

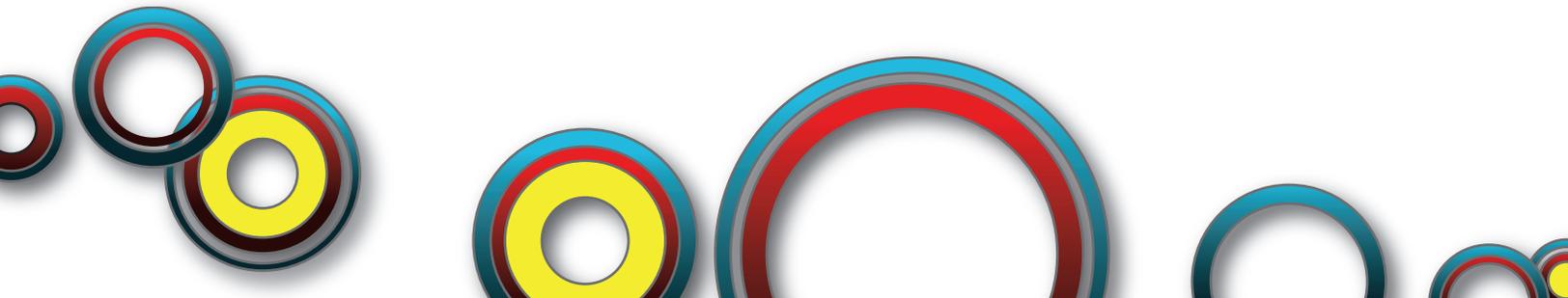


Lethbridge
Public Library

CONNECTING
YOU TO IDEAS

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

SUMMARY NARRATIVE



BACKGROUND

Between March 2015 and April 2016 The Lethbridge Public Library conducted 6 community conversations with various community stakeholder groups. The intention of these conversations was to continue our organizational goal of being outward facing by better understanding our community and its aspirations, concerns and issues. The conversations generated public knowledge that we can share and use to inform decision making.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

We held a community conversation for the following groups:

- Special Needs and Seniors Agencies
- Wellness Community
- Media
- Newcomers
- Family and Community Groups
- Teen Services Organizations

Each group spoke both for their organizations and what they saw in the communities they worked with but also reported on what they experienced personally in their lives or their families lives. Together we had 112 community stakeholders attend these meetings.

WE ASKED THE STAKEHOLDERS:

- What kind of community do you want? What are your aspirations/hopes for the community?
- What are the 2-3 most important issues or concerns when it comes to the community? What concerns do you have about these issues?
- How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally (or your organization)?
- What is keeping us from making the progress we want?
- What kinds of things could be done that would make a difference?
- Who do you trust to take action on these things?
- If we came back in 6 months or a year what might you see which would tell you that the things we talked about today were starting to happen?

From these questions we were able to garner a better understanding about what people in Lethbridge want in their community.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVE

Four themes emerged during our conversations.

1. People in Lethbridge want to live in a connected community where people know each other and know what is going on.
2. People want an inclusive community that is accessible to all.
3. People want to live in a community that is event-full, that has lots to do and a place where the community knows about what there is to do.
4. People want a community that is easy to get around in. A community with affordable, efficient transportation with services available in all areas.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY

During all of the conversations held connectivity was a shared aspiration brought up by each group. People want to live in a connected community that is inclusive and accessible to everybody and is genuinely friendly.

MAIN CONCERNS SURROUNDING CONNECTED COMMUNITY

- **Overall sense of disengagement** – people are concerned there is a disconnect between various groups in terms of values and communication. This has led to a sense of apathy and perception that Lethbridge has nothing to offer.
- **Current lack of community connectedness** – people talked about historical breakdowns in relationships between groups in the city and the effects of poverty on community connectedness.
- **Lack of effective communication** – people find there is no consistent way information is dispersed to the community. There is a lack of trustworthy information. There needs to be a focus on communicating activities and events in the city. The current lack of communication prevents people getting out to events and becoming connected to their community.
- **Lack of community meeting spaces** – several groups spoke about the lack of community places to meet. A lack of community planning for gathering spaces was identified by some. They believe that these spaces would lead to opportunities to build more community connectivity.

People feel that using a single point of contact like a 311 model may work to achieve some of the communication issues and knowledge of what is going on. They believe there is a need for more partnerships between organizations both for profit and non-profit to both share information but also connect members of the community together. They also feel that the City of Lethbridge has a part to play in facilitating community meeting spaces and communication.

INCLUSIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Much like the shared aspirations for a connected community most people spoke of a desire to live in an inclusive and accessible city.

MAIN CONCERNS SURROUNDING INCLUSIVITY & ACCESSIBILITY

- **Race, economic inequality** – people believe that there should be a focus on having a tighter web of communication and addressing issues of disengagement. They believe that this could address issues of class and racism and the problem where some people may not feel worthy of being engaged (the idea that a service, event, program is not for them).
- **Affordability** – people believe that a key part of creating an inclusive and accessible city is ensuring that services, event and programs are affordable.
- **Transportation** – people are concerned with the cost and availability of transportation throughout the city and how this impacts inclusivity and accessibility.

People believe that community agencies need to focus on working more collaboratively, on leadership, on communication, and on encouraging diverse sectoral representation in community groups to address these issues. They believe if identified connectors in the community - community champions, the media and the library - could play a part and concerns around inclusivity and accessibility could be addressed.

EVENT-FULL

People want a community that has a variety of attractive, accessible, affordable events. People want events and activities that have multi-generational appeal.

MAIN CONCERNS SURROUNDING EVENT-FULLNESS

- **Events with too narrow of a focus** – people talked specifically about a need for inclusive activities expanding on opportunities that already exist. They have concerns that events have too narrow of a focus for appeal or are marketed in a way that has too narrow of a focus (just marketed to families or students were examples). People believe we need to create inclusive affordable and accessible events.
- **Lack of community knowledge about events** – people talked about a need for better communication about events in the city. People feel there needs to be less of a reliance on social media to get events out to the public. People would like a way that there can be more conversations and promotions of events and programs.
- **East/West divide** – people talked about the hesitation there is by some in the community to cross the bridge to attend an event on the other side of town, especially if they have already crossed the bridge a few times that day.
- **Need for mixed use community spaces** – people identified a need for mixed use community spaces for events.

People believe that groups need to focus on communicating activities in the city and marketing to all generations. They believe the city agencies (for profit and non-profit) need to work collaboratively on events and not compete for resources. People would like the city to work on having community spaces throughout the city where events could be held.

TRANSPORTATION

People want a community that has easy, affordable transportation to all parts of the city.

MAIN CONCERNS SURROUNDING TRANSPORTATION

- **Cost and Convenience** – people have concerns about the cost of transportation, hours of service and a competition for resources in the city/costs of achieving better transportation. They are concerned that transportation is not improving, it is expensive and that getting a bus is hard since the bus routes are not going to all the communities.
- **East/West access** – people are concerned that there is both not enough city transportation from one side of the city to the other but that also there is a need for a third bridge. They have concerns about being able to access medical services and jobs.
- **Affordability** – people are concerned with the cost of transportation - both transit fares but also the cost of needing to access services on one side of the city vs. the other, and from one end of the city to the other (North/South).

People believe that we as a community need to focus on the cost of and convenience of transportation, as well as the schedules and that if the city and government played a part in this transportation could be improved. People would like to see services more conveniently located throughout the city.

