The conversation table topics were selected to align with the City's upcoming "Healthy City Strategy" (<http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/healthy-city-strategy.aspx>). This upcoming strategy builds upon the notion of a city where "together we are creating and continually improving the conditions that enable all citizens to enjoy the highest level of health and wellbeing possible." It requires: a good start in life; a place we can call home; enough money to get by; access to healthy food; a strong social support network; a sense of safety and belonging; and plenty of opportunities for working, playing, connecting and lifelong learning. The conversation tables included:

- Healthy Built Environment (e.g., accessible facilities, transportation, pedestrian routes, accessible parking, sidewalks, public washrooms);
- Human Services (e.g., support services, day centres, supports for care givers, access to information about services, etc.);
- Healthy Housing Options (e.g., affordable housing, housing options, location of housing, etc.);
- Eating Well (e.g., community gardens, pocket markets, community kitchens, access to fresh and nutritious food, etc.);

- Active Living and Getting Outside (e.g., Park Board and Community Centre programming; arts, culture and recreation; outdoor public spaces, etc.);
- Social Connectedness (e.g., social inclusion, participation in public processes, and community events); and
- Open Topic Table (a table for anything that participants wanted to discuss).

Some events also had designated “language tables” for groups of seniors who were working with interpreters. The participants at these tables were encouraged to discuss topic areas in which they were most interested.

### **Research Limitations**

As noted in the main report, the intent of the project was to gather a diversity of perspectives from community members on what needs to happen in order for Vancouver to be age-friendly. Since participants were not asked to build consensus or vote on priorities, the summary notes are not presented in any particular order of importance. Rather the feedback is organized by dialogue event, conversation table area, and discussion question. These summary notes are based on the opinions and perspectives that were shared by community members at various events. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all the existing programs/services in their neighborhoods, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify particular findings. In addition, some of the feedback provided by participants falls outside of City jurisdiction. Refer to the main report for an analysis of which key issues fall within municipal jurisdiction.

## Dialogue #1 – Gordon Neighbourhood House (October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

The first Seniors Dialogue event took place at Gordon Neighbourhood House. This section summarizes some of the highlights of the conversation that took place. In total, there were seven conversation tables set up at the event:

1. Healthy Built Environment
2. Human Services
3. Healthy Housing Options
4. Eating Well
5. Active Living and Getting Outside
6. Social Connectedness
7. Open Topic Table

Participants were encouraged to visit the conversation tables in which they were most interested. The summary notes are organized by conversation table topic area and specific discussion question.

### Research limitations

These summary notes are based on the opinions and perspectives that were expressed by community members at the event. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all of the existing programs/services that are available, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify specific findings.

While some of the feedback falls within municipal jurisdiction, other suggestions fall within the jurisdiction of other stakeholders (e.g. regional, provincial governments, etc.). Refer to the main report for an analysis of which key issues fall within municipal jurisdiction.

## 1.1 Healthy Built Environment

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Recognize that age-friendly transportation is an important issue for seniors (e.g. parking, walking paths, bus and shuttle service)
2. Improve public spaces (e.g. develop age-friendly seniors' centres; use rooftops for congregation spaces and public art spaces; offer raised public gardens)
3. Enhance programming for seniors at community centres (e.g. offer more computer classes)

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Some local assets that were identified include:

- Well maintained sidewalks in the West End
- Bike paths
- Bus drivers with positive attitudes
- Community centre staff
- Local papers that cover seniors issues

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

A number of suggestions were made to improve public amenities:

- Provide more bus shelters (these are essential given the rainy climate)
- Locate benches at regular intervals along walking routes (including side roads)
- Offer more public washrooms throughout the city and advertise their existence
- Widen sidewalks along Davie Street and Denman Street (they are too narrow on busy weekend days)

Community centres were considered to be an important community asset; however, there were a number of suggestions for improvement, such as:

- Ensure that classes are affordable for all income levels
- Locate community centres near bus and SkyTrain stations
- Expand weekend parking at the West End Community Centre by using a parking lot at a nearby school
- Offer new programs for seniors (e.g. computer lessons, Zumba exercise classes)

Some safety concerns were expressed about:

- Unsafe parking garages
- Inadequate street lighting
- Accumulated snow and leaves on walking paths
- Cracked sidewalks (due to tree roots)

Public transit was also key issue. Some of the suggestions for TransLink included:

- Offer lower cost bus fares for those who are not eligible for the provincial seniors fare

- Provide community shuttles that are accessible for people using walkers
- Improve the service of the Robson Street bus (e.g. the recent rerouting of the bus is creating a challenge for seniors)

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other recommendations expressed by seniors included:

- Hold events in Nelson Park because it is far away from crowded areas
- Provide a direct bus from Stanley Park to the Robson library
- Use public gardens to build bridges between cultures
- Develop rooftop and community gardens
- Paint tree roots (growing in cracked sidewalks) bright yellow to increase visibility

## 1.2 Human Services

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Promote awareness about services and provide information about how they can be accessed by all seniors
2. Recognize the range of services beyond the health care system that support the health of seniors
3. Identify roles and responsibilities regarding health services

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Senior participants appreciated the following services in the community:

- Exercise programs
- Senior colleges
- Better at Home
- Barclay Manor’s home care services
- Vancouver Coastal Health centres and mental health services

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

While many of the recommendations were targeted at health care providers, participants made the following recommendations to the City of Vancouver:

- Look for opportunities to co-locate seniors services (e.g. a multi-complex seniors centre and community centre)
- Clarify the role of the City and other levels of government in providing services for seniors
- Support the development of more organizations like the West End Seniors Network

Some recommendations for Vancouver Coastal Health included:

- Provide seniors-only health clinics
- Support doctors to make home visits
- Provide access to health care in seniors and community centres
- Locate services on Hastings Street and near Davie Street
- Help seniors find a family doctor
- Improve access to information about services that are available in the community (i.e. provide information in multiple languages)
- Provide support groups

### 1.3 Healthy Housing Options

#### **Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Ensure affordable housing is available to all seniors in Vancouver
2. Identify accessibility as a priority issue (including sidewalks and transportation between neighbourhoods)
3. Develop amenities such as green space and community social and meeting spaces

#### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Seniors appreciated the following:

- The beautiful surroundings in Vancouver (in particular around the West End)
- High quality transit
- The variety of apartments



**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some of the key recommendations made to housing providers by participants include:

- Ensure seniors are directly involved in the development plans for seniors housing at the beginning of the planning process
- Encourage social inclusion within housing developments as well as the creation of social/public space
- Provide a range of affordable housing options
- Locate services and amenities close to where people live
- Ensure security of tenure

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

No comments were provided.

## 1.4. Eating Well

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Support seniors to eat well (e.g. education on budgeting, shopping and cooking healthy meals)
2. Recognize and enhance the link between food programs and socialization for seniors (e.g. community gardens, farmers' markets, community kitchens)
3. Adapt cooking facilities and food safety regulations to create opportunities for more programming for healthy eating

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants mentioned the following community assets:

- Community gardens, which provide a number of benefits including access to healthy food as well as opportunities for socialization and access to new ideas
- Programs (e.g. Meals on Wheels, Gordon Neighbourhood House) that provide access to nutritious meals for seniors

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some recommendations were made to improve community gardens:

- Provide more information about where community gardens are currently located
- Use a more streamlined application process for community gardeners
- Ensure long-term security of existing community gardens

Participants also reported:

- A need for more information about healthy eating, shopping organically, and food preparation
- The Gordon Neighbourhood House kitchen is too small and needs to be upgraded to ensure the continued viability of the valuable food programs that are provided

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Another key topic of conversation that emerged was the role that food can play in addressing seniors' isolation. Some of the specific recommendations on this issue area include:

- Encourage seniors to work together whenever possible to purchase, prepare, and eat meals together
- Target services at specific groups of seniors (e.g. community kitchens for senior men)

## 1.5 Active Living and Getting Outside

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Recognize and enhance Alexander Park as a place for seniors
2. Encourage walking by supporting walking groups and by ensuring that sidewalks are well maintained and free of cracks and leaves
3. Support summertime activities such as movies in the park

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants said they appreciated many aspects of life in Vancouver including:

- The Seawall
- Libraries
- Community shuttles
- Traffic calming
- Benches along Granville Street

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

The recommendations made by participants include providing:

- Outdoor playgrounds for seniors
- More benches
- A gazebo in Alexander Park
- Better crosswalks at Burrard Street
- Benches that face each other (would encourage more interaction and conversations between seniors)

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other challenges reported by seniors include:

- Closure of the local community cinema
- Underutilized bike lanes
- Rising housing costs
- Limited awareness of seniors services
- Stigma surrounding particular activities (e.g. lawn bowling)

Participants also mentioned that dialogue is a good starting point for addressing seniors issues in the community.

## 1.6 Social Connectedness

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Support the development of seniors' centres and lounges across the city
2. Develop programming that addresses the needs of all seniors

3. Identify isolation by seniors as a priority issue

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants identified a number of positive aspects of life for seniors in Vancouver:

- Seniors have developed a strong voice in Vancouver
- The internet supports socialization
- Community centres, co-housing, peer counselling, seniors university courses reduce loneliness
- Partnerships between the City and community programs
- The mild climate leads to less homebound seniors during winter months

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

It was suggested that more seniors' centres are needed to help support seniors in Vancouver, and potential locations included:

- Southeast Vancouver
- Downtown Vancouver
- Chinatown
- Locations close to SkyTrain and bus services (on a per capita basis)

Some specific recommendations for senior service providers included:

- Ensure accessibility in programs
- Foster a welcoming environment in senior centres
- Promote sensitivity to multicultural issues
- Develop programs targeted to seniors with addiction/mental health issues
- Support active involvement of seniors in decision-making
- Encourage champions to advance the needs of seniors

The business community was identified as having a role in creating an age friendly community. For example, businesses could:

- Connect seniors to services
- Develop fitness programs
- Design programs for younger seniors
- Support senior workers in the workforce

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

No further comments were provided in response to this question.

## **1.7 Open Topic Table**

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants appreciated a number of aspects of life in Vancouver including:

- Access to walking and walking clubs
- Services such as Barclay Manor, Kerrisdale Seniors Centre and the West End Community Centre

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some challenges discussed at this table included:

- Cost of services
- Regulation of motorized scooters
- Limited literacy and computer literacy
- Limited information and referral services

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

No further comments were provided in response to this question.

## Dialogue #2 – Marpole Place Neighbourhood House (November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

The second Seniors Dialogue event took place at Marpole Place Neighbourhood House. This section summarizes some of the highlights of the conversations that took place. In total, there were six conversation tables set up at the event:

1. Healthy Built Environment
2. Human Services / Eating Well (Combined Table)
3. Healthy Housing Options
4. Active Living and Getting Outside
5. Social Connectedness
6. Open Topic Table

Participants were encouraged to visit the conversation tables in which they were most interested. The summary notes are organized by conversation table topic area and specific discussion question.

### Research limitations

These summary notes are based on the opinions and perspectives that were expressed by community members at the event. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all of the existing programs/services that are available, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify specific findings.

While some of the feedback falls within municipal jurisdiction, other suggestions fall within the jurisdiction of other stakeholders (e.g. regional, provincial governments, etc.). Refer to the main report for an analysis of which key issues fall within municipal jurisdiction.

## 2.1 Healthy Built Environment

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following recurring recommendations were identified:

1. Locate benches throughout the community
2. Ensure bus stops and bus shelters are covered

3. Investigate how the Marpole Community Centre can be more centrally located and more accessible for seniors

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants identified a number of positive aspects of life in Vancouver and Marpole including:

- Marpole Branch Library
- Access to buses and the Canada Line
- Walking opportunities
- Greenways
- Access to beaches

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

A number of suggestions were made to improve walking and transportation:

- Repair sidewalks and roadways (participants reported frequent injuries due to uneven sidewalks and voiced a need for better attention to sidewalk cracks)
- Provide longer crossing times and more count-down displays at crosswalks
- Improve visibility of pedestrian crosswalks
- Install more benches (including expansion of the memorial bench program)
- Provide more public washrooms
- Provide reflectors on traffic lanes to help drivers in the rain
- Mitigate truck traffic on Hudson Street (especially South of 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue)
- Improve bus shelters

Improvements to community centres were also suggested, including:

- Improve the accessibility of Marpole Community Centre
- Consider creating a community centre at Granville and 70<sup>th</sup> because it is a better location

Transit services were another topic of discussion. Some suggestions for TransLink included:

- Offer free or highly subsidized fares for seniors
- Provide a community shuttle between Marpole and Oakridge
- Offer more frequent service at night

### **Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Additional recommendations included:

- Encourage greater ongoing involvement by seniors in planning processes
- Plan the new park space being made available due to downsizing by the Langara Golf Course with seniors in mind
- Provide volunteer opportunities for seniors

## **2.2 Healthy Services/Eating Well (combined table)**

### **Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Support small community centres that are local and provide services close to large apartment buildings
2. Disseminate information through directories and flyers
3. Listen to the wants and needs of seniors when decisions are being made

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Aspects of life in Vancouver and Marpole that were appreciated by participants included:

- Services that are located close to housing
- Community and volunteer centres
- The recent renovation of Marpole Place
- The meals program and community dinners at Marpole Place
- Community gardens located near railways
- Markets located within walking distance of residences
- Food and grocery delivery services

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Regarding services, participants suggested the City could:



- Improve access to services by supporting non-profits to find affordable space that is within walking distance for seniors
- Provide information about existing services within each neighbourhood

Participants discussed a number of opportunities to improve access to healthy, nutritious food including:

- Further develop grocery delivery services
- Develop community spaces for cooking and eating (e.g. linking neighbourhood houses to community kitchens)
- Create farmers markets close to the neighbourhood
- Involve seniors in farmers' markets

A number of opportunities to improve services within the Vancouver Coastal Health region were also identified:

- Support couples to stay together even though they may have different care needs
- Address high cost of dental treatment
- Increase access to affordable in-home services
- Involve seniors in decision-making (many were upset when a decision was made to relocate a day-care service away from Marpole)

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Participants also made the following recommendations:

- Incorporate a community-building perspective into conversations about health
- Provide ongoing information about healthy eating and nutrition to seniors
- Ensure that information is available in a range of languages.

## 2.3 Healthy Housing Options

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Encourage further conversations aimed at redefining affordability
2. Provide access to information for seniors through a centralized city office
3. Ensure diversity of housing options/tenures that are safe, comfortable and affordable and encourage independent living

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

No comments were raised in response to this question.

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants identified the following housing recommendations:

- Create a central registry of available housing for seniors (including eligibility criteria)
- Circulate information through pamphlets and other means of City coordinated outreach
- Build new housing for many different households, not just families and younger adults
- Play an active role in developing seniors' amenities
- Examine existing zoning bylaws
- Develop models for building plans and tenure that are suited to the needs of seniors
- Support the principles of independent living and aging in place by ensuring appropriate design in all new units
- Promote affordable housing for seniors
- Examine issues of gentrification in Marpole

Specific suggestions regarding the location of new senior housing were also made to the City, other levels of government, and housing providers:

- 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Granville (near McDonalds)
- Empty lot behind Marpole Place Neighbourhood House
- Along Kingsway

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

No comments were provided in response to this question.

## **2.4 Active Living and Getting Outside**

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Ensure access by seniors to parks and the Fraser River
2. Develop an array of low-cost classes and programs in the neighbourhood

3. Develop opportunities for participation in arts and culture activities within the neighbourhood

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

The following aspects of life in Vancouver were noted by participants:

- The increase in seniors' programs over the last five years
- Discount passes and low cost are a crucial means for improving access
- Knowledge and understanding about seniors' issues is also growing within the city
- Strathcona Community Garden provides a good example of a community garden designed for seniors and people with disabilities (lessons learned there should be incorporated into other parks and gardens)

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Recommendations included:

- Activity programs to address issues of isolation
- Develop smaller and safer parks throughout the neighbourhood
- Ensure the availability of washrooms for seniors who are out in the community
- Provide more information about existing parks and programs

## 2.5 Social Connectedness

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Increase awareness about what is happening in the community (i.e. services and events)
2. Improve efforts to reach seniors who are extremely isolated
3. Increase integration of seniors with groups of all ages

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants identified a number of aspects of life in Vancouver that they appreciated:

- Vancouver is a friendly city

- The security of the city (including measures in place to support seniors)
- Opportunities for socialization provided through facilities such as Marpole Place Neighbourhood House
- Growing interest in seniors' issues by the City and organizations such as the United Way

The transportation system was also mentioned. It was noted there are good TransLink connections between Marpole and other parts of the city.

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

The following recommendations were made by participants:

- Create more awareness about social activities (distribute a newsletter)
- Provide information and orientation to immigrant seniors (identified as a priority issue)
- Develop noncommercial spaces for seniors to congregate
- Develop community kitchens and volunteer activities
- Improve and increase efforts to reach isolated seniors
- Provide classes and support to develop the skills and capacity of seniors (e.g. computer skills)
- Promote citizen engagement and involvement in decision making
- Support integration between generations
- Support for a “buddy system” of ongoing phone contact between seniors

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other issues discussed included:

- Address the amount of traffic going through the Marpole neighbourhood on a daily basis
- Develop a public square (similar to one in Metrotown in Burnaby) near the Marine Drive SkyTrain Station

## 2.6 Open Table

### Recurring themes:

Facilitators and note takers identified the following three recurring themes at the end of the day's discussions:

1. Encourage age friendly and safe physical environments with amenities that cater to seniors, including sidewalks, benches, an indoor pool and track, and a safe traffic environment

2. Further develop age-friendly services in Marpole by reestablishing adult day-care programs, developing more services such as grocery stores, providing more seniors-friendly spaces such as Marpole Place
3. Enhance access to services and amenities in Marpole including more user-friendly transportation

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants added these comments:

- Public drinking fountains like the one of Granville and 70<sup>th</sup> (though there could be more)
- Well-maintained curb cuts and the greenway programs and bike paths benefit many members of the community

## Dialogue #3 – Trout Lake Community Centre (November 9th, 2012)

The third Seniors Dialogue event took place at Trout Lake Community Centre. This section summarizes some of the highlights of the conversations that took place. In total, there were seven conversation tables set up at the event:

1. Healthy Built Environment
2. Human Services
3. Healthy Housing Options
4. Eating Well
5. Active Living and Getting Outside
6. Social Connectedness
7. Open Topic Table

Participants were encouraged to visit the conversation tables in which they were most interested. The summary notes are organized by conversation table topic area and specific discussion question.

### Research limitations

These summary notes are based on opinions and perspectives that were expressed by community members at the event. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all of the existing programs/services that are available, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify specific findings.

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## 3.1 Healthy Built Environment

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Address safety issues related to transportation, maintenance and clearing of sidewalks, traffic lights
2. Increase access to public washrooms
3. Ensure that community centres include a senior focus

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants identified the following community assets:

- Britannia and Trout Lake Community Centres
- Britannia's programming (e.g. senior's writing group, badminton) and anticipated programming at the new Trout Lake Centre
- Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) concerns in programming
- Britannia Centre Public Library
- Access to green spaces

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants made the following recommendations regarding recreation centres:

- Improve older community centres so that they can provide age-friendly access
- Restore longer hours for washrooms so that those attending early morning classes can have access to the washroom

Improvements to traffic and roadways were also suggested:

- Build a crosswalk on Victoria Drive to provide access to Trout Lake Community Centre
- Place a street sign at the corner of 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Victoria Drive
- Develop more street parking around Trout Lake Community Centre
- Adopt the City of Burnaby's practice of using larger print on street signs

Issues related to sidewalks and pedestrian traffic were also a focus of discussion. For example, the following recommendations were made:

- Repair cracked sidewalks immediately as they have caused injuries to seniors
- Promptly clear leaves or other obstructions from sidewalks
- Develop strategies to manage scooters and pedestrian traffic on city sidewalks
- Increase the number and location of benches
- Develop better street lighting
- Improve access to washrooms

Participants also suggested the City work to address increasing conflict between pedestrians and motorists:

- Increase crossing times at crosswalks
- Enforce traffic violations at crosswalks
- Provide more education about right of way in traffic circles

### **Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

The following recommendations were made regarding the Trout Lake Community Centre:

- Increase the number of programs geared towards seniors
- Establish a Seniors Coordinator position similar to the one at Britannia Community Centre

The following recommendations were made regarding Vancouver community centres:

- Address issues of access to community centres
- Ensure consistent policies regarding affordability at all community centres
- Improve coordination between community centres to ensure that all seniors have access to programs

The following general recommendations were also made:

- Continue to support block parties but advertise the application process more effectively
- Expand and make the HandyDART program more flexible (a recommendation for TransLink)

## **3.2 Healthy Services**

### **Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Improve access to services by ensuring the 3-1-1 service is well known by isolated seniors, minority seniors and other vulnerable seniors
2. Provide a seniors' service coordinator in every community centre
3. Provide services that support seniors to age in place services (house work, yard work etc.)

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants appreciated that information about services is available through a number of sources, including:

- Social networks
- Brochures and flyers
- Community newsletters
- 411 Seniors Centre

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and**



**service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Communications and access to information were identified as important issues:

- Improve readability and accessibility of the City of Vancouver website for those seniors who have trouble reading small print and navigating complex web pages (New Westminster’s Senior Services website provides a good model)
- Improve access to information by advertising seniors events and dialogues in newspapers and around community centres

Caregiver support was also identified as an area for improvement:

- Increase support for seniors taking care of loved ones in their homes
- Improve home support services to assist seniors living in their homes, including: yard work, home repairs, and housework

Issues related to isolation were also raised:

- Work to address issues of isolation among immigrant seniors

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Participants also noted the following points related to housing and human services:

- Identify housing as an important priority related to over-all health and well-being
- Focus on housing issues for First Nations and Aboriginal residents of Vancouver

### **3.3 Healthy Housing Options**

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Develop a housing strategy that supports affordability for everyone not just those in the lowest income bracket, but also seniors wishing to downsize. Lobby provincial and federal governments to develop a housing strategy based on a clear vision.
2. Develop a “one stop shopping” clearing house for all seniors’ housing options. Perform inventory on existing options so we know where they are and can better plan where to go.
3. Work on changing the way we think about space: use existing housing and get creative by sharing existing lots and develop more co-op housing and other models.

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants noted a number of valuable assets and successes:

- Many seniors have accessed appropriate and affordable housing
- The City’s Housing Centre
- Many seniors’ developments are close to transit
- A mix of ages and housing types (e.g. Tinsletown area)

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants identified a number of needs regarding housing:

- Improve coordination around housing issues
- Establish a “one-stop shop” where seniors can find information about housing options
- Pay attention to low-middle income families and those seniors looking to downsize and stay within the City of Vancouver
- Develop zoning policies that encourage the development of social housing and other forms of non-market housing
- Continue with the City’s efforts to lobby senior levels of government to provide more resources for social housing

### **3.4 Eating Well**

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Support education and awareness of healthy cooking/eating
2. Examine strategies to address affordability (it is not always affordable to eat healthy food)
3. Build on what is working by developing community gardens and kitchens and by supporting volunteering as way to access food

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

The following food related initiatives were identified as community assets by participants:

- Activities to raise the profile of food issues
- Efforts by the City to bring food to meetings and events is beneficial for seniors
- Opportunities in Vancouver to access fresh locally grown food (Summer Farmers' Market at Trout Lake, many fruit and vegetable stands)
- Although food costs are higher at the Farmers' Market, there is access to low cost food through local businesses and the Quest program
- Links between healthy eating and community building made through community kitchens, canning workshops, seniors' lunches at Trout Lake, and community gardens
- Education programs in mainstream media on healthy eating

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

The following recommendations were made for the City of Vancouver:

- Explore the establishment of a system to ensure discounts for seniors and others on fixed incomes at farmers' markets
- Explore expansion of community gardens to rooftop locations

It was also recommended that service providers support communication and education about food issues within Vancouver (eating seasonally, canning and jarring, eating well on a budget, cooking for one or two, targeted education for immigrants and newcomers)

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Participants made other recommendations for the City, Health Authorities and other groups interested in supporting seniors:

- Support bulk purchasing or cooperative buying options as a way to benefit seniors
- Develop and a standard definition of "senior" across BC

## 3.5 Active Living and Getting Outside

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Accessibility, including transportation to activities and access to sidewalks

2. Communication, including: communication between senior focused organizations; communication for the seniors' population about programs and services available to them; and coordination and staffing issues
3. Affordability, including support for budgeting, and streamlining application processes

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants noted several positive aspects of life in Vancouver:

- Trout Lake Community Centre and surrounding park
- The seawall and other parks in Vancouver
- The close connection between seniors and service providers
- The support that organizations such as MOSAIC give to newcomers to Vancouver

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants who identified the following recommendations to improve access to active living:

- Improve bus transportation to social events and activities
- Address issues of building accessibility for seniors' facilities and events
- Promptly fix uneven sidewalks in need of repair

It was also suggested the City pay more attention to seniors' issues:

- Improve promotion and advertising of seniors' activities
- Provide more staffing focused on seniors

Participants suggested that the City work to support coordination between the many programs serving seniors. Options discussed include:

- Develop a seniors' hub as central information source
- Encourage co-promotion and advertising of seniors' events
- Publish a universal newsletter
- Develop cooperative approaches to fundraising
- Encourage service providers to continue to develop cooperative approaches for program planning

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Several potential locations for new programs and facilities were noted:

- Build a seniors' centre in southeast Vancouver
- Develop seniors' services at locations close to SkyTrain and buses
- Utilize Tisdale Park (near Oakridge mall) as a senior-friendly location

Recreational program ideas were also discussed:

- Develop multicultural spaces and activities
- Improve programs for younger adults
- Encourage field trips and walking clubs (i.e., Nordic Walking)
- Initiate outdoor activities for men including walking and exercise groups
- Recognize the importance of a flex pass to improve access to recreation centres

### 3.6 Social Connectedness

#### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following recurring needs were identified:

1. Accessibility
  - Transportation that facilitates participation and mobility
  - Language programs that help people connect within and across culture/languages
  - Infrastructure that is more accessible
2. Engagement
  - Lots of volunteer opportunities to support seniors
  - Opportunities for seniors to take in part in civic and social process (e.g. polling stations, seniors' websites and discussion forums)
3. Seniors planning for seniors
  - Better definition of seniors and older adult
  - Development of programs that are more appropriate for young seniors

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Accessibility challenges were noted by participants. For example, it was recommended that the City and other service providers:

- Ensure citizens are able to get out and around by providing accessible transportation
- Provide accessible infrastructure (e.g. curb cuts)

- Improve access and mobility in areas such as Stanley Park and the Seawall
- Improve lighting at night so that seniors feel safe when they leave their homes
- Make room on city sidewalks for scooters
- Establish areas on the street for people to sit and talk without crowding existing sidewalks

Suggestions relating to newcomer seniors included:

- Provide more services and support for newcomer seniors
- Develop more language classes
- Initiate dialogue across the city about issues related to multiculturalism

Participants also identified the need for programming that reflects the diversity in interests and life situations across the seniors population:

- Develop a mixture of programs specifically aimed at seniors, as well as inter-generational programs and activities for specific groups such as younger or older seniors
- Enhance peer counseling and information and referral support
- Promote the City's 3-1-1 information line to ensure access to programs and services

### 3.7 Open Table

#### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Transportation and Access (e.g. it is difficult to find parking if you are a caretaker helping a senior especially if you do not have a handicap parking permit)
2. Access to information and inclusion (e.g. Getting seniors out of their homes, how to involve newcomers to activities and groups, best ways to reach community members, communicate info that will reach seniors directly)
3. Institutional capacity and funding (e.g. high program costs for mixed and seniors only facilities; need for a new relationship between providers and seniors; need to develop capacity for local advocates and champions)

#### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants noted a number of aspects that they appreciated:

- Availability parks in Vancouver
- Good number of seniors' services and programs in areas such as Mount Pleasant
- High quality community organizations such as the 411 Seniors Society

- Availability of parking
- Overall condition of the sidewalks

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Recommendations specific to First Nations Elders in Vancouver included:

- Offer transportation, housing and health services specifically for First Nations Elders
- Address social isolation
- Invite Elders Council to community events to promote awareness about issues of First Nations Elders
- Provide a greater variety of programs at Trout Lake Community Centre
- Lower program fees and offer transportation to and from Trout Lake Community Centre
- Provide washrooms that are available after closing time at Trout Lake Community Centre

Conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles were also discussed. In particular, participants recommended that the City:

- Address pedestrian safety issues at the intersection of Commercial and Victoria
- Lengthen the crossing light time at the Cambie and Broadway intersection

It was also suggested that the City work with organizations such as 411 Seniors Society to strengthen programs and supports for seniors.

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Participant identified the following issues:

- Encourage more participation and engagement by seniors in the development of priorities and programs
- Build partnerships with seniors (do not simply provide care)
- Promote the use of the term “older adults” to replace the term “seniors”

## Dialogue #4 – Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre (November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

The fourth Seniors Dialogue event took place at Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. This section summarizes some of the highlights of the conversation that took place. In total, there were nine conversation tables set up at the event:

1. Healthy Built Environment
2. Human Services
3. Healthy Housing Options
4. Eating Well
5. Active Living and Getting Outside
6. Social Connectedness
7. Open Topic Table 1 & 2
8. Punjabi language tables 1 & 2
9. Cantonese language table

Participants were encouraged to visit the conversation tables in which they were most interested. The summary notes are organized by conversation table topic area and specific discussion question.

### Research limitations

These summary notes are based on the opinions and perspectives that were expressed by community members at the event. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all of the existing programs/services that are available, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify specific findings.

While some of the feedback falls within municipal jurisdiction, other suggestions fall within the jurisdiction of other stakeholders (e.g. regional, provincial governments, etc.). Refer to the main report for an analysis of which key issues fall within municipal jurisdiction.

## 4.1 Healthy Built Environment

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Make washrooms and facilities available in public places



2. Address issues of walkability by ensuring curb cuts are not blocked and that sidewalks are maintained and free of leaves
3. Promote public spaces and plazas that have benches and are accessible and well lit

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants reported appreciating the following:

- The elders room at Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- The seniors programs at Sunset Community Centre

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some challenges which can prevent some seniors from leaving their homes include:

- Limited curb ramps
- Lack of awareness among drivers about curb ramps
- Inadequate snow and leaf removal during winter months
- Need for public washrooms, water fountains, pay phones and benches
- Inadequate lighting on walking paths
- Bus stops without bus shelters and benches

Some comments with regards to community centres were also raised, including:

- Britannia Centre is accessible but lacks programming/activities geared towards seniors
- Program costs at senior centres are sometimes more expensive than private services
- Community centres should offer better access to computer and the internet
- There needs to be more community centres on the Eastside
- Diversify programming to include woodworking, crafting, gardening, etc.

Participants also made some recommendations directed at TransLink:

- Improve service frequency
- Provide bus displays with route information
- Improve HandyDART service

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

It was noted that school spaces could be more effectively used to address community needs.

## 4.2 Human Services

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Ensure that community housing works to enhance inclusion and social connections
2. Develop resources to address the needs of an aging population
3. Ensure that services are culturally significant

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants appreciated a number of aspects of life in Vancouver including:

- The City's 3-1-1 service
- New housing in the downtown area
- Improved street cleanliness
- Resources available at schools and community centres
- New HandyDART service

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

The following recommendations were offered to service providers:

- Offer case managers to socially disconnected seniors
- Provide an adult day care program in the Downtown Eastside
- Address issues related to social inclusion for Elders
- Provide information about programs and services
- Involve appropriate Aboriginal-serving organizations in service delivery
- Ensure service providers have knowledge about First Nations/Aboriginal history, culture and traditions
- Provide interpreters familiar with a variety of dialects
- Offer services to help people cope with grief and loss
- Provide free seniors centres

Participants made specific recommendations about at community centres, including:

- Address inequitable allocation of resources, potentially by having community centres specialize in particular areas and offering transportation between community centres
- Make it easier for seniors to use the leisure access program

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other comments raised included:

- Housing is a priority issue, especially the accessibility of social housing, costs and services in supportive housing, socialization and housing support services
- More gathering places are needed
- An aging population will put increased pressure on existing support services
- Recognize and value the roles of women and Elders within First Nations and Aboriginal cultures
- Elders can play an important role in providing information about services to younger members
- Incorporate traditional practices and protocols for each season of the year
- Address transportation challenges faced by seniors trying to attend doctor’s appointments
- Focus on preventative practices

### 4.3 Healthy Housing Options

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Address issues of isolation and support prolonged independence by locating amenities within walking distance of housing
2. Ensure access to seniors only and mixed-age housing

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Seniors reported appreciating the following community assets:

- Cooperative housing
- SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Residents) program

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Seniors mentioned that housing should be located close to a number of amenities to support aging in place and independence. Particular amenities that were identified included:

- Doctors
- Dentists
- Transportation
- Recreation
- Grocery shopping

Some suggested considerations when designing seniors housing included:

- Quiet time
- Visitors
- Inexpensive parking
- Storage
- Safety (e.g. monitors, on site caretakers, and emergency exists)

It was noted that housing projects can address issues of isolation by encouraging mixed units where grandchildren can live with seniors. Links between Elders and the younger generation are especially important in the Aboriginal community. Participants also discussed the idea of introducing more support for independent seniors living on their own.

Other recommendations included:

- Provide more non-market and subsidized housing
- Encourage a mix of income levels in new developments
- Set aside land within the city targeted at seniors housing
- Avoid grouping elderly with people with psychiatric disabilities because the two groups do not share the same support system.

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

No comments were provided.

## 4.4 Eating Well

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Expand outreach around community kitchen programs/workshops (through community papers) and expand the communal work program funding
2. Situate grocery stores closer to seniors housing and encourage local grocery stores to provide low cost delivery for seniors
3. Develop a written resource list of all food services available for seniors including communal dining options and other community-based services

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants reported appreciating the following aspects of life in Vancouver:

- The availability of community gardens for active seniors
- The City’s 3-1-1 service
- Links on the City website to the dial-a-dietician service
- Low cost meals and food redistribution programs
- Availability of grant programs to support food security work

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

The following challenges were identified:

- Difficulties accessing affordable, locally grown food
- Farmers markets are expensive
- Community gardens require a lot of time and energy

Specific recommendations for service providers included:

- Offer affordable meal delivery and grocery delivery services
- Provide education programs connected to community kitchens
- Offer information about food programs
- Provide outreach to isolated seniors
- Implement a harvest program to distribute uneaten fruit from local fruit trees
- Deliver education targeted at people living with diabetes
- Organize more potlucks and community meals in community facilities
- Develop stricter guidelines for community kitchens

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other comments included:

- Consider the recent initiative in New York City which banned large soft drinks and addressed salt and fat content in restaurant meals
- The Meals on Wheels program needs to do more presentations to explain their services to the community

## 4.5 Active Living and Getting Outside

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Ensure ongoing communication about events and programs by developing an easily accessible website and printed booklets
2. Locate seniors' facilities near to seniors' housing and transportation
3. Support seniors to become more involved in their communities

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants reported appreciating the following aspects of life in Vancouver:

- Walkable neighbourhoods
- A good transit system
- Access to seniors programs at community centres
- Seniors programmers are receptive to hearing the concerns of seniors
- Meditation and movement classes (e.g. Tai Chi, Chi Gong and Tae Bo)
- Fitness centres
- Britannia Seniors Lounge
- Walking clubs
- Biking and walking trails

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

The need for planning approaches that recognize the diverse needs of seniors and older adults was discussed by participants. It was also suggested that intergenerational programming can help build respect and communication between younger and older members of the community.

Some barriers to access were identified including:

- Limited access to information about programs (e.g. inaccessible City of Vancouver website, limited access to printed information through newsletters and seniors bulletin boards, a need for a printed guide to seniors programs and services)
- Program cost
- Language barriers (i.e. a lack of interpreters)
- Bus fares

Some specific recommendations for service providers included:

- Support easier transportation to activities
- Promote more outdoor activities
- Explore the use of school spaces for seniors programs
- Develop more lounge spaces and plazas where seniors can sit and talk
- Support the development of seniors centres in partnership with community centres
- Provide seniors centres and seniors programming in Southeast Vancouver and the South Granville area
- Offer uniform access to programming at all community centres

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other comments raised include the following:

- Offer education on healthy eating and environmental issues
- Develop programs through Public Private Partnerships
- Trees that block street lights are a safety hazard

## 4.6 Social Connectedness

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Develop intergenerational programming that takes into account the needs of younger and older seniors
2. Support meaningful activities to promote connections between seniors including arts-based programs, dialogues, shared meals, and programs that address safety concerns
3. Address transportation issues for seniors as this affects social connectedness

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants reported appreciating the following:

- Availability of co-op housing and recreation centres
- Notice boards at Britannia Centre which help seniors without access to the internet stay connected
- West Coast Traditional Night at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre provides opportunities for international dialogue

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some specific suggestions to improve programming include the following:

- Provide programs geared towards younger and single seniors
- Train younger seniors to provide peer counseling, support and information to seniors over the age of 75
- Offer programs that build intergenerational connections across all age groups
- Provide more coordinators (with increased training and support) at community centres and neighbourhood houses
- Offer shared meals (e.g. potlucks, community kitchens, intercultural meals, etc.)
- Host dialogue circles and conversations based on the Philosopher’s Café model
- Offer workshops and education opportunities on various topics (e.g. health and safety issues)
- Use notice boards and libraries to disseminate information to seniors.

## 4.7 Open Topic Tables

Two Open Tables were facilitated at this event. These provided an opportunity for participants to discuss topics of their choosing. The reoccurring issues at these tables included:

- Transportation and accessibility
- Information and communications
- Safety
- Access to affordable housing

In particular, participants reporting the following transportation related challenges:

- Lack of transportation options prevents access to community centres
- HandyDART wait times are a barrier
- Parking lots are expensive



- A need to improve access to public washrooms at transit stations

Another focal point of the conversation was access to information. In particular, participants recommended that service providers:

- Provide information about seniors programs and services in hard copy paper formats because they do not have computer access (e.g. offer a monthly calendar of events)
- Post information on bulletin boards at community centres and libraries
- Use larger print on information resources
- Improve outreach and communications to minority groups

Recommendations to improve access to affordable housing for seniors included:

- Develop housing projects that address mixed needs
- Emulate the Beulah Garden Homes Society model of assisted living
- Offer homeless shelters for seniors

Other comments include:

- Address safety issues in parks
- Offer self-defense training to seniors
- Improve access to community gardens
- Develop more Elders programs at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- Increase availability of home care
- Offer grocery delivery services

## 4.8 Punjabi language tables

Two tables were established to accept input from seniors who speak Punjabi. They were encouraged to discuss the topics that were most of interest to the group. Their comments are organized by conversation topic area.

Some recommendations to create a healthy built environment included:

- Improve lighting on streets and in parks
- Improving bus stops by providing benches, garbage cans and rain shelters
- Enhance sidewalk maintenance
- Improve crosswalk wait times
- Increase access to payphones

Some recommendations for TransLink include:

- Provide access to public washrooms at SkyTrain stations
- Address security concerns on SkyTrains
- Improve bus service
- Provide better locations for bus stops

A number of suggestions on the topic of active living were raised:

- Provide more seniors centres in the East and Southeast areas of Vancouver
- Offer low-cost or free exercise facilities
- Organize trips and picnics
- Hold intercultural and intercommunity events and festivals

When discussing access to nutritious and healthy food, participants expressed:

- A need for more information about community gardens in Punjabi and other languages
- Concerns about ongoing inspection of expiry dates and overall food safety
- Difficulties accessing affordable, fresh food in all areas of the city

Housing was also a focal point of conversation. In particular, participants mentioned that:

- Rents in Vancouver are not affordable
- Most affordable housing is located far away from bus services
- There are challenges with discriminatory landlords
- Some existing rental properties are falling into disrepair
- The City could potentially provide more information about programs to support home modifications for accessibility issues
- Punjabi speaking seniors seeking access to care facilities may face many issues including language barriers, cultural differences, and limited culturally appropriate food options

Other comments made include:

- There is no information about volunteer opportunities that is published in Punjabi
- There are challenges with safety and vandalism and suggested (potentially the Police force could be more visible)
- There needs to be greater awareness about cultural holidays and celebrations

## 4.9 Cantonese language table

One table was established for Cantonese speaking seniors. The group discussed a range of issues. Their topics are organized by conversation topic area.

Participants reported appreciating:

- The staff and services at South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
- The quality of food at farmers markets.

Some challenges with the built environment were reported including:

- Inadequate snow and leaf removal
- A need for more washrooms at city parks
- Insufficient crosswalk walking times
- Street signs are hard to see because the text size is too small
- Not all neighbourhoods have sidewalks
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Garbage pickup frequency
- Limited enforcement of disability parking regulations

Participants also recommended that TransLink offer public washrooms.

This group also noted a lack of affordable housing in the city. Assisted housing is an option for those who cannot live with their families, but it was noted that this option can be costly and may not address issues of culture and diet.

Some recommendations were directed at service providers, including:

- Offer more adult daycare services
- Provide more services in Mandarin and Cantonese
- There should be more alternatives to the traditional western diet and more opportunities for community dining

## Dialogue #5 – Collingwood Neighbourhood House (November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

The fifth Seniors Dialogue event took place at Collingwood Neighbourhood House. This section summarizes some of the highlights of the conversations that took place. In total, there were eight conversation tables set up at the event:

1. Healthy Built Environment
2. Human Services / Eating Well (Combined Table)
3. Healthy Housing Options
4. Active Living and Getting Outside / Social Connectedness (Combined Table)
5. Open Topic Table
6. Mandarin Language Table
7. Cantonese Language Table #1
8. Cantonese language Table #2

Participants were encouraged to visit the conversation tables in which they were most interested. The summary notes are organized by conversation table topic area and specific discussion question.

### Research limitations

These summary notes are based on the opinions and perspectives that were expressed by community members at the event. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all of the existing programs/services that are available, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify specific findings.

While some of the feedback falls within municipal jurisdiction, other suggestions fall within the jurisdiction of other stakeholders (e.g. regional, provincial governments, etc.). Refer to the main report for an analysis of which key issues fall within municipal jurisdiction.

## 5.1 Healthy Built Environment

### Recurring issues:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Improve access to washrooms
2. Encourage flexible decision-making
3. Increase the ceiling for low income bus passes

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants appreciated a number of aspects of life in Vancouver:

- The attention paid to curb cuts, signage, and crosswalks in the city
- The TransLink transit system including the kneeling busses, the yearly pass for low-income seniors, and the SkyTrain and Canada Line

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants noted concerns regarding the state of city sidewalks and roadways. In particular, they recommended that the city:

- Build wider sidewalks
- Address issues such as sidewalk cracks, leaves, pot holes, etc. in an expedient manner
- Improve the quality and amount of signage around crosswalks
- Address safety issues for pedestrians at intersections (e.g. Victoria and 49<sup>th</sup>, Victoria and 41<sup>st</sup> and Joyce and Kingsway)
- Develop a method for evaluating cross walk times

Another focal point of conversation was the need for a new community centre to serve the southeast part of Vancouver.

Participants also identified a number of recommendations for improvement to the transit system for TransLink to consider:

- Make HandyDART more affordable
- Train bus drivers to be more age-friendly
- Improve and maintain bus shelters
- Provide washrooms at SkyTrain stations
- Improve transit access to Champlain Heights and the Southeast quarter of the city
- Initiate shuttle busses between community centres (e.g. Fraser Lands, Killarney and Champlain Arts Centre)

## **5.2 Healthy Services / Eating Well (combined table)**

**Recurring trends:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Improve access to services by paying attention to issues such as access to information, transportation and literacy
2. Provide places for seniors to meet (e.g. neighbourhood houses)
3. Develop one connection point that can put seniors in touch with services

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants mentioned that they appreciated the following community assets:

- The Better at Home pilot program
- Small and large farmers' markets
- Green grocers in their neighbourhoods
- Wide aisles at Safeway
- Community efforts to use meal programs to address issues of isolation
- A community shuttle service that supports access to shopping
- Meals on Wheels

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Recommendations to improve access to affordable, nutritious food include:

- Pay attention to issues of food affordability
- Improve accessibility in community gardens
- Recognize that community gardens are not a solution for every senior since there is a lot of time and energy involved in growing your own food
- Develop more food delivery services
- Provide support services to assist with shopping and cooking to allow seniors to age in place

Participants recommended that Vancouver Coastal Health develop better coordination of supports before, during and after hospital stays (for seniors who do not have family members living nearby).

There were also a couple of general recommendations to improve access to support services, including the following:

- Provide more information about available programs (for example, Renfrew Collingwood has coordinated services to help seniors but many do not know about this)

- Document the impacts of cutbacks to support programs by senior levels of government and advocate on seniors behalf

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Access to the City’s website was also identified as an issue, since it was noted that some seniors found the website to be difficult to navigate.

### 5.3 Healthy Housing Options

**Recurring trends:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Improve access to housing information for seniors (including information on support programs like senior peer housing counselors) by distributing information to community centres, banks, etc.
2. Review support programs for low-income seniors with enough assets to disqualify them from subsidized housing
3. Increase the availability of affordable seniors housing stock.

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants noted a number of housing-related success stories in Vancouver:

- There is a range of housing options available in Vancouver
- Seniors housing is well located
- The City employs innovative strategies (e.g. the purchase of the Ramada Hotel)
- BC Housing representatives are very helpful

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants made a number of recommendations to improve seniors housing in Vancouver

- Address the loss of affordable housing stock
- Provide transition support to seniors who want to move out of single family houses into smaller and more affordable accommodations (e.g. provide information about options, ensure seniors maintain their social and support networks in Vancouver)

- Locate affordable housing for seniors in a safe area close to shopping and transit
- Ensure that seniors housing is located near seniors' centres
- Support the development of affordable housing and services in the Kerrisdale area
- Distribute written information to banks, doctor's offices and community centres to provide information that supports seniors in identifying housing options

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Participants expressed concern that the existing seniors housing stock may not be able to keep pace with the expanding population of seniors. A number of solutions were suggested:

- Build relationships with faith-based organizations around housing issues.
- Support the establishment of co-op housing
- Provide financial planning support and assistance for seniors
- Encourage temporary housing for rehabilitation/recovery
- Support retrofitting to address mobility issues, isolation related to mobility issues
- Encourage BC Housing to address the long wait lists that currently exist for subsidized housing

## 5.4 Active Living and Getting Outside / Social Connectedness (combined table)

**Recurring trends:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

- Encourage the development of multiple opportunities for participation in neighbourhood houses and community centres (including volunteering) that accommodate different interests and ages
- Ensure equal access to transportation option across the city
- Develop green spaces and encourage gardens/flower planting as a means to connect people

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants noted a number of aspects of life in Vancouver that they appreciated:

- Available activities (e.g. day-trips, yoga, Thai-Chi and dancing)
- The city's ethnic diversity and opportunities to connect with people from different cultures
- Medical services
- Seniors' groups



- Opportunities to volunteer
- The outdoors (e.g. green spaces, community gardens and mild climate)
- The City's leadership and the City's engagement with citizens around community garden decision-making

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants made the following suggestions:

- Provide more affordable life-long learning opportunities to seniors in Vancouver
- Promote activities for seniors (e.g. a dedicated swimming pool for seniors, day-trips and tours, programs for young seniors, potlucks, and seniors days at the movies)
- Address barriers that prevent seniors from taking part in activities (e.g. language barriers, isolation, lack of information about activities)
- Support the development of a “buddy-system” to encourage isolated seniors to try new activities in their area
- Develop a “Seniors’ House” to support the needs of seniors from ethnic communities
- Develop a universal access pass for community centres which addresses the variable costs charged at different recreation facilities
- Work with TransLink and other stakeholders to address issues of transportation

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Participants identified access to information to be an important issue.

## 5.5 Open Table

### Recurring trends:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

- Provide information on earthquake preparedness (including more comprehensive plans)
- Facilitate more seniors helping seniors programs (e.g. facilitate training in different languages through centres and neighbourhood houses)
- Create senior neighbourhoods with amenities located nearby and more affordable dental care

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants identified the ambulance and fire services as services that are responsive to the needs of seniors.

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants made the following suggestions:

- Explore the idea of complete seniors' services (i.e. facilities that would provide a variety of services to support seniors from retirement through to the end of their lives)
- Work with non-profit organizations to create an active role for seniors in the planning of seniors' facilities
- Address safety issues for seniors
- Develop seniors' only communities and neighbourhoods with services and facilities geared to the needs of seniors
- Support earthquake preparedness for individual seniors as well as for seniors' centres and other community centres
- Provide information about volunteer activities and training to senior volunteers (in a variety of languages)

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other recommendations include:

- Work with Vancouver Coastal Health and other stakeholders to improve access to dental care and medication for seniors (e.g. offer seniors' discount, address language issues)
- Address food insecurity
- Provide more support and information to family members and others who provide support to seniors

## **5.6 Mandarin Language Table**

An open topic table was set up at the dialogue for Mandarin-speaking seniors. Participants were invited to share feedback on issues that the group was most interested in.

### **Recurring trends:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Improve access to public transportation
  - Offer free bus pass for seniors
  - Provide public bathrooms for seniors at SkyTrain stations
  - Post directional signs at SkyTrain stations
  - Provide name of bus at each stop
2. Provide support for seniors with activities of daily living
  - Offer interpretation for special doctor's appointments
  - Post Chinese language food safe notices in supermarkets
  - Offer free life alarms
3. Encourage seniors involvement in active living:
  - Hire Chinese speaking senior activity facilitators
  - Provide public shelter space for senior exercise groups
  - Offer a designated seniors swim time at the pool

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants identified a number of positive aspects of life in Vancouver:

- Supportive bus drivers
- Accessible busses
- Low-cost bus passes
- Education sessions offered by Vancouver Police
- Settlement and information services provided by Collingwood Neighbourhood House and women's advocacy groups
- Access to medical services as well as Medicare and Pharmacare

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants made the following suggestions to improve programs and activities:

- Increase the number of programs during rainy months
- Develop strategies to promote access to gyms in Collingwood and to swimming pools (e.g. a dedicated time for seniors)
- Co-locate seniors facilities with community centres

A number of suggestions to improve access to information were made:

- Provide more accessible signage for the City's recycling program
- Provide information about shopping (including food alerts and recalls) in multiple languages
- Ensure Chinese seniors living near Collingwood Neighbourhood House have clear information about where to go or who to ask in order to access services

Participants made the following suggestions regarding transit for TransLink to consider:

- Explore offering free bus passes to seniors (based on programs in the UK, France and China)
- Improve signage at bus and SkyTrain stations for people with language barriers
- Improve access to washrooms at SkyTrain stations

### **Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

No comments were raised in response to this question.

## **5.7 Cantonese Language Table #1**

Two open topic tables were set up at the dialogue for Cantonese-speaking seniors. Participants were invited to share feedback on issues of interest to the group. Highlights of the conversation are provided below and are organized by conversation topic area.

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants reported that they appreciated the following aspects of life in Vancouver:

- The mild climate in Vancouver
- Parks, libraries, community centres and neighbourhood houses
- Bus service
- Multicultural gatherings
- Efforts by government to consult with citizens
- Information about programs is readily available through posters and signs and through word of mouth
- Access to community gardens

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

### *Built Environment*

Some recommendations to improve the built environment included:

- Offer more public washrooms
- Improve lighting at night
- Increase garbage pick-up frequency
- Clean public benches more often
- Provide education to dog owners about dog waste
- Expand the services of neighbourhood houses
- Consider expanding the Collingwood Neighbourhood House so that there is more space for meetings and programs

### *Active Living and Getting Outside/Social Connectedness*

The following recommendations were made to promote active living and social connection:

- Increase exercise opportunities (especially during winter months) that are geared towards seniors and newcomers
- Develop spaces to accommodate large groups and activities

### *Housing and Human Services*

Participants also made a number of recommendations to improve access to support housing and support services:

- Provide more information about available programs and services (e.g. housing and care options)
- Offer information about housing alternatives in multiple languages

### *Eating Well*

A few opportunities to increase access to healthy nutritious food were identified including the following:

- Address isolation by developing meal programs that involve one-on-one contact
- Improve communication about community gardens and how to access them

## 5.8 Cantonese Table #2

The second table of Cantonese-speaking seniors also explored a range of topics. The ideas raised will be organized under the conversation table topics that were addressed.

### *Healthy Built Environment*

Participants suggested Trankslink explore the idea of making washrooms available at SkyTrain stations.

### *Human Services*

A number of recommendations to improve access to services and housing were identified. For example, the following recommendations were targeted at service providers:

- Provide volunteer Chinese language social visitors and phone support to help to address issues of isolation (e.g. dealing with accidents, getting sick and not having help in the home, food security when living alone with mobility challenges)
- Improve home support for low-income seniors who own their own home (e.g. some people bought homes in East Vancouver a long time ago and have low incomes, but are not eligible for community home support because of their home assets but do not want to move)
- Provide a comprehensive list of all services/housing options at the library or other public locations since many do not know where to go or who to ask about this
- Provide culturally- and language-specific information about preventative care and staying healthy; illness costs more than prevention
- Develop a central place for information about all services including care, housing, and other services

### *Eating Well*

A number of recommendations were made to improve access to healthy and nutritious food including the following:

- Provide information about farmers markets in multiple languages
- Develop programs to support shared gardening spaces and growing food on balconies
- Provide information on community gardens in multiple languages

### *Healthy Housing Options*

Addressing safety and security in affordable/non-profit housing units was a focus of conversation. In particular participants recommended that housing providers:

- Offer 24 hour security in BC Housing buildings that are located in the Downtown Eastside
- Mitigate the security risks for those who live on the lower floors of affordable/non-profit housing units within the Downtown Eastside

Seniors also reported challenges accessing available affordable housing units. Some challenges include:

- Long BC Housing/non-profit housing/co-op housing wait lists
- Rigid eligibility criteria for affordable housing options
- Language barriers and culturally inappropriate referral systems.

Participants also identified opportunities to develop culturally appropriate care/supportive housing. For example,

- Hire multicultural, bilingual staff
- Provide non-western food options
- Employ multicultural social workers and health care staff

#### *Active Living and Getting Outside/Social Connectedness*

Participants reported that they are active in seniors programs including lunches, exercise, dance, Mah Jong and English classes but that they would like more opportunities for informational/learning programs.

## Dialogue #6 – City Hall (November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

The sixth Seniors Dialogue event took place at Vancouver City Hall. This section summarizes some of the highlights of the conversation that took place. In total, there were eight conversation tables set up at the event:

1. Healthy Built Environment
2. Human Services
3. Healthy Housing Options
4. Eating Well
5. Active Living and Getting Outside
6. Social Connectedness
7. Open Topic Table
8. Farsi language table

Participants were encouraged to visit the conversation tables that they were most interested in. The summary notes are organized by conversation table topic area and specific discussion question.

### **Research limitations**

These summary notes are based on the opinions and perspectives that were expressed by community members at the event. Because some community members may not be fully aware of all of the existing programs/services that are available, the specific information should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify specific findings.

While some of the feedback falls within municipal jurisdiction, other suggestions fall within the jurisdiction of other stakeholders (e.g. regional, provincial governments, etc.). Refer to the main report for an analysis of which key issues fall within municipal jurisdiction.



## 6.1 Healthy Built Environment

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. The curb cuts being installed across the city are great; however, there should be more thought put into where they are installed. There should be better signage for drivers to ensure that they do not block the curb cuts and more education on rules of the road.
2. There needs to be washrooms at major transit stations (especially SkyTrain)
3. Residents of the city like the transit system. The kneeling buses are great; however, there needs to be improved transit on North-South routes, more community shuttles, and shuttles that link community centres, neighbourhood houses, libraries, etc.

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Some local assets that were identified include:

- The Comox-Helmcken Greenway
- Improved curb cuts for people using mobility devices
- Wide sidewalks
- Community centres and programming
- The Brock House Society
- Improved accessibility on transit

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

A number of recommendations were made to improve the accessibility of pedestrian pathways and bus stops including:

- Improve street lighting and signage
- Provide pedestrian friendly traffic lights
- Increase the number of benches
- Offer more public washrooms
- Fix narrow and uneven sidewalks
- Provide bus shelters
- Provide well positioned curb ramps

- Improve signage for people who are Deaf
- Provide amenities within walking distance

Other recommendations to improve the built environment include:

- Consider seniors needs before new community centres, seniors centres are built
- Offer more affordable street parking options (parking garages can be intimidating due to safety concerns)

Some recommendations for TransLink include:

- Improve transportation routes (on North-south routes)
- Offer public washrooms at major transit stations
- Provide shuttles between community centres, neighbourhood houses, shopping malls, etc.
- Improve the convenience of HandyDART

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other comments that were raised include:

- There is a lack of computer/internet classes for seniors
- There is not enough seniors programming in Dunbar
- It is difficult for Deaf seniors to find programs and facilities that meet their needs

## 6.2 Human Services

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Share local perspectives and concerns regarding human services with senior levels of government by further developing an advocacy role
2. Support the coordination of human services through information and referral services
3. Promote diversity in seniors services based on geography, technology, special needs, culture, language, age

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants expressed appreciation for:

- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Neighbourhood Houses (including South Vancouver Neighbourhood House)
- Kerrisdale Community Centre
- Vancouver Public Library (e.g. reading programs, audio book delivery services)

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Access to information emerged as a key issue, because seniors reported not knowing about the services that are available to them. Some recommendations included providing:

- Information about seniors’ services and programs at all public facilities (e.g. libraries, community centres, doctor’s offices, cultural services, grocery stores, etc.)
- Human operators for 211 and 911 services
- A video relay service to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens
- Culturally sensitive information in multiple languages

Some suggested locations for new facilities included:

- A seniors centre in East Vancouver and Killarney
- An upgraded Dunbar Centre

Specific programs that are needed include:

- Transportation services
- Legal counsel
- Caregiver support

Some approaches to service delivery that were raised include:

- Ensure diversity in programming (for example, most services for dementia are for those over the age of 80 and there is a lack of programs for early onset dementia)
- Use a community-driven approach to designing services based on the perspectives of those using the services

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

It was identified that the City plays an important role in providing a point of entry for seniors looking for services and support. It would be helpful to clarify issues of municipal jurisdiction so that seniors know who to call for particular issues, and where they can access a recently published seniors’ guide. It was also pointed out that seniors have a range of needs and experiences because of the diversity within the seniors population (e.g. age, geography, income, culture and health status).

## 6.3 Healthy Housing Options

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Support aging-in-place and affordable housing by emphasizing retrofitting of existing homes and facilitating the development of support services
2. Examine housing models from elsewhere such as the approach to seniors' housing used in Denmark
3. Ensure that new seniors' housing developments are close to amenities and transportation

### **Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants commented positively on the following:

- The City's efforts to prioritize housing issues
- The work of St. Mary's Ukrainian Senior Citizen's Housing Society
- The City's collaborations with non-profit organizations and faith communities on housing

### **Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some of the housing challenges that were identified include:

- Overall lack of affordable housing
- Demolition of social housing units in the Little Mountain area which will lead to a decline in social housing stock
- Few available seniors housing units on the West side of Vancouver
- A need for more support to allow people to age in place within their homes
- A need for housing options for senior couples with different care needs
- Seniors housing options need to provide supports that encourage isolated seniors to get out and socialize
- It can be a challenge for those who want to downsize
- Some groups have unique housing needs (e.g. women, immigrant seniors)
- Housing options need to provide shared public space

- It is important to provide a range of options (e.g. homesharing with a shared caretaker, cooperative housing, cohousing, and the Abbeyfield model)

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Some other comments that were made include:

- The City should work with non-profit organizations and faith communities to support the development of affordable housing
- The Performing Arts Lodge near Coal Harbour is a good example of mixed housing
- Housing providers could consider converting lobby space into common space for shared meals

## 6.4 Eating Well

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Provide consistent healthy food options at seniors' centres
2. Develop community gardens close to areas where seniors live

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants mentioned that they appreciated the following aspects of living in the City of Vancouver:

- Availability of healthy food and vegetables at stores
- Low-cost meals at the Kerrisdale Seniors Centre
- The City of Vancouver's Food Policy Council

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Some suggestions for service providers that were provided by participants include:

- Offer nutrition education
- Hold community kitchens with guest speakers
- Create rooftop gardens
- Offer peer-support and training programs

- Hold wellness fairs
- Offer vegetarian options at seniors' food programs
- Improve meals in care facilities

Some challenges were identified that limit seniors ability to access healthy food:

- Lack of information on available services for those who do not use computers/the internet
- Low income
- Limited transportation options

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

N/A

## 6.5 Active Living and Getting Outside

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Address issues of economic and social inclusion in programs and services
2. Ensure a range of transportation options
3. Develop a central connector through the city that matches needs with resources

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants mentioned that they appreciated the following community assets:

- Opportunities available through community centres
- The new Park Board business model

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

Participants mentioned that the City has a key role to play in facilitating the connection between seniors and the services and programs that have been established. Participants recommended that the city:

- Provide a central database staffed by live telephone operators

- Provide outreach to advertise services in the community
- Offer specific information about subsidized housing and more written information such as newsletters and flyers
- Offer seniors computer/internet training programs
- Facilitate the development of networks between organizations providing programs and services

Some barriers that may prevent some seniors from becoming active were identified. Some examples include:

- Limited transportation/bus options
- Unsafe cross walks (e.g. visibility and timing of the lights)
- Inadequate sidewalk maintenance (e.g. cracks, leaves, snow removal)
- Limited number of benches

Some specific ideas around activities and programming that were offered include:

- Art walks and tours
- Intergenerational programs
- Community gardens and birdfeeders
- Geocaching programs (i.e. activities that use GPS technology to find hidden items for recreation and education)
- Programming which addresses the needs of people with mental illness

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

It was noted that successful programs have simple formats and are welcoming of a variety of seniors. The need for a “connection centre” that provides non-medical help was also identified.

## 6.6 Social Connectedness

**Recurring themes:**

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Engage seniors in organizing their own meaningful programming
2. Provide training, education and services in a way that is sensitive to diversity (e.g. language, culture, ability and gender)
3. Address issues such as mobility and accessibility

**Question 1 – What is going well? In other words, what aspects of the City of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?**

Participants appreciated a number of community assets including:

- Seniors centres and neighbourhood houses
- Community services that address issues such as multiculturalism
- Programs that offer access to healthy food (i.e. community kitchens), exercise classes and outreach services
- Meaningful volunteer opportunities that help build connections and allow seniors to share wisdom and experience
- Programs which stimulate and challenge seniors

**Question 2 – What needs to happen for the City of Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? In other words, what needs to happen in order for the City to meet the facility and service needs of seniors and older adults? Where do you think these services and amenities should be located, and why?**

It was noted that many seniors experience social isolation and there needs to be a concerted effort to conduct outreach to isolated seniors. Some recommendations to improve access to community services include:

- Hire staff with language skills in centres and programs
- Provide programming for Deaf and Hard of Hearing seniors that is staffed by people with sign language skills
- Consider programming modeled after the exercise groups for Deaf and Blind seniors that are offered in Montreal
- Target services towards senior males (for example, Oakridge Seniors Centre has had success by recognizing birthdays, offering computer classes and other activities)
- Offer information about available services
- Plan activities targeted at various ages and skill levels

It was also mentioned that seniors represent a resource in terms of acquired wisdom and experience. With that in mind, it was suggested that the City play a role in facilitating historical projects involving seniors and younger people working together to document and preserve the past.

**Question 3 – Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?**

Other comments that were raised include:

- The City should document the relationship between social connections, active transportation and lower health costs
- Transportation is a challenge (there are challenges travelling East and West and North and South)



- HandyDART is a challenge to use because it requires advance booking
- It is difficult to read signage on buses and street signs because of the small text size
- There needs to be more alignment between the City and the federal and provincial governments

## 6.7 Open Topic Tables

### Recurring themes:

At the end of the event, the table facilitator and note taker were asked to identify the most commonly raised ideas across the different discussion groups. The following themes were identified:

1. Support ongoing dialogue on issues of aging, identity and support involving all members of the community
2. Facilitate the development of connections between organizations and individuals in order to address the needs of seniors
3. Support the community by developing peer support and advocacy and by addressing barriers to access such as language and discrimination

There was a general discussion about issues of aging, identity and support. In particular the following observations were made:

- The term “senior” itself can promote segregation
- It would be valuable to support ongoing intergenerational dialogues that encourage interaction and discussion between seniors and others about issues of aging
- Media such as writing, puppetry, storytelling, etc. are being used by the Parks Board and could be expanded to promote creative dialogue on important issues

Participants expressed concern about the number of isolated seniors in the city and identified a number of issues connected to isolation including mental health concerns and suicide attempts. The following recommendations were made:

- Foster peer outreach programs that support the development of properly trained volunteers to provide information, companionship and support to isolated seniors
- Provide supports to low income seniors that fall outside of narrow eligibility requirements for support services
- Provide education programs that support access to resources and address barriers around language and discrimination (especially relevant for Aboriginal Elders)

Concern was also expressed that there is not the level of support for seniors with Alzheimer’s that there is in other countries. For example, ongoing cafes for those diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease are held

in the United Kingdom, Netherland, and Eastern Canada. Denmark has also developed models to emulate. There is a need to bring together community organizations, the City, Vancouver Coastal Health, and other stakeholders to develop a long term strategy for addressing issues.

## 6.8 Farsi and Dari Language Table

An open topic table was set up at the dialogue for Farsi and Dari speaking seniors. Participants were invited to share feedback on the conversation table topics that were most of interest to the group. Highlights of the conversation are organized under the various topic areas.

### *Housing*

The housing challenges that were reported by participants include the following:

- Seniors living with families sometimes have limited freedom and many responsibilities such as childcare, cooking, and housecleaning
- Seniors living on their own also face challenges accessing housing through BC Housing because of language barriers and long wait lists
- Rising rental costs in the city (perhaps new buildings could have dedicated subsidized or affordable housing units)
- Social housing units, not for profit buildings and apartments do not provide prayer spaces (needed on Fridays and during Ramadan)
- There is a need for socially appropriate housing units (similar to those developed by S.U.C.C.E.S.S) and these need to be advertised in Farsi through organizations such as MOSAIC

### *Eating Well*

Some participants mentioned that they enjoyed using community kitchens to cook traditional foods. Others were excited to learn about community gardens at the Dialogue and would like to be able to learn more about the available service. They reported that they would be interested in participating in community gardens especially if they were close to where they lived.

### *Human Services*

Participants reported that people within their Afghani community were having difficulties accessing services because the following challenges:

- Their identification documents have the wrong age and age limits eligibility for seniors' services

- There is limited access to consular services from Afghanistan to address challenges with documentation
- Seniors without birth certification have difficulty volunteering because of the need for a birth certificate and criminal record check
- Language barriers prevent them from accessing medical services and medications

### *Social Connections*

Language barriers can create a challenge for Farsi-speaking seniors to form connections with other community members. It is also challenging to learn English because of: family responsibilities; gender roles; limited education; and the need for culturally appropriate assistance. Some suggestions to facilitate social connection were provided, including:

- Provide opportunities for cross-cultural sharing
- Offer seniors' trips outside of Vancouver
- Create a multicultural seniors' centre in a central location
- Offer volunteer opportunities that do not require official documentation (e.g. birth certificates, criminal record checks)