



# City of Vancouver Seniors Dialogues: Summary Report

May 2013





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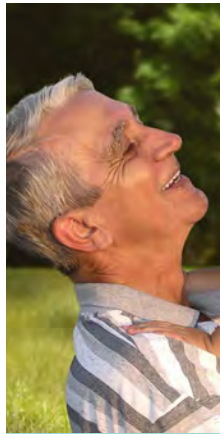
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# 1. Executive Summary

## Introduction

The number of seniors in Vancouver is projected to grow significantly in the coming years, from 13.1% in 2006 to over one-fifth of the city's population in 2036.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is increasingly important to ensure that planning for future facilities and services in Vancouver are aligned with the guiding principles of an age-friendly city.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an age-friendly city is one that “encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.”<sup>2</sup>

In response to this projected demand for age-friendly services and amenities, the City of Vancouver's Social Policy Division applied for and received funding from the Union of BC Municipalities to undertake a community engagement process with older adults. In summer 2012, the City contracted with the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to plan, coordinate and deliver a Seniors Dialogues project.

## Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to engage with older adults, caregivers, and community agencies that support seniors and caregivers on how the City can ensure that its facilities and services are age-friendly. The intent was to gather the varied perspectives of the city's older adult population on what an age-friendly city should look like. To accomplish this, the project organizers worked to involve a diverse group of older adults reflecting the overall diversity of Vancouver's seniors' population.

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1 BC Stats. (2008). Population Estimates and Forecasts.

2 World Health Organization. (2007). Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide.

## Community Engagement Process

SPARC BC and City staff developed a community engagement plan for this project in collaboration with the Seniors Dialogues Project Advisory Committee.<sup>3</sup> Most project participants took part in one of the six seniors dialogues that were held across the city. Community members were also invited to participate by calling the Seniors Dialogues hotline which was set up through the City's 3-1-1 information service or by emailing a project email account. In addition, further community input was gathered through two focus groups and eight key informant interviews to ensure that a diversity of perspectives were included in the project.

About 400 participants took part in the project. The project was successful at reaching the target audience since 83% of dialogue participants were older adults (age 55 plus); 18% were care providers; and 61% worked or volunteered for a seniors serving organization. The project was also successful at attracting a diverse group of seniors from a variety of age-cohorts, since 24% of dialogue participants were between the ages of 55 and 64 years, 51% were between the ages of 65 and 80, and 7% were over the age of 81. In addition, there was representation from the following groups: Aboriginal Elders; recent immigrant seniors; seniors experiencing financial barriers; seniors from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and two spirited communities; seniors with disabilities; and visible minority seniors.

## Opportunities to create age-friendly services and amenities

Since the intent of the project was to gather the diverse perspectives of Vancouver's seniors population on what needs to happen in order to ensure services and facilities are age-friendly, this report summarizes the opinions and perspectives that were expressed by project participants.

Participants were not asked to vote on top priorities or achieve consensus; thus, the following opportunities to enhance age-friendly services and amenities are not presented in any particular order. However, the opportunities identified in the body of the report were the suggestions most frequently mentioned by participants across various dialogue events.

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**3** The Project Advisory Committee includes representatives from: the City of Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee; City of Vancouver and Vancouver Park Board staff; neighbourhood houses; the United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the Vancouver Foundation.



Some of the identified opportunities fall outside 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 following opportunities are oriented towards the City and matters that fall within the City's jurisdiction, and are organized under the different conversation table topics that were used at Seniors Dialogue events.

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 on 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 well-being 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 Seniors' Dialogues were constructed around six key areas of the Healthy City Strategy which includes the Built Environment, Housing, Human Services, Eating Well, Active Living and Social Connectedness.

The following were identified as key opportunities for the City of Vancouver:

### **Built Environment**

- Increase the supply of accessible bus shelters
- Provide more age-friendly walking paths for older adults by improving sidewalk maintenance, street lighting and increasing the number of benches
- Enhance pedestrian safety at crosswalks
- Improve accessibility in public spaces (e.g. community centres)
- Provide more affordable parking options and more visible street signs for older adult drivers

### **Healthy Housing Options**

- Connect older adults with information on available seniors housing options
- Partner with housing providers and senior levels of government to create more choice in seniors housing options



## Human Services

- Partner with others to provide older adults with information about available supports and services in accessible formats
- Partner with others to build local capacity to develop a range of services that are reflective of the increasingly diverse seniors population

## Eating Well

- Provide accessible community gardens throughout the city
- Partner with other groups to explore ways to provide more affordable food options to seniors on fixed incomes

## Active Living and Getting Outside

- Offer seniors recreation programming throughout different areas of the city so that seniors can be active close to home
- Develop age-friendly parks and outdoor facilities

## Social Connectedness

- Create more spaces close to where seniors live that encourage socialization
- Provide opportunities for seniors to be involved in volunteering
- Partner with others to hold intergenerational community events and programs

This report outlines important information for ongoing planning for an age-friendly city. As a next step, the City of Vancouver can use this information within the framework of the Healthy City Strategy to address the amenity and service needs of the city's diverse seniors' population. Many of the building blocks for a seniors' action plan are outlined in the body of the report.



## 2. Introduction

The number of seniors in Vancouver is projected to grow significantly in the coming years, from 13.1% in 2006 to over one-fifth of the city's population in 2036.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is increasingly essential to ensure that planning for future facilities and services in the City of Vancouver takes into account the needs of older adults in the community.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an age-friendly city is one that “encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.”<sup>5</sup>

In response to the projected demand for age-friendly services and amenities, the City of Vancouver applied for funding from the Union of BC Municipalities to undertake a community engagement process which gathers input from older adults, senior caregivers, and community agencies that support older adults and caregivers, on how the City can ensure its facilities and services are age-friendly. The City then contracted the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) in summer 2012 to plan, coordinate and deliver a Seniors Dialogues project.

The objective of this project is to gather the diverse perspectives of the city's older adult population on what an age-friendly city would look like. To accomplish this, the project organizers worked to involve a diverse group of older adults which reflects the overall diversity of the city's seniors population.

The information gathered through this project can be used to inform a citywide age-friendly policy and the City's upcoming “Healthy City Strategy.” The “Healthy City Strategy” builds on 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 well-being 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 Seniors Dialogues events were shaped around six key areas of the Healthy City Strategy which includes: the Built Environment, Housing, Human Services, Eating Well, Active Living and Social Connectedness. Refer to the next page for a diagram illustrating the building blocks of the City's Healthy City Strategy.

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**4** BC Stats. (2008). Population Estimates and Forecasts.

**5** World Health Organization. (2007). Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide.



(Source: <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/healthy-city-strategy.aspx>)

In addition, the information received through this project will also be disseminated to relevant City departments (e.g. engineering, housing planners, etc.) as well as various partner agencies to assist with planning efforts related to seniors.

In addition to this introduction, this report contains the following sections:

- The community engagement process section describes the different steps involved in the community engagement process
- The findings section highlights those actions to be considered by local and regional/provincial/federal stakeholders
- The appendices set out a full summary of key gaps and opportunities for the City to consider as well as a detailed description of the community engagement process

### 3. Overview of the Community Engagement Process

SPARC BC and City staff developed a community engagement plan for this project in collaboration with the Seniors Dialogues Project Advisory Committee<sup>6</sup>. Most project participants took part in one of the six dialogues that were held across the city. Community members were also invited to participate by calling the Seniors Dialogues hotline which was set up through the City's 3-1-1 information service or by emailing a project email account. In addition, further community input was gathered through two focus groups and eight key informant interviews to ensure that a diversity of perspectives were included in the report.

In total, about 400 participants took part in the Seniors Dialogues project. The project was also successful at reaching the target audience since 83% of dialogue participants were older adults (age 55 plus); 18% were care providers; and 61% worked or volunteered for a seniors serving organization. The project was also successful at attracting a diverse group of seniors from a variety of age-cohorts since 24% of dialogue participants were between the ages of 55 and 64 years, 51% were between the ages of 65 and 80, and 7% were over the age of 81. In addition, there was representation from the following groups: Aboriginal Elders; seniors experiencing financial barriers; seniors from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and two spirited communities; seniors with disabilities; visible minority seniors.

The dialogues used a World Café format where participants were invited to participate in three rounds of conversation. The room was set up to have conversation tables focussed on various aspects of an age-friendly community. The specific conversation table topics were drawn from the City's Healthy City Strategy priority areas and included:

- Healthy Built Environment
- Human Services
- Eating Well
- Active Living and Getting Outside
- Social Connectedness
- Open Discussion Table

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**6** The Project Advisory Committee includes representatives from: the City of Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee; City of Vancouver and Vancouver Park Board staff; neighbourhood houses; the United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the Vancouver Foundation.

During each round of conversation, participants were asked to share their input on the following questions:

- What is going well (i.e. What aspects of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?)
- What needs to happen in order for Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community (i.e. 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?
- Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?

Refer to the appendices for a detailed description of the community engagement process.



## 4. Analysis of Findings

This section summarizes the most frequently raised ideas that emerged across the six dialogues, two focus groups, and eight key informant interviews. It summarizes those issues within the City's jurisdiction and those that fall within region and/or provincial jurisdictions. To see a concise summary of the key gaps and opportunities that fall within the City's jurisdiction, refer to the appendices. Individual dialogue summaries are also available for each of the specific events.

Feedback from participants is organized by the conversation table topics that were used during the dialogue process:

- Healthy Built Environment (e.g. accessible facilities, transportation, etc.)
- Healthy Housing Options (e.g. affordable housing, housing options, locations, etc.)
- Human Services (e.g. support services, day centres, access to information, etc.)
- Eating Well (e.g. community gardens, pocket markets, community kitchens, etc.)
- Active Living and Getting Outside (e.g. Park Board and Community Centre programming)
- Social Connectedness (e.g. social inclusion, participation in public processes and community events, etc.)

Each table addressed the following questions:

- What is going well? (i.e. What aspects of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?)
- What needs to happen in order for Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? (i.e. 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 should be located and why?

## 4.1. Healthy Built Environment



	City of Vancouver jurisdiction	Other stakeholder jurisdiction (regional, provincial, etc.)
<b>What is going well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of curb ramps</li> <li>• Well maintained sidewalks</li> <li>• New bike paths and greenways</li> <li>• Accessible community centres that are well used by seniors</li> <li>• Access to accessible parking stalls</li> </ul>	<b>TransLink</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of accessible buses</li> <li>• Access to Canada Line</li> <li>• Adequate and frequent bus service</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be improved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalk maintenance, snow &amp; leaf removal</li> <li>• Number of public washrooms throughout the city</li> <li>• Number and frequency of benches</li> <li>• Number of water fountains along walking paths</li> <li>• Lighting at sidewalks and on bike paths/greenways</li> <li>• Number of bus shelters and benches at bus stops</li> <li>• Crossing times at cross walks</li> <li>• Signage/visibility at crosswalks</li> <li>• Some parts of the city do not have access to seniors centres/lounges close to home</li> <li>• Affordable parking options for seniors on a fixed income</li> <li>• Visibility of street signs and road lines</li> <li>• Understanding of the rules of the road for traffic circles</li> </ul>	<b>TransLink</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to public washrooms at SkyTrain stations</li> <li>• Frequency/reliability of HandyDART service</li> <li>• Accessibility of community shuttles</li> <li>• Fall risk on buses</li> <li>• Cost of transit</li> <li>• Areas of the city that are underserved by public transit</li> </ul> <b>Vancouver Coastal Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable parking options at VGH and other hospitals</li> <li>• Information about what services VCH offers to seniors</li> </ul> <b>Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “unsafe” parking garages</li> </ul>

## 4.2. Healthy Housing Options

	<b>City of Vancouver jurisdiction</b>	<b>Other stakeholder jurisdiction (regional, provincial, etc.)</b>
<b>What is going well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Vancouver has shown leadership in partnering with non-profit housing operators</li> <li>• Seniors housing is located in neighborhoods close to parks, public transit, and other amenities</li> <li>• There is a variety of different seniors housing models in existence within the city</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local non-profit and private housing providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a variety of different seniors housing models in existence within the city</li> <li>• Housing cooperatives</li> <li>• Non-profit seniors housing</li> <li>• Some private seniors housing providers are offering good quality seniors living options for those who can afford them</li> </ul> <p><b>BC Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a variety of different seniors housing options</li> <li>• Affordable seniors housing units</li> <li>• Rent geared to income housing</li> <li>• Rent supplements</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be improved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising rental costs are pricing seniors out of the market</li> <li>• Concerns about the long term security of housing due to gentrification</li> <li>• Zoning limits potential seniors housing options</li> </ul>	<p><b>BC Housing and non-profit housing providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties accessing information about seniors housing options in the city</li> <li>• Long waitlists for affordable seniors housing</li> <li>• Concerns about the supply of affordable seniors housing options keeping pace with growing demand</li> <li>• “Unsafe” affordable housing options</li> <li>• Ineligibility for housing subsidies because income ceiling is set too high</li> <li>• Housing units are too small</li> <li>• Limited options for seniors with disabilities</li> <li>• Lack of options for senior couples when one person has complex care needs, and the other can live relatively independently</li> <li>• Limited options to “age in place” and access seniors housing in one’s own neighborhood</li> <li>• Lack of choice in available seniors housing options</li> </ul> <p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties obtaining accessible housing options when discharged from hospital with complex care needs</li> </ul> <p><b>CMHC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining funding for housing cooperatives</li> </ul> <p><b>Private landlords and households</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging landlord/tenant relationships</li> <li>• House rich, cash poor seniors cannot afford maintenance</li> </ul>



## 4.3. Human Services

	<b>City of Vancouver jurisdiction</b>	<b>Other stakeholder jurisdiction (regional, provincial, etc.)</b>
<b>What is going well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seniors coordinators at community centres share useful information on available services with clients and through brochures/newsletters</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of exercise, grocery delivery, home support recreation, housing services</li> <li>Innovative pilot programs that do not exist in other communities</li> <li>Better at Home pilot project</li> <li>411 Seniors Centre</li> <li>Seniors advocacy groups</li> </ul> <p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health services</li> <li>Mental health support groups</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be improved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited community space for non-profits who offer seniors services</li> <li>Need for a seniors coordinator at every community centre</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to expand availability of programs to meet excess demand (e.g. home care, house cleaning, yard work, adult day centres, support groups, respite care)</li> <li>High cost of services</li> <li>Lack of culturally responsive seniors services for Aboriginal communities and immigrant communities</li> <li>Need for accessible, hard copy brochures in multiple languages</li> <li>Lack of outreach services for isolated seniors, especially immigrant seniors</li> </ul> <p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of community, homecare supports when seniors get out of hospital after illness or injury</li> </ul>



## 4.4. Eating Well

	<b>City of Vancouver jurisdiction</b>	<b>Other stakeholder jurisdiction (regional, provincial, etc.)</b>
<b>What is going well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community gardens provide access to affordable, healthy food as well as opportunities for social connections across diverse groups</li> <li>• Many seniors have grocery stores, and fruit and vegetable stands within walking distance of their homes</li> <li>• Farmers markets offer fresh and nutritious foods</li> <li>• Some community centres offer cheap meals on different days of the week</li> </ul>	<p><b>Neighbourhood houses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some offer cheap meals on different days of the week</li> <li>• Healthy snack festivals</li> </ul> <p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers education around healthy eating</li> </ul> <p><b>Service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some organizations offer food delivery services</li> <li>• Food events (community kitchens, festivals) bring people together and provide opportunities for socialization</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be improved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to information about community gardens and other food programs/services</li> <li>• Need to ensure that all community gardens are accessible for seniors with disabilities</li> <li>• Community gardens should be located throughout the city so that they are close to home regardless of where you live</li> <li>• Challenges accessing affordable food options in one's own neighborhood</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising food costs</li> <li>• High cost of healthy foods</li> </ul> <p><b>TransLink</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges accessing accessible transportation to the grocery store (HandyDART only allows people to bring two bags)</li> </ul> <p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for more education on eating well on a budget, cooking for dietary/nutrition needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors need more access to home supports to help with food preparation</li> <li>• There is demand for more food programs/events which bring community members together to socialize</li> </ul>



## 4.5. Active Living and Getting Outside

	<b>City of Vancouver jurisdiction</b>	<b>Other stakeholder jurisdiction (regional, provincial, etc.)</b>
<b>What is going well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a variety of excellent seniors programs offered in the City (e.g. Tai Chi, Zumba, Outdoor fitness)</li> <li>• The city has excellent recreation facilities (e.g. fitness centres, pools, community centres)</li> <li>• Many recreation programs are affordable</li> <li>• There are many accessible parks and green spaces throughout the city</li> <li>• There are excellent walking spaces in the City with benches</li> </ul>	<b>TransLink</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public transit helps people access parks and recreation facilities</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be improved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to information about seniors fitness programs in accessible formats</li> <li>• Sidewalk maintenance</li> <li>• Inadequate snow/leaf removal</li> <li>• Some areas of the city do not have sidewalks</li> <li>• Walking paths lack enough benches and good lighting at night</li> <li>• Unsafe crossing times at intersections</li> <li>• Demand for age-friendly parks that are designed for seniors</li> <li>• Not all neighborhoods have access to a seniors centre or seniors fitness programs</li> <li>• Some community facilities are less accessible than others</li> </ul>	<b>Recreation service providers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited awareness of seniors fitness programs</li> <li>• Existing seniors programs are already full and there are concerns about the ability to meet future demand</li> <li>• Demand for walking groups which help to overcome stigma of walking alone, and for walking groups with a specific purpose (e.g. bird watching, art walks)</li> <li>• Seniors fitness programming needs to take into account the diversity in the seniors population (e.g. age, abilities, culture)</li> </ul>

## 4.6. Social Connectedness

	<b>City of Vancouver jurisdiction</b>	<b>Other stakeholder jurisdiction (regional, provincial, etc.)</b>
<b>What is going well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community gardens and green spaces provide opportunities for seniors to get outside and form connections</li> <li>• Community centres and neighbourhood houses play a key role in facilitating connections between seniors through offering seniors programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer recreation programs which provide opportunities to build connections</li> <li>• Volunteer opportunities give seniors purpose and decrease loneliness and isolation</li> </ul> <p><b>United Way</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has increased awareness of seniors issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A friendly, multicultural and progressive city</li> <li>• Seniors centres</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be improved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to information about existing programs in accessible formats</li> <li>• Need for more spaces for seniors to gather and socialize that do not require them to buy anything (a.k.a. seniors centres and lounges)</li> <li>• Not all neighborhoods offer a seniors centre or seniors gathering space</li> <li>• Demand for more intergenerational community events</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for diverse programming which recognizes the diversity in the seniors community (e.g. age, gender, people with disabilities, language, culture)</li> <li>• Need to address the needs of isolated seniors</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for meaningful involvement for seniors (e.g. volunteering, developing seniors programs)</li> <li>• Facilitate intergenerational programming, and cross-cultural programming</li> <li>• Demand for ongoing learning and training</li> </ul>

## 4.7. Additional considerations

This section summarizes additional themes that emerged during the community engagement process that fall outside of the conversation table areas. In particular, participants mentioned that some groups of seniors (e.g. Aboriginal Elders, immigrant older adults) have unique needs in the areas of housing, health, transportation and wellness that need to be addressed. Because of the complexity of these issues, it is anticipated that they would require a coordinated response across jurisdictional boundaries.

The specific issues reported by Aboriginal Elders include the following:

- Elders who are away from their community are particularly prone to social isolation
- In some cases, there are multiple generations of family living in crowded conditions due to a shortage of appropriate housing
- Existing Elders housing options are falling into disrepair

The specific issues reported by immigrant seniors include the following:

- Limited access to essential information due to not speaking English (e.g. difficulties meeting with family doctors, challenges reading medical prescriptions, difficulty accessing TransLink's information)
- Limited access to seniors programs and volunteer opportunities due to language barriers
- Some worry about complaining too much and being ignored
- Limited freedom due to family responsibilities (e.g. housekeeping, cooking, taking care of grandchildren)
- Challenges accessing culturally sensitive home supports and respite care because of language barriers and cultural differences around food
- Concerns about elder abuse in their communities

Some other themes that emerged from the discussion that do not fall within the other conversation table areas include the following:

- Many seniors would like to have access to face to face information centres
- Seniors would like ongoing opportunities for involvement in decision-making about issues that affect them and their communities
- Seniors have also expressed concern about emergency preparedness



## 5. Conclusion

The Seniors Dialogue project engaged a diverse group of seniors which reflects the diversity in Vancouver's seniors' population. These participants were involved in identifying successes, gaps and opportunities to create more age-friendly services and amenities. The information gathered as a result of the dialogues has been summarized to set out potential actions for local, regional and provincial governments. This report outlines important information for ongoing planning for an age-friendly city, and will be distributed among City departments and key senior and local government partners for consideration. As a next step, the City of Vancouver should consider use of this information for the development of the Healthy City Strategy and a seniors action plan.

## Appendix A: Key Gaps and Opportunities

This appendix summarizes some of the key gaps in age-friendly facilities and services that were identified throughout the community engagement process and opportunities to address them.

As noted in the research limitations section, the intent of this project was to capture the diversity in perspectives among community members on what needs to happen in order for Vancouver to be completely age-friendly community. The key gaps have been identified by analyzing the feedback provided across various events to identify reoccurring issue areas that emerged across multiple community events. Since participants were not asked to build consensus or vote on priorities, the following key gaps and opportunities are not presented in any particular order of importance. Rather the recommendations are organized under the conversation table headings used in the engagement process.

These findings are based on the opinions and perspectives that were shared by community members throughout the engagement process. Because some community members may not be aware of existing programs/services in their neighborhoods, the specific information on key gaps should be interpreted with caution and there may be a need for further research to verify particular findings.

## Healthy Built Environment

The following key gaps were identified during conversations that took place at the “healthy built environment” conversation tables. Much of the conversation was focused on areas where the City has jurisdiction; as a result, the key gaps and opportunities presented below in the following table are targeted at the City.

However, there were a couple of reoccurring areas of conversation that fell outside of City jurisdiction. For example, much of the conversation focused on HandyDART and public transportation more generally which falls within TransLink’s jurisdiction. In situations where a topic area falls outside of the City’s jurisdiction, it is recommended that the City share the community’s feedback with the appropriate agencies.

Healthy Built Environment	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
Bus shelters: Need to ensure that older adults have access to bus shelters with benches while waiting for the bus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review feedback provided by participants on bus shelter locations and design, as well as the City’s current design standards</li> <li>2. Increase the supply of bus shelters throughout the city where possible</li> </ol>
Sidewalk maintenance: Need to ensure that seniors have access to well maintained, level sidewalks that are free of obstructions (e.g. cracked pavement, un-cleared snow and leaves).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Review feedback provided by participants on existing sidewalk problem areas</li> <li>4. Explore the feasibility of expanding existing sidewalk maintenance programs</li> <li>5. Enhance public education on community members’ responsibility to clear snow/leaves from their sidewalks</li> <li>6. Educate community members on where to call (3-1-1) if they would like to report a damaged sidewalk</li> <li>7. Explore ways to increase accessibility of sidewalks that are damaged by trees</li> </ol>
Benches: Need to provide benches at regular intervals for older adults and people with disabilities who have difficulties walking long distances.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Conduct an inventory of available benches in the city</li> <li>9. Review accessibility standards for the regular placement of benches</li> <li>10. Explore the feasibility of expanding the memorial program to increase the supply of benches</li> </ol>



<b>Healthy Built Environment</b>	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
<p>Pedestrian safety: Need to ensure pedestrian access to safe cross walks that have suitable crossing times and countdown timers for older adults with mobility disabilities. Crosswalks also need to be well marked for drivers, and well lit. Bike paths and greenways also need to be well lit to ensure safety in fall/winter.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Provide countdown timers at major crosswalks where possible</li> <li>12. Research accessibility standards for sidewalk crossing times and explore innovative options (e.g. pedestrian video detection systems)</li> <li>13. Explore the feasibility of adjusting sidewalk-crossing times to ensure that they are safe for seniors and people with disabilities</li> <li>14. Explore ways to increase the visibility of crosswalks for drivers</li> <li>15. Explore ways to improve lighting at bike paths/greenways</li> </ol>
<p>Community centres, neighbourhood houses: Older buildings need to be retrofitted to be accessible for people with disabilities. Newer facilities need to have accessible pathways leading to the community centre from nearby areas (e.g. crosswalks) and also need to be checked for gaps in accessibility.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Review the raw data feedback provided by participants on accessibility at community centres/neighbourhood houses</li> <li>17. Conduct accessibility audits of facilities using accessibility audit checklists in collaboration with people with disabilities</li> <li>18. Develop a plan for addressing identified challenges</li> </ol>
<p>Driving: Need to improve visibility of nighttime driving conditions (e.g. larger, more visible street signs, more visible crosswalks, brightly painted road lines, avoid planting in traffic circles which obstructs the view).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Review current design standards with regards to road design and visibility</li> <li>20. Explore current best practices in road design and visibility</li> <li>21. Explore the feasibility of upgrading road visibility standards</li> </ol>
<p>Parking: Need to ensure access to safe, affordable parking for seniors. It is particularly important for seniors to have access to affordable parking at hospitals and areas with a lot of medical services. Some seniors have expressed concerns about the safety of parking garages.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22. Explore the feasibility of providing more affordable parking options to seniors who need to drive</li> <li>23. Explore the feasibility of providing free parking for seniors/people with disabilities at key areas</li> <li>24. Share feedback on unaffordable hospital parking with Vancouver Coastal Health</li> <li>25. Explore ways to improve security/safety at structured parking garages</li> </ol>
<p>Public transit: Need to ensure access to affordable and accessible public transit services.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. Review feedback provided by participants on SkyTrain washrooms, financial barriers, accessibility challenges, HandyDART challenges, and overall bus service</li> <li>27. Share feedback on public transit service received through this project with TransLink's Access Transit Program</li> </ol>

## Healthy Housing Options

Most of the conversation at the “Healthy Housing Options” table was focussed on the need for seniors to have better access to affordable housing options since many seniors living on fixed incomes are being priced out of the housing market. Another common theme was the need for seniors to have choice in their housing options that meet their needs and supports a good quality of life as they age. In general, seniors acknowledged that there are some innovative housing options in existence in the community. Nevertheless, seniors suggested that there was a lot of work to be done, since they found that there are long wait lists for different affordable seniors housing options.

The following table summarizes some of the key gaps that emerged across the different events and corresponding opportunities. The following recommendations are geared towards the City and what falls within the City’s jurisdiction. Since the provincial and federal governments and non-profit housing providers have a key role to play in the provision of affordable and suitable housing options, many of the recommendations are focused on the City’s role in collaborating with other stakeholders.

Healthy Housing Options	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
Wait lists: Need to address long wait lists for affordable seniors housing	28. Partner with other levels of government and non-profit housing providers to expand the availability of supportive and affordable housing for seniors 29. Partner with other levels of government and housing providers to encourage new rental construction (e.g. non-profit/co-op construction)
Appropriate and suitable housing: Need to have appropriate housing options where seniors feel safe and comfortable	30. Work with other levels of government to expand the continuum of housing options available to seniors (e.g. co-housing) 31. Partner with other levels of government to preserve the existing housing stock
Choice: Need to provide flexibility in choice of housing options for seniors with different needs, income levels	32. Expand diversity in housing types through zoning 33. Provide a variety of housing options in each neighborhood through zoning to allow for aging in place 34. Integrate seniors housing strategies into local neighbourhood plans
Access to information: Need to connect older adults with information on available housing options	35. Explore with housing service agencies ways to share information on available housing options to seniors (e.g. central database, a one stop advocacy office)
Accessible/Adaptable housing: Need to have access to housing that can be adapted or made accessible as seniors age	36. Upgrade accessibility standards in Vancouver building bylaws. Explore development of adaptable housing standards 37. Provide seniors with information about programs that fund home modifications (e.g. RRAP for people with disabilities)

## Human Services

Most of the conversation at the Human Services tables was focused on various types of support services (e.g. home care, help with housework/yard cleaning, adult day centres) that are needed in an age-friendly community. While some of the conversation about the need for specific support services was relatively far reaching, there were some reoccurring themes that emerged across the discussion namely the need:

- to have more information about available support services in print for people who do not use computers;
- for increased services to meet existing demand (and projected future demand);
- for affordable/free services to meet the needs of low income seniors;
- to reach out to isolated seniors who may not be aware of/accessing services;
- the need to provide culturally responsive services that meet the needs of different groups (e.g. Aboriginal people, immigrants, etc.).

Since many of these areas fall outside of the City's direct jurisdiction, most of the opportunities outlined in the table below focus on the City's role in assisting to provide information about what services are available in the community, as well as the City's role in planning, convening different government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private service providers involved in providing services to seniors.

<b>Human Services (a.k.a. Healthy Services)</b>	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
Access to information: Need to ensure older adult's access to information about available support services. This information needs to be available in accessible formats, and translated into multiple languages. It is not sufficient to post this information online, since many seniors do not use computers or the internet.	38. Facilitate the creation of an inventory of available support services for seniors 39. Facilitate the creation of an updated guide that outlines available services 40. Facilitate production of the guide in accessible formats (large print) and ensure that it is translated into multiple languages 41. Ensure that the information is available in hard copy and is not just posted online
Build capacity: Need to build the capacity of service providers to address excess demand for support services, the projected future demand, the needs of isolated seniors, and the need for affordable services.	42. Review the specific feedback provided on support services provided through this project 43. Convene service providers and funders to develop a plan to address the need for more support services
Support services: Need to be adapted to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse seniors population (e.g. immigrants, Aboriginal, Deaf seniors)	44. Explore best practices in delivering culturally responsive support services to older adults 45. Convene service providers to discuss opportunities provide culturally responsive support services to older adults

## Eating Well

A reoccurring theme at the "Eating Well" conversation tables was the need for seniors to have access to affordable, nutritious food. Some of the challenges experienced by seniors in Vancouver that were identified include: living on a fixed income; rising overall food costs; the relatively high cost of healthy food; and the difficulty that seniors with limited mobility have in regularly accessing fresh ingredients and preparing healthy meals. There was also some conversation around how food can provide opportunities for social interaction (as well as intergenerational interaction) through community gardens, food events, and community kitchens.

The following table summarizes some of the reoccurring key gaps that were identified across the different events, as well as some opportunities to address them. The opportunities are geared towards the City but also present some opportunities for the City to partner with other agencies/organizations such as Vancouver Coastal Health and community organizations to address food security issues.

<b>Eating Well</b>	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
Access to information: Need to provide information to older adults on available food services (e.g. grocery delivery services, meal delivery services, community gardens, farmers markets, home supports, cheap/free meals etc.)	46. Partner with VCH to inventory the available seniors' food services 47. Partner with VCH to provide guides/ brochures which outline available services 48. Partner with VCH to ensure that information is provided in accessible print formats (large print) and translated into multiple languages. Provide hard copy versions
Food affordability: Need to provide affordable food options for seniors on fixed incomes	49. Explore the feasibility of bulk buying programs, gleaning projects 50. Partner with community organizations to offer training in food preservation to seniors
Nutrition Education: Need to provide information to older adults on healthy eating (e.g. eating well on a budget, easy and healthy meals, how to cook for diabetes)	51. Partner with other groups (e.g. Vancouver Coastal Health) to provide healthy eating classes to seniors
Community gardens: Need to ensure that they are accessible for seniors with disabilities and located throughout the city	52. Build new community gardens to a high standard of accessibility 53. Inventory the current wait lists for community gardens 54. Explore the feasibility of providing more community gardens throughout the city in areas with excess demand
Socialization: Need to provide opportunities for socialization using food	55. Partner with other organizations to offer intergenerational community kitchen programs 56. Partner with other organizations to offer multicultural community kitchen programs

## Active Living and Getting Outside

There was some significant overlap between the ideas raised at the Active Living and Getting Outside conversation tables and the conversation at the Healthy Built Environment table. For example, many of the ideas raised focused on providing age-friendly pedestrian routes (e.g. well maintained and well lit sidewalks, benches, safe crosswalks).

Another significant topic of conversation was the valuable role that community centres, neighborhood houses and seniors centres play in encouraging physical activity among seniors. Some reasons why participants thought that seniors did not always access these programs included: a lack of programs targeted at seniors within one's own neighborhood; difficulty accessing/affording transportation to programs that are further away; limited awareness of what types of programs are in existence; programs are already full; and limited accessibility at some facilities for seniors with disabilities.

Many participants also reported that they felt that their neighborhood was underserved relative to other parts of the city, and that they needed a seniors centre and/or more seniors programming in their area. For example, southeast Vancouver was identified to be an area that needs a seniors centre. Participants also asked for greater variety and choice in the programs that are geared at seniors because of the diversity within the seniors population (e.g. age, ability, culture, gender, interests). There was some discussion about how to build capacity of service providers to meet a growing demand from seniors for available programs.

Some participants mentioned that they thought most parks were designed for children, not seniors, and that seniors friendly parks would offer additional features such as adult play equipment, accessible public washrooms, benches that face each other for conversations.

The following table summarizes some of the reoccurring key gaps as well as opportunities to address them.

<b>Active Living and Getting Outside</b>	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
Access to information: Need for increased awareness of seniors recreation programs	<p>57. Inventory the available recreation services for seniors.</p> <p>58. Provide guides/brochures which outline available services.</p> <p>59. Ensure that information is provided in accessible print formats (large print) and translated into multiple languages.</p>
Access to seniors programs: Need for seniors programs throughout the city in various community centres/neighbourhood houses so that seniors can access these programs close to home.	<p>60. Explore the feasibility of having seniors programmers in all the community centres/neighbourhood houses</p> <p>61. Explore the feasibility of offering seniors recreation programs in all community centres, neighbourhood houses across the city</p>
Transportation: Need for seniors to have access to affordable/free and accessible transportation to community events.	<p>62. Inventory available free shuttle/volunteer driving programs that connect seniors to community centre/neighbourhood house programs</p> <p>63. Advertise available services in brochures</p> <p>64. Explore the need/feasibility of expanding existing volunteer driving services</p>
Choice: Need for choice in recreation programs for seniors with a variety of ages and interests.	65. Convene service providers and discuss opportunities for new types of programs
Sidewalk maintenance: Need to ensure that seniors have access to well maintained, level sidewalks that are free of obstructions (e.g. cracked pavement, un-cleared snow and leaves).	See recommendations under the Healthy Built Environment Section
Age-friendly parks: Need to ensure that parks meet the needs of seniors (e.g. seniors play equipment, access to public washrooms, well lit, accessible, affordable food).	66. Explore the feasibility of creating "age-friendly" parks in Vancouver

## Social Connectedness

There was also some significant overlap between the ideas raised in the Social Connectedness tables and the Active Living and Getting Outside tables, since both groups emphasized the need for diverse programming to provide a variety of choices for an increasingly diverse seniors population, and the need for improved access to information about available programs. A key topic of conversation was also the need for seniors lounges throughout the city, so that seniors have somewhere they can go to visit/socialize that does not require them to buy anything. Some seniors expressed a strong desire to have opportunities to make a meaningful contribution to their community and/or a desire to be involved in intergenerational social activities. Participants also expressed concern about socially isolated seniors. The following table summarizes the key reoccurring gaps as well as opportunities to address them.

<b>Social Connectedness</b>	
Key Gaps	Opportunities
Elders/Seniors lounges: Need community spaces for seniors to visit/socialize that do not require visitors to buy or consume anything. These need to be located close to home for seniors	67. Explore the feasibility of creating more seniors lounges/centres in various community centres/neighbourhood houses/libraries in Vancouver
Diverse programming: Need to offer social programs that meet the needs of a diverse seniors population (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, language, people with disabilities)	68. Partner with community centres/neighbourhood houses and other seniors programmers to identify innovative options 69. Conduct outreach to underrepresented groups (e.g. men, people with disabilities, immigrants who do not speak English)
Transportation: Need for seniors to have access to affordable/free and accessible transportation to community events	70. See recommendations under the Active Living and Getting Outside Section 71. Explore the need/feasibility of expanding existing volunteer driving services
Coordination: Need to increase collaboration and coordination of service providers to limit redundancy in programs and provide more variety	72. Convene service providers and funders to discuss opportunities for coordination and collaboration
Meaningful involvement: Need for seniors to volunteer/contribute to the community	73. Inventory available volunteer programs 74. Advertise available programs in brochures 75. Explore the need/feasibility of expanding existing volunteer programs to include a cross-cultural component
Intergenerational connections: Need for seniors to connect with younger generations	76. Facilitate the connection between senior and youth organizations 77. Partner with other organizations to offer intergenerational programming at community centres, neighborhood houses

# Appendix B: Detailed Community Engagement Process

SPARC BC and the City of Vancouver developed a community engagement plan for this project in collaboration with a Seniors Dialogues Project Advisory Committee and the City of Vancouver's Seniors Advisory Committee. The Senior Dialogues Project Advisory Committee includes representatives from the City of Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee, City of Vancouver and Vancouver Park Board staff, neighborhood houses, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the Vancouver Foundation.

Most project participants took part in this project by participating in one of the six seniors dialogues that were held across the city. However, community members were also invited to participate by calling the Seniors Dialogues hotline which was set up through the City's 3-1-1 information service or by E-mailing a project E-mail account. In addition, further community input was gathered through two supplemental focus groups and eight key informant interviews. Focus groups were conducted with a caregiver support group and seniors on the west side of Vancouver. Key informant interviews were also conducted with staff of senior services organizations that have contact with socially isolated seniors.

## The Seniors Dialogues

Six Seniors Dialogues were held between October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to gather input from community members on how the City can ensure that its facilities and services are age-friendly. The dialogues were held at the following locations:

- Gordon Neighbourhood House;
- Marpole Place Neighbourhood House;
- Trout Lake Community Centre;
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre;
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House; and
- Vancouver City Hall.

When selecting the dialogue locations, the organizers worked to ensure that the events were spread throughout the city so that older adults would not have to travel far to participate. Locations of the dialogues were chosen based on recommendations from the Project Advisory Committee and the City's Seniors Advisory Committee. Specific dialogue locations were also based on the following criteria: available space that could accommodate large groups; connections with public transit; accessibility for people with disabilities; proximity to concentrations of the city's seniors population; and "seniors-friendly" venues that regularly host seniors programs.



## Seniors Dialogues Target Audience and Outreach

The target audience for the Seniors Dialogues included: seniors, older adults and Elders; caregivers; and community agencies that support seniors, older adults, Elders and caregivers. In addition, the consulting team also worked to ensure that project participants reflected the overall diversity within the seniors' population. In particular, SPARC BC worked to gather input from immigrant, Aboriginal, low income, LGBT2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirit), and visible minority seniors as well as seniors with disabilities and across different age profiles and genders.

A contact list with 147 organizations was developed for the purpose of the project. An email advertisement was followed up by a phone call from SPARC BC staff asking organizations if they received the invitation, and if they or their clients would require any workshop supports (e.g. transportation, interpreters) to participate. In addition, an advertisement was placed in the October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 edition of the Vancouver Courier Newspaper, and on the City of Vancouver website. Various community partners were also involved in sending out information about the dialogues through their mailing lists and/or newsletters. On request, SPARC BC made presentations about the community engagement process to various seniors groups such as the West End Seniors Network, and a Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Elders program. The City of Vancouver and SPARC BC also promoted the project on CBC's Early Edition radio show.

## Workshop Supports to Remove Barriers to Participation

As part of the outreach process, the organizers advertised a number of support services intended to help potential participants overcome barriers that could preclude their participation; these support services were available upon request. For example, the following interpretation services were requested and provided: American Sign Language, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi. In other cases, volunteers offered interpretation supports for groups of seniors who spoke Farsi, Pashto, and Spanish. In addition, buses, shuttles and taxi services were provided to groups on request.

## Dialogue Format

The dialogues used a World Café format where participants were invited to participate in three rounds of conversation. The room was set up to have conversation tables focused on various aspects of an age-friendly community. The specific conversation table topics were drawn from the City's Healthy City Strategy priority areas and included:

- Healthy Built Environment
- Human Services
- Eating Well
- Active Living and Getting Outside
- Social Connectedness
- Open Discussion Table

During each round of conversation participants were asked to share their input on the following questions:

- What is going well (i.e. What aspects of Vancouver make it a great place for seniors and older adults to live?)
- What needs to happen in order for Vancouver to become a fully age-friendly community? (i.e. 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?
- Do you have any other comments or feedback that you would like to add?

Upon completing the initial round of conversation, the table host (or facilitator) and notetaker stayed at the conversation table, while the participants moved on to the next table of their choice. As part of this process, table hosts were encouraged to welcome new participants and briefly share the main ideas, themes and questions of the initial conversation, and the travelling participants were invited to carry key ideas, themes and questions to their new conversation. This allowed all of the tables or conversation clusters in the room to be 'cross-pollinated' with insights from prior conversations.

At the end of the session, event feedback forms gathered participant feedback on the overall event, as well as information on the diversity of participants.

## **World Café Strengths and Research Limitations**

The World Café approach was selected because it is designed to create an inviting environment where participants feel at ease and comfortable participating and sharing their viewpoints. The goal of a World Café event is to inspire all participants to speak and listen and to provide a safe space where diverse perspectives may emerge. As a result of this approach, the Seniors Dialogues project has captured a diverse array of perspectives on what an age-friendly city should look like.

However, it is also important to note that there are some research limitations that accompany the World Café format. These research limitations are outlined below.

- Since the intent was to explore a diverse array of perspectives, participants were not asked to build consensus or vote/agree on top priorities. The feedback generated through this project should not be confused with a priority setting exercise.
- It is not possible to analyze the specific frequencies of particular ideas within the conversation table notes. For instance, if an idea was recorded in the summary notes, there is no way of knowing if this idea was mentioned once by one person at the table or if it was an idea that was shared among the other members of the group. There is also a possibility that not every idea raised was recorded in the notes.
- This process was designed to capture personal opinions and perspectives on access to age-friendly community amenities and services in Vancouver. As a result, some of the information shared by participants may be out of date or inaccurate.

The World Café format does allow for the identification of common or key themes raised across different events and tables. These key themes are summarized in the Analysis of Findings section, in the Executive Summary, and discussed in greater detail in Appendix A.

## Number of participants

Across the dialogue events, there were at least 347 dialogue participants and an additional 85 volunteers from various community organizations. These numbers are based on the registration list, and are expected to be an undercount as some participants arrived after the events were in session.

**Table 1: Participation Across Dialogue Events**

Dialogue	# of Participants	# of Volunteers	Total #
Gordon Neighbourhood House	34	13	45
Marpole Place Neighbourhood House	50	12	62
Trout Lake Community Centre	37	14	41
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre	85	18	103
Collingwood Neighbourhood House	63	13	76
Vancouver City Hall	78	15	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>420</b>

Volunteer table facilitators included representatives from the following organizations (in alphabetical order): 411 Seniors Centre, BC Association of Community Response Networks, Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House, City of Vancouver, City of Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee, Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Gordon Neighbourhood House, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Park Board, West End Seniors Network, West End Seniors Planning Table, and Vancouver Coastal Health. Most of the volunteer notetakers were students from (in alphabetical order): Douglas College, SFU's Department of Gerontology, SFU's Population and Public Health program, SFU's School of Resource and Environmental Management, UBC's Department of Geography, and UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning.

## Diversity in Dialogue Participants

As part of this project, the organizers worked to encourage the participation of a diverse group of seniors that reflects the diversity in the broader population. Information on participant diversity was gathered through post-event feedback forms which approximately half of participants filled in. Overall, the project was very successful at both reaching the target population as well as attracting a diverse group of participants that reflect the overall diversity within the seniors' population.

The target population for the project was seniors, senior caregivers, and people who worked/volunteered for a senior serving organization. Of those who filled in feedback forms: 83% were older adults (age 55 plus); 18% were senior caregivers; 61% worked or volunteered at a seniors serving organization.

There was also diversity in age across different participants: 18% of participants were under the age of 55; 24% were between the ages of 55 and 64 years; 51% were between the ages of 65 and 80; and 7% were over the age of 81.

One group that was relatively underrepresented was senior males, since 84% of dialogue participants were female.

The project was also successful at capturing the experience of low income seniors, since 38% of participants reported experiencing financial barriers.

Evaluation findings suggest that the project attracted ethno-culturally diverse seniors since participants reported that they spoke 16 different primary languages.

Individuals were also invited to self-identify as being part of various specific diversity groups on the evaluation form. As a result, among those who chose to answer this optional question, we know that there were at least<sup>7</sup>:

- 14% participants with disabilities;
- 5% participants who had lived in Canada for less than 3 years;
- 8% Aboriginal/First Nation participants;
- 28% visible minority participants; and
- 7% lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/two spirited participants.

In general, the diversity among participants suggests that the targeted outreach process was effective at reaching a diverse group of seniors.

## **Seniors Dialogues Hotline and E-mail account**

As part of the outreach process, project organizers also promoted a Seniors Dialogues hotline that was set up through the City's 3-1-1 operator service, which provided community members with an additional opportunity to share their input on how the City could become more age-friendly. Participants, who were unable to attend to a dialogue event, were also invited to share their input by emailing [seniors.dialogues@vancouver.ca](mailto:seniors.dialogues@vancouver.ca). In total, 11 community members left feedback via email and one community member left feedback via 3-1-1.

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<sup>7</sup> These proportions are expected to be an undercount because not everyone chose to answer this question. In addition, there were lower response rates from conversation tables using interpreters.

## **Focus groups**

In addition to the dialogues, two focus groups were held to gather input from community members. Both focus groups were located on the west side of Vancouver in Kerrisdale and Kitsilano, since seniors on the west side of Vancouver lived the furthest away from the previous dialogue locations. The first focus group was held in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health's West Side – Pacific Spirit Caregiver Support Group in Kerrisdale. This caregiver focus group took place to provide caregivers with an opportunity to share their perspectives on the specific challenges experienced by caregivers in Vancouver in a supportive environment. In total, nine participants took part in this workshop. The second focus group was held in collaboration with Kitsilano Neighbourhood House and Steeves Manor at Linden Tree Place in Kitsilano with twelve participants.

## **Key informant interviews**

Throughout the planning and delivery of the community engagement process, the organizers worked to ensure that the experiences and perspectives of isolated seniors were captured. Since many of the older adults who came to the dialogue events were already accessing seniors recreation programs at seniors centres, neighbourhood houses, and/or community centres, they did not fit the definition of an isolated senior.

To address this gap, supplemental key informant interviews were conducted to gather information about the experiences of isolated seniors. In total, seven key informant interviews were held with senior service providers who provide services or conduct outreach to isolated seniors. Those interviewed include: BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support; Health and Home Care Society of BC; Kay's Place Volunteers; Meals on Wheels; West End Seniors' Network; Seniors Advisory Board of South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

It was also identified that seniors who live in older adult communities (such as AMICA) may be less likely to access community recreation programs, since a lot of recreational programming and support services would already be offered within their place of residence. To ensure that this perspective was also captured, a representative of senior residents from AMICA at Arbutus Manor was also interviewed.

## **Summarizing the findings**

After the completion of the dialogue events, focus groups and key informant interviews, the results were reviewed to identify key ideas that were raised across multiple events/tables. These key ideas are summarized in the analysis of findings section, and in the key gaps and opportunities section in Appendix A. There are also individual dialogue summary reports that are available that describe the highlights of the discussion at each dialogue.





