



Interim Community Engagement & Feedback Update September 16, 2019

This update is intended to provide a high-level overview of key themes and feedback received from public outreach and engagement on the Stronger Vancouver initiative from July-September. Outreach activities will continue through October. Responses and comments received to date are currently being coded and a more detailed analysis, including all public comments received, will be provided in the final feedback report in October.

OVERVIEW

In July 2019, the City of Vancouver embarked on a second phase of public engagement on the Stronger Vancouver initiative in order to gather community feedback on the capital projects, programs and services in the proposed Stronger Vancouver plan. The City is using various outreach strategies – including tabling at community events, open houses, an online survey, discussion groups, focus groups and more – to reach as many members of the community as possible. The goal of the



outreach is to educate and raise awareness about the Stronger Vancouver initiative, gather feedback on how important each of the proposed projects and services are to residents and to hear ideas about the community's priorities for the future of Vancouver. Outreach will continue throughout September, with the results from a statistically-valid survey available in October.

To date, the City has engaged with over 2,200 community members about their priorities and preferences for the future of Vancouver. Key themes heard from residents include strong support for public safety improvements and homeless services, in addition to support for improving parks and investing in the Fourth Plain corridor.

Outreach Category	# of Participants
17 tabling events, 5 focus groups, 3 open houses	1,282
Online Survey	932
2 discussion groups	(scheduled for late-Sept.)
Statistically-valid survey	400 (goal)

TABLING EVENTS

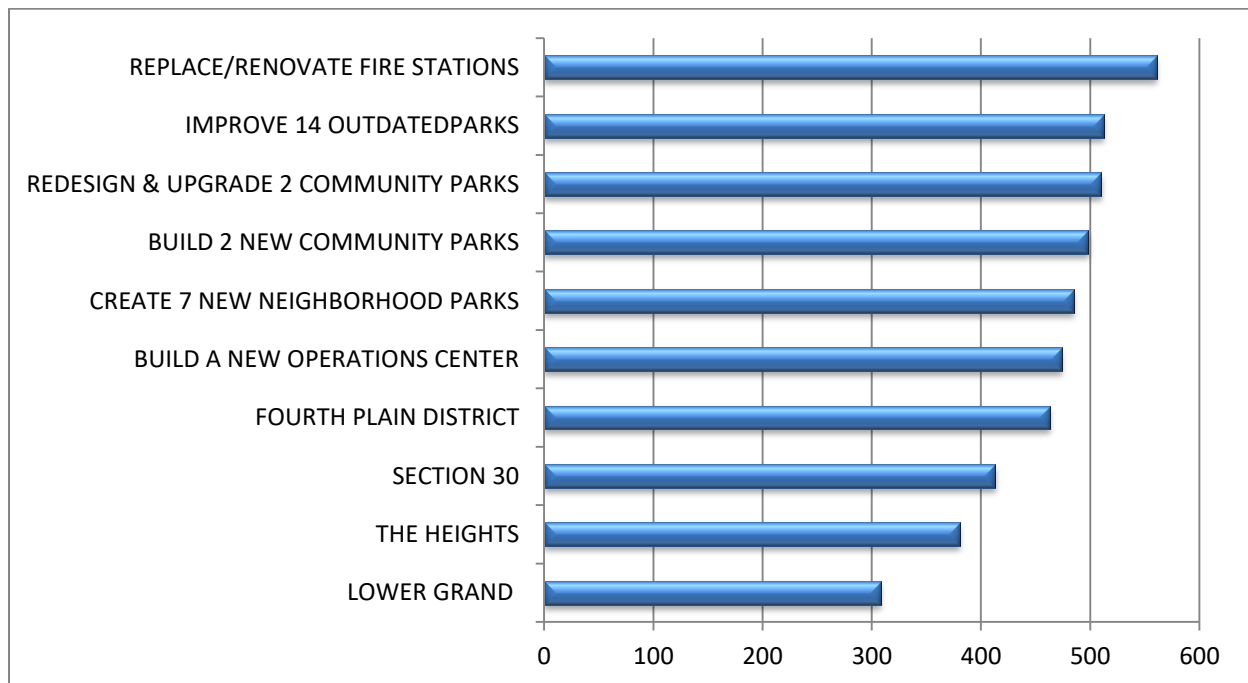
Community Events. City staff hosted a booth/ information table at 15 community events throughout the summer, including concerts and movies in the park, farmers markets, National Night Out and the Multicultural Fair, where we were able to connect with approximately 1,000 community members. The booths included information about A Stronger Vancouver and interactive feedback activities:

15 community events, connecting with 1,000 community members

- 1) An exercise in which participants use stickers to express how important they think each of the proposed capital projects are; and
- 2) An exercise in which participants provided comments and ideas for what they think is important for the future of Vancouver.

Booths were staffed by City staff from Communications, CMO, Parks & Recreation, Community & Economic Development, Public Works, Fire and Police. A list of the outreach events, locations and dates can be found in Appendix A. A high level overview of feedback received at the community events is below.

Capital Projects Exercise. Visitors to the booth were asked to complete an interactive exercise to let the City know how important each of the proposed capital projects are to them. The top three projects indicated as “most important” or “important” to participants in this exercise were: 1) Replacing/renovating fire stations, 2) Improving 14 parks*and 3) Redesigning and upgrading 2 community parks**



*Arnada, Fruit Valley, John Ball, Columbia Lancaster, David Douglas, Father Blanchet, Jaggy Road, Ogden, Oakbrook, Quarnberg, Wintler, Burnt Bridge Creek School, Homestead, Kevanna

**Bagley, Marine

Comments & Ideas. Participants were asked to provide their ideas and comments on what A Stronger Vancouver means to them. Overall, people were largely positive about the initiative and added important comments about projects and programs that they would like to see in the plan. Many participants noted that they value **neighborhood parks and dog parks** and they want to make sure that **parks are safe**. Participants also had many transportation-related comments: several people expressed interest in **expanding light rail access throughout Vancouver** and replacing the **I-5 bridge**. Many participants expressed concerns that **increased development would cause more traffic, gentrification, and displacement**. Community members also frequently brought up the importance of **addressing homelessness**, and they discussed solutions such as **building new homeless shelters** throughout the city. *More details, including all comments received, will be included in the final feedback report in October.*



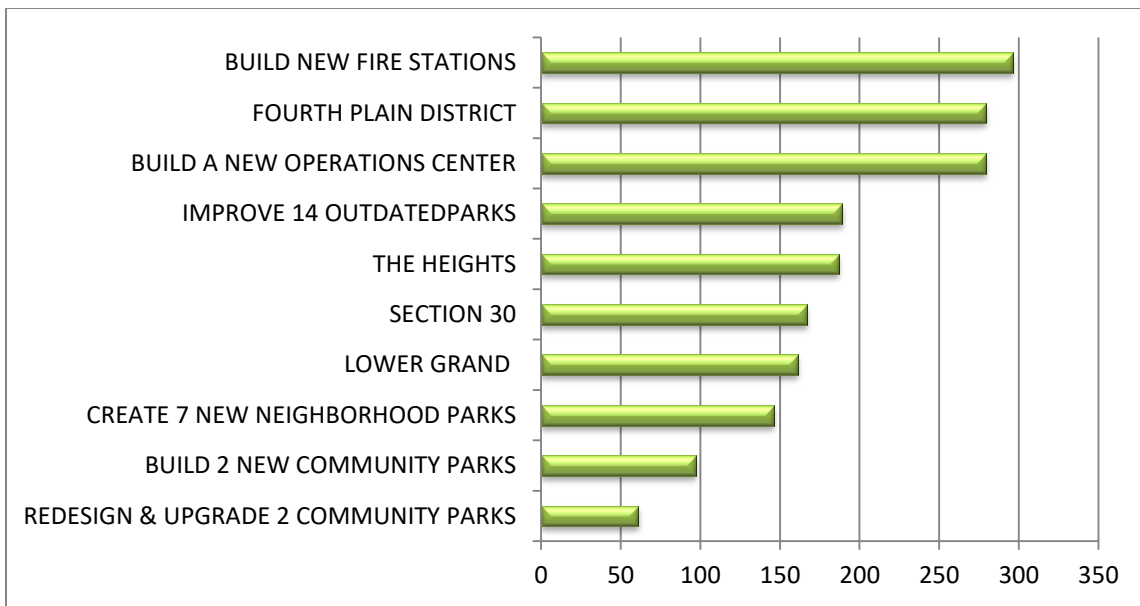
Outreach to Seniors. An information table was set up to connect with senior residents at Luepke and Firstenburg centers to discuss the initiative and obtain feedback on the projects via the interactive board exercises. Many of the seniors we talked to were thrilled that we were asking them for their feedback and once we got talking they were full of ideas, feedback and comments! Major themes heard from this outreach were concerns surrounding the lack of affordable housing and the inability for many seniors to keep up with the cost of living increases, the issue of homelessness and encampments, and the need for improved traffic safety. *More details will be included in the final feedback report in October.*

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was open from July–Sept. 15. The survey asked for feedback on the importance of the capital projects, priorities among the capital projects, major funding sources and comments/ideas. The survey was translated into Spanish and Russian. Responses and comments are currently being coded and will be included in the final feedback report in October.

932 survey
responses (as of
Sept. 12)

The top three projects indicated as “very important” or “important” to survey respondents were: 1) Replacing/renovating fire stations, 2) Fourth Plain District investments and 3) Building a new operations center.



Survey respondents were also asked to indicate their highest priority amongst the capital investments, the results are: 1) Renovating & replacing fire stations, 2&3 tied) Fourth Plain District investments and building a new Operations Center.

Revenue sources. When asked which of the below funding sources should be relied on more than others, survey respondents indicated the highest preference for using a combination of funding sources, followed by business tax. Property and utility taxes received the lowest ranking.



Comments & Ideas. Over 250 comments were submitted via an open-ended question included in the survey. Key themes emerging from the comments include homelessness, affordable housing traffic, taking care of existing assets, and a concern over raising taxes. *Open-ended comments are currently being coded and will be detailed in the final feedback report.*

Russian & Spanish Language Survey Responses. To date, there are 30 Russian language and four Spanish language responses to the survey. The low response rate in Spanish is likely due to the fact that many Vancouver community members who speak both English and Spanish have chosen to take the survey in English. *Responses will be detailed in the final feedback report.*

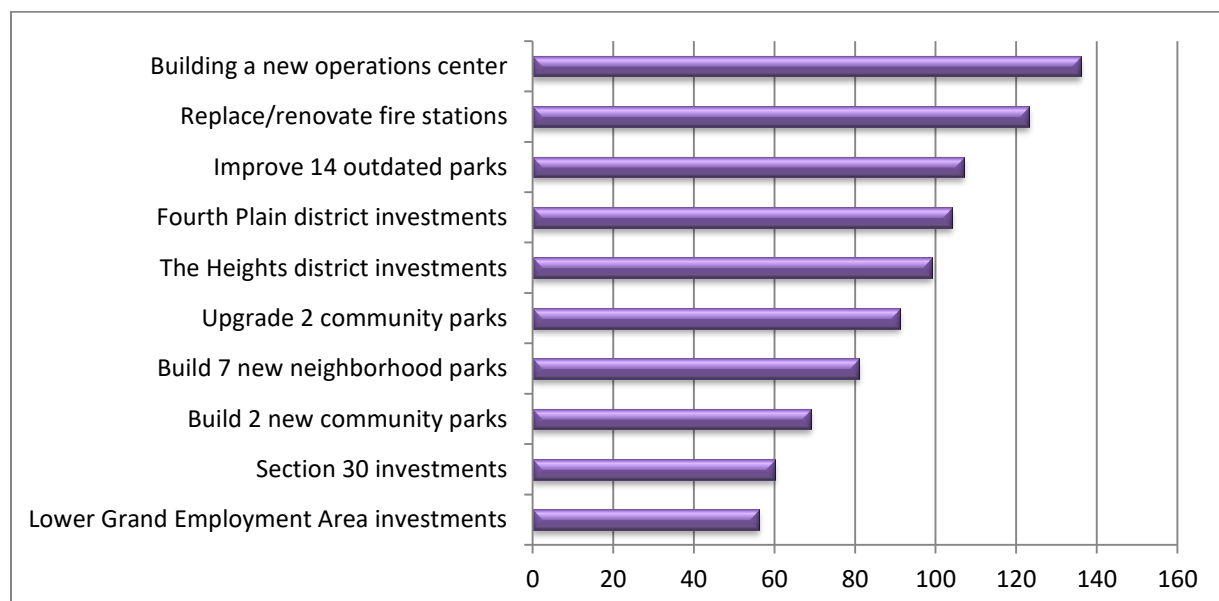
OPEN HOUSES

The open houses provided an opportunity for community members to learn more about the Stronger Vancouver effort in detail and interact with Councilmembers, the City Manager and City staff about the proposed plan. There were three open houses in different locations throughout the city in August. ESL interpretation was advertised as available if requested and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters were present at all three meetings. At each open house, community members heard a brief presentation from the City Manager and then had the opportunity to go through several informational and interactive stations in which they learned about and provided feedback on the proposed capital projects, programs and services, funding sources, a prioritization exercise, and opportunity to share their ideas and comments. Overall, participants indicated that most of the elements contained in the proposed package were important for the future of Vancouver.

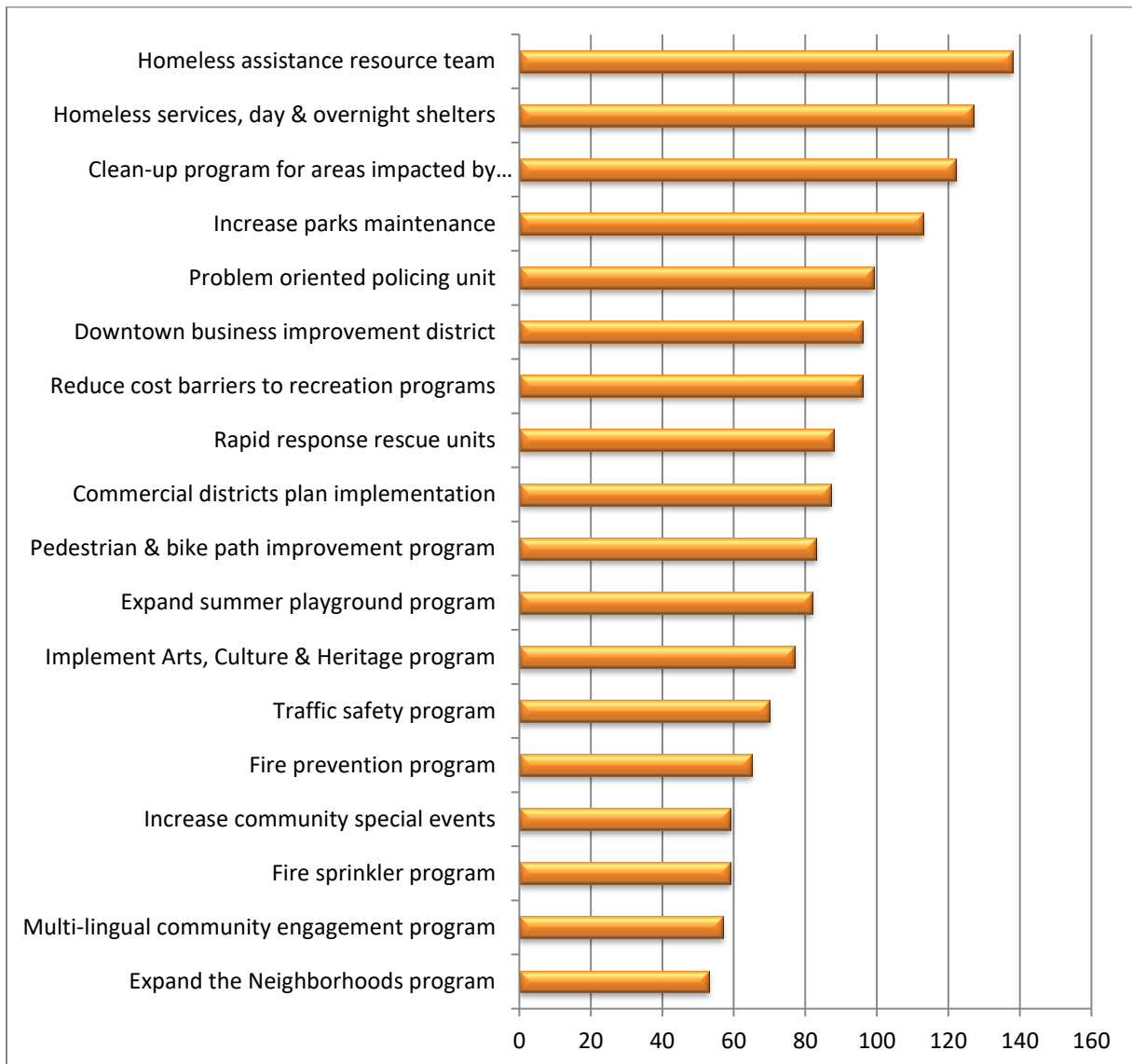
3 open houses

232 attendees

Capital Projects. The top three projects indicated as “very important” or “important” to open house attendees were: 1) Building a new operations center, 2) Replacing/renovating fire stations and 3) Improving 14 outdated parks.



Programs & Services. When asked to indicated level of importance for each program and service, open house attendees indicated the following as the top three “very important” or “important” programs and services 1) homeless assistance resource team, 2) homeless services, and 3) clean-up program for areas impacted by homelessness.



Revenue sources. After learning about all the projects, programs, and services, community members were given the opportunity to provide input on funding sources. Property tax had the highest responses as the funding source to rely on more than others, followed closely by business taxes. Utility tax received the lowest ranking.

Priorities. At the last station of the open house, participants were given tokens to indicate their top five priorities across ten categories that encompassed all the projects, programs, and services. The top five priorities indicated by open houses participants were: 1) homelessness services and response, 2) public safety improvements, 3) upgrade/build new neighborhood and community parks, 4) build a new operations center and 5) improve traffic safety.

Comments. Many community members provided comments during the open houses, including the desire for more **resources for the homeless population** as well as more **support for early childhood education (day care)**. Attendees also wanted to see improvements to, or replacement of, the **I-5 bridge** as well as the addition of **light rail**. *More details, including all comments received, will be included in the final feedback report.*

Ideas for A Stronger Vancouver. Similar to the community event outreach, one of the open house stations gave participants the opportunity to provide ideas about what residents think is missing from the Stronger Vancouver package. Many participants expressed wanting **more affordable and safe early childhood programs** for all Vancouver children and stated that there is a childcare crisis in Vancouver. In terms of infrastructure, many participants mentioned replacing the **I-5 bridge** and **improving sidewalks**. *More details, including all ideas received, will be included in the final feedback report.*

DISCUSSION GROUPS / FOCUS GROUPS

Engagement efforts were conducted to gain feedback and input from a broad range of city residents, including non-English speaking residents and those with different abilities. Efforts included collaborating with Slavic and Spanish community liaisons to organize discussion groups in Spanish and Russian and working with service providers and educators to put together discussion groups with deaf, blind and visually-impaired residents.

Tabling outreach was conducted at the new 4th Plain Farmers Market and at the annual Multicultural Fair, where we were able to connect with hundreds of residents and obtain their feedback.

The Stronger Vancouver online survey was translated into Spanish and Russian, in addition to printed informational materials. The City mailed approx. 14,000 postcards to households surrounding the Fourth Plain corridor to raise awareness of the initiative, online survey and open houses.

Multicultural Discussion Groups. The goals of the multicultural discussion groups were to receive feedback from the Spanish and Russian speaking communities on the projects and programs in the proposed plan, to make new connections between the City and residents, and to learn about how to better engage with these communities in the future.

Spanish Discussion Group

Overall Comments

- Discussion group members explained that they **choose to live in Vancouver because it is calm, safe, and has good weather.**
- Discussion group members would like to see **low-cost recreational programs and services** (e.g., swimming pools) in more diverse locations throughout Vancouver.
- The City should make concerts and movies in the park more **culturally responsive** to the Spanish speaking community.
- The City should **place flyers and news alerts in community centers, popular grocery stores (WinCo, Mexican grocery stores, etc.), public libraries, and schools** to inform the Spanish-speaking community about City events, services, and public engagement opportunities.
- The City should also **mail postcards to Spanish speaking households** to inform them about City events, services, and public engagement opportunities.
- Most discussion group members said they **do not use social media** to get their information.
- Discussion group members were **appreciative that the City reached out** to hear their feedback and perspectives.

Feedback on Capital Projects, Programs, and Services

- The feedback on capital projects in this discussion group expressed preferences for:
 - **improving outdated parks**
 - **redesigning and upgrading community parks**
 - **replacing and renovating fire stations**
- When presented with a list of the programs and services that are part of the plan, participants noted that the proposed services reflect the needs of their community. They highlighted **access to recreation programs, more police presence, and improved transportation** as key improvements.
- When asked to share their priorities among both capital projects and programs and services, most members of the discussion group chose “**improve access to recreational programs for low income residents**” as one of their top priorities. Other priorities included **upgrading and building neighborhood and community parks, making public safety improvements**, and creating an **Arts, Culture, and Heritage Program**.

Slavic Discussion Group

Overall Comments

- Discussion group members explained that they choose to live in Vancouver because it is **small and quiet**, and many have a **strong network of family and community members** here.
- Many younger people in the Slavic community attend events like concerts and movies in the park, while the older generation prefers gatherings and bbqs with family and friends.
- Many group members noted that **big parks are often crowded**.
- Some were worried **that population growth and development are making Vancouver lose its small-town feel**.

- Many expressed **concerns about increased traffic and congestion.**
- The City should **distribute materials at the Russian store, put announcements in Russian magazines, on Russian radio stations, and in the Russian newspaper** so that they can be better informed about opportunities to engage with the City.
- The City should also use connect with **Russian Facebook groups** to inform the Slavic community about City-related events and opportunities.
- Slavic community members find out a lot of information from their churches and pastors, so the **City should work with the church network in Vancouver** to distribute announcements and information.

Feedback on Capital Projects, Programs, and Services

- The feedback on capital projects in this discussion group expressed preferences for:
 - **replacing and renovating fire stations**
 - **improving outdated parks**
 - **building new community and neighborhood parks**
- Many group members **highlighted the importance of first responders being safe and having the equipment they need to serve the city.**
- There was **not very much support for investing in business districts** among this group. Some group members explained that they believe that corporations should pay for these business district improvements. Others noted that Vancouver already has a lot of new buildings and construction and it does not need more. Some said that new business districts would make Vancouver grow even more than it already is.
- Many noted that **increasing homelessness services was crucial**, but that the new services should focus **on helping homeless people find job opportunities.**
- Group members highlighted the importance of programs that will **decrease traffic.**
- Some members noted that many Slavic community members do not bike however ,one member said that she would bike more if biking were more popular and the roads were safer.
- Several members explained that they are not aware of many of the services that the City provides and they would like to receive more information.

Feedback on Sources of Funding

- Many discussion group members noted that **the people who benefit from each project or program should be the ones who should pay for it.**
- Others explained that they would be willing to pay for projects and programs but stressed the **importance of being able to see the results** (e.g. a new park or road improvements).
- Several group members noted that they **did not want an increase in business taxes.**

Priorities

- When asked to share their priorities among both capital projects and programs and services, most members of the Slavic discussion group chose **upgrade and build community parks and make public safety improvements.**

Focus Groups. Three 12-person focus groups were held with a randomly selected group of Vancouver residents representing a broad cross-section of ages, ethnicity, and incomes. A high level overview of feedback from these groups includes placing a high priority on homeless services and overnight shelters, concern about population growth and development, the lack of affordable housing, and the need for good jobs in Vancouver. Almost all participants expressed that they like the small town feel of Vancouver and are fearful of overdevelopment and rising cost of living. While many supported parks, most felt that the City should take care of the parks it has before building new ones. In the discussions about funding sources, there was concern for the detrimental effects of tax increases on low-income residents and an overall sentiment that everyone should be paying, not just one group. *More details from the focus groups will be included in the final report.*

Discussion Groups with Differently-Abled residents. The City is working with organizations in the deaf and blind and visually impaired communities to facilitate two discussion groups to give the opportunity for the City to hear these communities' perspectives and priorities for the future of Vancouver. These discussion groups will take place in September.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The City used social media to raise awareness about the initiative and engagement opportunities. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and NextDoor have all proven to be useful channels to inform people about the open houses, tabling events and online survey.

Facebook. 10 posts about A Stronger Vancouver outreach; 3 event listings for the open houses; 37,415 people reached; 124 post shares; 208 post comments; 4,982 engagements (including click throughs, comments, shares, likes, etc.).

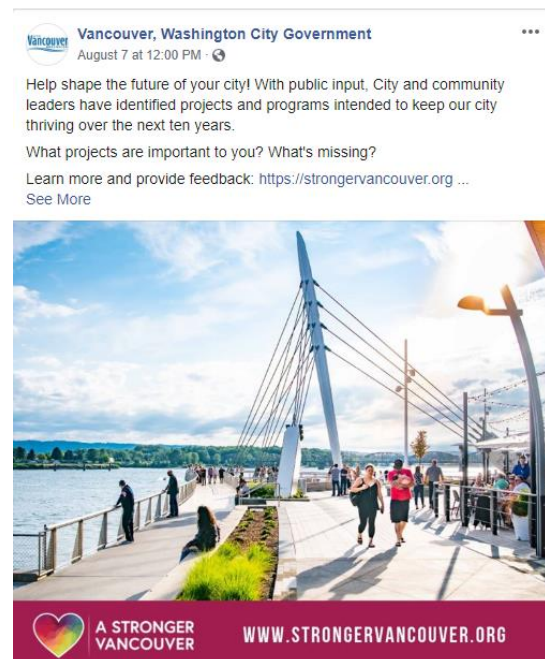
Twitter. 8 posts about A Stronger Vancouver outreach; 5,397 impressions; 72 actions taken (including click to web, retweets, likes, or comments).

Instagram. 2 posts; 4,700 views; 32 click throughs to website

NextDoor. 3 event listings for the open houses; 7,068 impressions

Social Media Comments

Many people have provided comments on the City's Facebook and Instagram posts about A Stronger Vancouver. Comments cover a wide range of topics and sentiments. Some of the key topics discussed in the comments were: **improving parks, addressing homelessness, ensuring traffic and parking do not worsen with development, preventing gentrification**, the importance of **affordable housing**,



supporting small businesses, better transportation, resistance to increased taxes and resistance to Vancouver's population growth. *Comments are currently being coded and will be included in the final feedback report.*

OUTREACH CHANNELS

The City has used a variety of outreach channels to inform as many community members as possible about opportunities to provide input on the proposed plan, including:

- Press Release
- Vancouver Connects community newsletter
- Office of Neighbors newsletter; Emails to Neighborhood Association leaders
- Parks and Recreation newsletter
- Postcards (distributed at events, community centers, City Hall, neighborhood meetings)
- The Messenger newspaper
- City social media
- Strongervancouver.org
- Beheardvancouver.org (Stronger Vancouver page translated to Spanish and Russian)
- Educational videos airing on CVTV, YouTube, and social media
- Outreach to local organizations including: Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber, Fourth Plain Forward, YMCA, LULAC, and others
- Postcard mailing to 14,000 households along the Fourth Plain corridor
- Fact sheets (translated to Spanish and Russian)
- Online survey (translated to Spanish and Russian)
- Representative survey
- Booth/information table at events

We connected with community partners asking them to share the open house invitation and online survey link with their stakeholders, including:

- Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce
- CTRAN
- The Vancouver Clinic
- East Vancouver Business Association
- Identity Clark County
- Workforce SW Washington
- CREDC
- Clark Public Utilities
- Clark College
- WSU Vancouver
- Vancouver Public Schools
- Evergreen Public Schools

- YWCA
- SW WA Communities United for Change
- Columbian
- Clark County Today

NEXT STEPS

During this phase of engagement, the City connected with thousands of Vancouver residents. Overall, the feedback received on the Stronger Vancouver initiative has been largely positive and community members are appreciative that the City is reaching out to find out what they think is important for the future of Vancouver. A final feedback report will be presented to City Council at the October 7, 2019 Stronger Vancouver workshop.

APPENDIX A

Outreach activities

Event	Location	Date	Participants
Noon Rhythms Concert	Esther Short Park	July 17	33
Movie in the Park	Fruit Valley Park	July 19	55
Columbia Tech Ctr. Concert	Columbia Tech Center	July 21	46
4 th Plain Community Market	5800 SE Fourth Plain Blvd	July 23	21
Noon Rhythms Concert	Esther Short Park	July 24	41
Movie in the Park	Esther Short Park	July 25	150
Eastside Tech Center Market	Tech Center	July 25	64
Downtown Farmers Market	Downtown	July 29	67
Noon Rhythms Concert	Esther Short Park	July 31	60
Six to Sunset	Esther Short Park	August 1	72
National Night Out	LeRoy Haagen Community Park	August 6	77
Noon Rhythms Concert	Esther Short Park	August 7	34
Movie in the Park	Marshall Park	August 9	30
Discussion Group	Hispanic community (<i>w/Spanish speaking translator present</i>)	August 12	12
Noon Rhythms Concert	Esther Short Park	August 14	55
Open House (West)	Red Cross Building	August 21	95
Open House (East)	Firstenburg Community Center	August 22	65
Open House (Central)	Water Resources Education Center	August 27	72
Discussion Group	Slavic community (<i>w/Russian speaking translator present</i>)	August 28	12
Multicultural Festival	Evergreen Park	September 7	101
Focus Group	Vancouver residents, over 55 years of age	September 10	12
Focus Group	Vancouver residents, under 35 years of age	September 10	12
Senior Outreach	Luepke	September 11	33
Focus Group	Vancouver residents, income under \$65,000	September 11	12
Senior Outreach	Firstenburg	September 12	51
Discussion Group	Vancouver residents, Blind/Visually-impaired	Late-September	TBD
Discussion Group	Vancouver residents, Deaf	Late-September	TBD
Total	17 tabling events; 7 focus groups; 3 open houses		1,282

Surveys	Location	Date	Responses
Online survey	www.strongervancouver.org www.beheardvancouver.org	July-Sept.	932
Statistically valid survey	ETC Institute	In progress	400 (goal)

Comments	Location	Date	Total
Received via survey open-ended question	www.strongervancouver.org www.beheardvancouver.org	July –Sept.	310
Received via emails	www.strongervancouver.org www.beheardvancouver.org	July –Sept.	46
Received via social media	Social media	July – Sept.	264
Received at focus groups	Focus groups	Sept	TBD
Received at open houses	Open houses	August	TBD