

Senior's Dialogue: Marpole Place Neighbourhood House

November 5, 2012

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 70th 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 70th 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:

- 72nd 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 70th (though there could be more)
- Well-maintained curb cuts and the greenway programs and bike paths benefit many members of the community