



SURVEY ON SPACE NEEDS  
FOR  
CULTURAL COMMUNITIES  
IN VANCOUVER



Cultural Communities Advisory Committee

OCTOBER 2018

## ABOUT THE CULTURAL COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CCAC)

The mandate of the Cultural Communities Advisory Committee (formerly known as the Multicultural Advisory Committee\*) is to advise Council on enhancing access and inclusion for Vancouver's diverse cultural communities to fully participate in City services and civic life.

As a volunteer group, we have worked together to discuss the needs and challenges of cultural communities across Vancouver, while also providing support to communities who have been driving positive and mindful action. In our opinion, we are a sounding board, safe dialogue space and an action incubator for communities who seek to enhance their daily lives in our wonderful city.

## THE SURVEY

The survey focused on assessing the challenges faced by cultural communities when looking to secure affordable and available operational, meeting, and event spaces in the City of Vancouver, as well as identifying potential providers of space.

It is important to note that by cultural communities, our committee is referring to ethno-cultural focused groups.

As stated, this survey had two main goals:

1. To take the first step in understanding the space needs of cultural communities; and
2. To identify available spaces that cultural communities can access.

To this end, a survey, composed of 27 questions, was sent to 81 different community and cultural organizations in Vancouver. We received responses from a total of 76 different entities, of which nearly half were recorded as 100% completed surveys. Within the respondents, some 12 organizations were new engagers with the City of Vancouver, while many of the other respondents cited very little previous engagement with the city. While the number may not seem objectively large, as a committee, we were glad that this activity enabled the first communication between the city and a cultural organization.

In this report, we will be sharing some survey result highlights, lessons learned from this first survey exercise and a few key recommendations based on the data gathered here.

## SURVEY RESULT HIGHLIGHTS

The following were the main highlights of the survey results:

- The majority of the survey respondents were groups that have been established for more than 10 years.
- A little over 40% of respondents operated in a language other than English. The top four other languages being Spanish, French, Cantonese and Farsi.
- Over half of the respondents cited a need for space, with the nearly equal intention of using it for events, meetings and operations.
- When asked which spaces they used most often for current activities, the top two answers, by a large margin, were community centers/neighborhood houses and outdoor spaces. Other answers that were given included: restaurants, private homes, post-secondary institutions, libraries and theatres.

- When asked what type of space was used for meetings, the top answers were private homes and office spaces.
- When asked to rate their satisfaction with the spaces currently used for events, meetings and operations, respondents showed the most dissatisfaction with operations spaces.
- When asked to identify the most significant challenge when securing a space, the top issues cited were availability on needed dates and times, and accessibility of a convenient location.
- When asked about the challenge of securing a space of the appropriate size, respondents answered that the hardest venue to locate were those that could hold over 100 participants.
- The survey also asked if the respondent was also a provider of space and if so, how available were they making this space to third parties. From the responses, most space providers are hitting the limits of their capacity in providing space.

In sum, the most important takeaways from the survey responses were:

1. The biggest challenge for cultural communities in locating space is affordability and ease of access.
2. There are not enough spaces with regular availability.
3. While event spaces are vital for cultural communities, there is a great need for more operations space, a place for communities to hold meetings, working sessions and dialogues.

## LESSONS LEARNED

This was the first ever survey exercise undertaken by this committee and we have reflected on how we may better approach cultural communities should a future opportunity to canvas space needs arise.

Firstly, this survey was only available in English. Given the fact, that over 40% of the respondents stated that they operate in a language other than English, a future survey should perhaps be translated to facilitate comprehension and to encourage a higher number of responses.

Secondly, the definition of “cultural community” is quite fluid for various groups. We should perhaps expand the scope of this survey to other small groups of various faiths and emerging groups (for example: choirs and social justice groups) in order to have a richer sample of space needs.

Thirdly, the issue of available amenities could have been further elaborated upon during this survey. The amenity most cited in further elaborated responses was the need for a kitchen, or an area designated for food preparation.

Fourthly, we would have liked to conduct more outreach with smaller groups. Our respondents were mostly organizations who are well-established (over 10 years of operation). We would be interested to see if this is due to a lack of confidence and time in the smaller groups, or has there been a decline in emerging cultural community groups in the past few years.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Partnerships: We recommend that a process for partnership-building be created to link established community groups with emerging and less developed groups. This could enable a stronger support network and a more efficient use of the current available space in Vancouver. One suggestion would be to create resource guides focused on assisting both types of groups in their partnerships.
2. Coordination: We recommend that a coordination tool or mechanism be adopted to enable small groups to quickly identify available spaces. There are some projects seeking to do this already (i.e. Spaces Vancouver), however, the coordination mechanism would benefit from broad input and a larger selection across the city of Vancouver.
3. Information to Implementation: We recommend that the information regarding space needs be recommended through various city planning organization committees. This is not an issue to be solved by one unit within City Hall. Rather, it will require a concerted and coordinated effort by various branches in order to see a real improvement. A recommendation that was made during a CCAC meeting was to share these results with the School Board Planning Process, and with actors engaged in the Social Infrastructure Report.