



Building Resilient Neighbourhoods Project: Vic West Resilience Snapshot

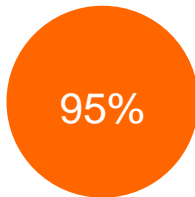
Appendix: Survey and Interview Data

December 2013

APPENDIX: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW DATA

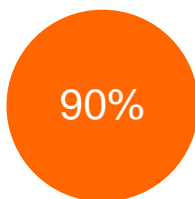
This appendix provides a more detailed look at the results of our Vic West Resilience Survey and key informant interviews with neighbourhood leaders. In total, 179 residents or leaders were interviewed or surveyed. This included 160 residents who either responded to an on-line survey or did an in-person survey in our “Neighbourhood Living Room” that was set up at various events and venues. An additional 19 people were selected for more in-depth interviews due to their role in giving leadership to one or more important activities in the neighbourhood, or work within key neighbourhood organizations. We collected this information between June and October 2013.

ATTITUDES AND VALUES



95% of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that neighbourhood public spaces are well cared for

CHARACTERISTIC 1: There is a sense of respect, or positive regard, for each other and the neighbourhood



90% of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that there is a high level of neighbourhood pride in Victoria West

Community leaders cited a number of examples of people caring for public places, including a lack of litter and efforts to clean up parks. They also said that most related events were well attended.

“In the Craigflower area, yes. People are moving to Victoria West because of neighbourhood pride”

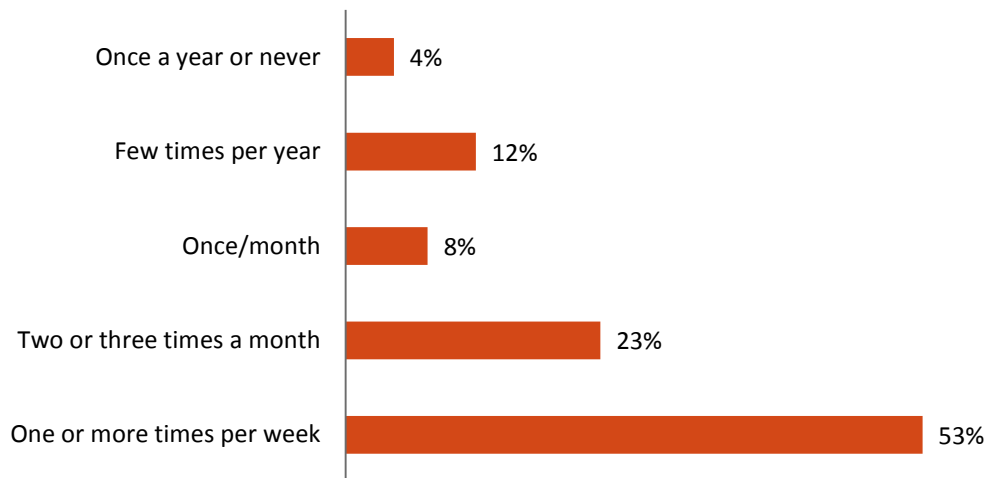
“People come here looking for community – it is no longer just a cheap place to live in Victoria... but people come with that attitude and are

more open to change because of this. This has been a gradual change over the past 10 years”.

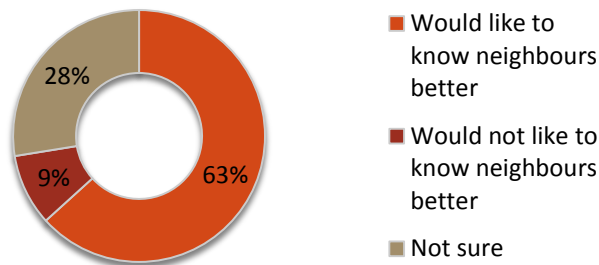
“Y events are well-supported, [and there is a strong] annual event. The Y is a hub but I can see a division – do the wealthy attend the [community centre]?”

“Yes, but people still think Victoria West is ... the “other side of the bridge ... dangerous”

How often to you have a conversation with your neighbour?



Would you like to know your neighbours better?

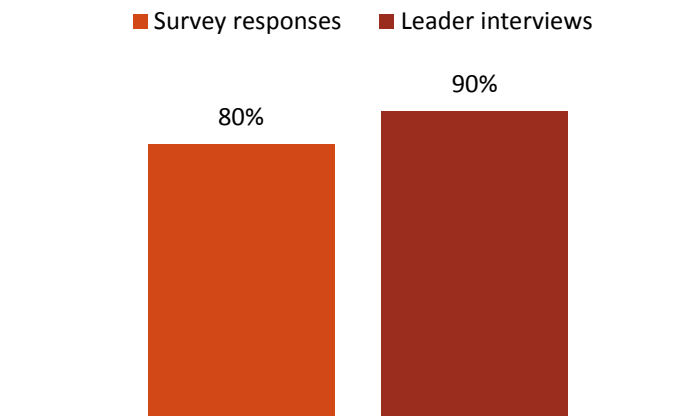


Respondents suggested many ways to get to know neighbours better. The most common suggestion was block parties. Also mentioned were more neighbourhood-wide events, like the Corn Roast and Swimfest, more ‘bumping places’ and shared spaces like benches, coffee shops, and wider sidewalks. Others said that having a shared issue

or project, like a street clean-up, work party, or discussion circles on issues of common interest would help.

Characteristic 2: The neighbourhood has a “can do” attitude and gets things done.

Vic West residents have a 'can do' attitude and can get things done



“Victoria West residents believe they can influence the future of the neighbourhood”

95% of leader interviews agree or strongly agree

Some examples that survey respondents gave included the new Victoria West orchard, efforts to clean up or care for parks and the waterway, and the recent organizing efforts against the proposed sewage treatment plant. The more active volunteers provided many examples of projects that had been undertaken; however, most of the examples came only from the general area of Craigflower Village and the Community Centre.

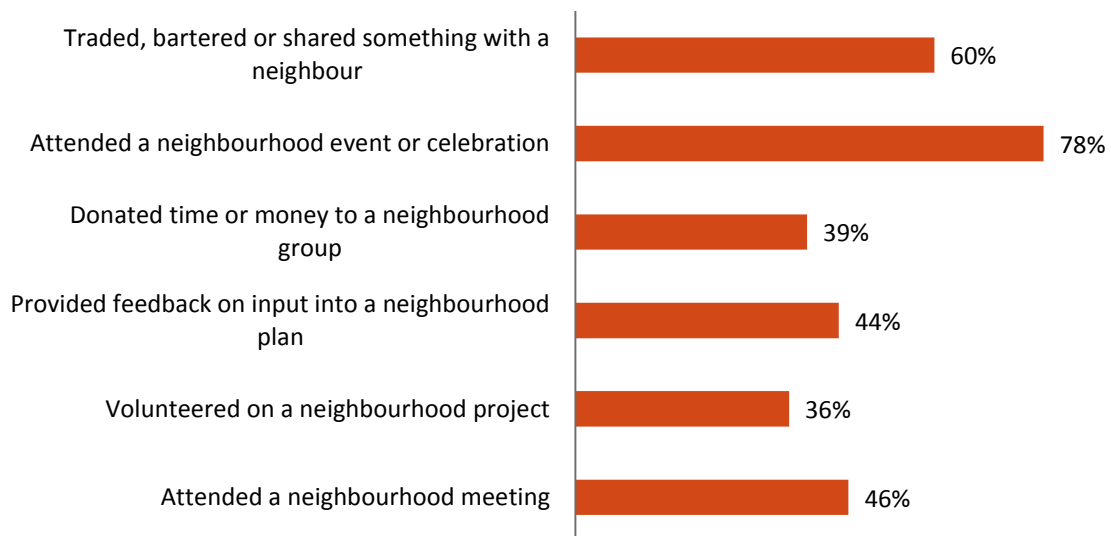
There were also suggestions for strengthening Victoria West’s “can do” attitude:

“It seems to be the same group of people who get involved over and over. Everyone benefits from the efforts of these folks, but participation seems to hit a fairly low ceiling. I think this is probably the case in most places/in most scenarios, but I also believe it can change for the better”.

“Many people do have a sense of initiative, but most people would rather help if someone else organizes it, and many would just wait for someone else to do it. I think this is what contributes to burn-out of the people who tend to initiate community projects. Sometimes I think people would initiate or organize projects but they don't feel empowered or competent - they've never done it. Or they figure it would take too much time and everybody always feels 'too busy'.”

Most survey respondents attend community events as their primary way of getting involved in the neighbourhood. The table below summarizes in what ways survey respondents participated in neighbourhood activities in the past 12 months.

In the past twelve months, have you...



Some of the examples of neighbourhood participation that survey respondents mentioned included attending events such as the Victoria West Corn Roast and Gorge Swim Fest, being involved in protests and meetings about the proposed sewage treatment plant, being involved in a strata council, sharing plants, food and tools with neighbours, and being involved with the Victoria West Community Association.

Overwhelmingly, survey respondents told us that lack of time and busy schedules were the biggest barrier to participation in neighbourhood activities, followed by not knowing

about opportunities to get involved or there not being activities that matched their interests.

“Our condo is a unique community in itself. We have Friday Happy Hours attended by 10 to 30 residents. We have an active recycling committee of 16 people. There is a book club, a card night, a decorating committee, a landscape committee, a Strata Council, a golf group, and a social committee. We use some of the recycling deposit money to support local charities and to fund a Christmas Dinner. We also host a summer BBQ”.

“I checked volunteer, but it is generally, not formally - I just help out at events when I go. Given that I'm a single mom who can't always rely on a regular schedule, I can't always commit to meetings or volunteer hours...although I want to be more involved and help out whenever I can!”

“condos are a bit isolated from the general community, they seem to be more insular. Plus the single family dwelling neighborhoods are a bit distant and separated from our area by parks and business areas”.

“Our particular area has a very diverse socio-economic mix. In the past people at either end of the scale seemed reluctant to mix”.

“Seems to be divide between south and north Victoria West.”

Characteristic 3: There is a spirit of mutual assistance.

90%

Almost 90% of survey respondents did a favour for a neighbour in the past 12 months.

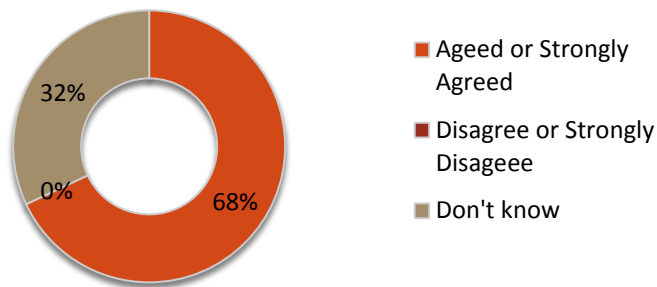
These favours included caring for a neighbours house or apartment, borrowing and lending things from each other, sharing food, and helping each other with chores or in work parties.

“I am third on a call list for a neighbour with dementia. We help each other a fair bit and visit”.

“We live in a building, and are very friendly with most of our neighbors within the building, and we all help each other out, etc, however, it would

be great to have a stronger connection to our "street" neighbors as well, not just those in the same building"

Residents in Victoria West support people who are vulnerable (leader Interviews)

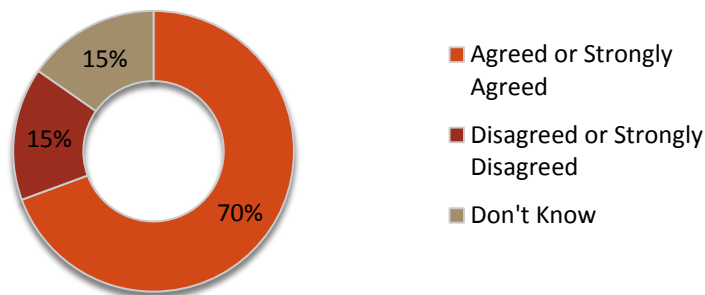


Leader interviewees provided few examples of people or organizations supporting others who are facing challenges. While some examples of individual support for neighbours were identified, such as bringing meals to people when they are sick, there were almost no examples described of organizations or groups in the neighbourhood providing more systemic support. Some respondents also commented on the loss of neighbourhood services such as the Rainbow Kitchen.

"At individual level, when people are sick, have broken leg, had a baby (e.g. child care sharing). Not sure about neighbourhood level. There is a bit of a disconnect with people living in poverty."

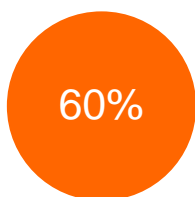
Characteristic 4: There is support for learning and skills development at all levels.

Residents of Vic West are open to new ideas and learning (survey responses)



“There is an old guard with potentially waning influence (e.g. concerned about boats on the Gorge. This is a small loud majority, but there is a small younger demographic that has a different opinion (about this issue)”.

“Tricky to answer. Depends on the idea, can be fairly set. Like urban farming and (backyard) chickens, for example – not everyone is into chickens. Songhees is different, has different neighbourhood issues”.

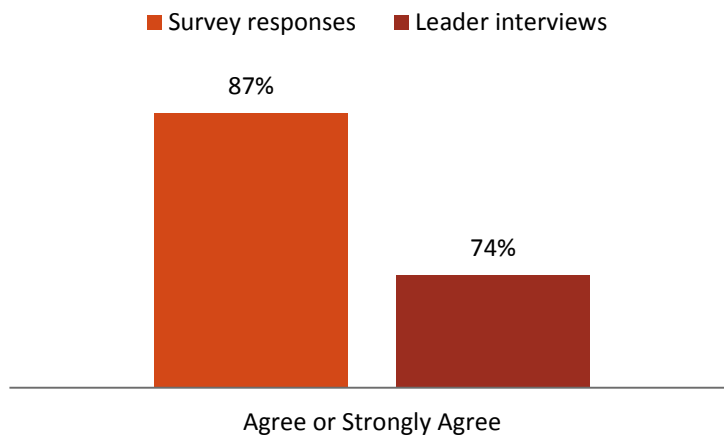


60% of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that there are opportunities for Victoria West residents to pursue formal and informal learning, while 33% of respondents did not know and none disagreed.

Some examples of learning opportunities included arts-based activities (Art Quest, Quilters), recreation and sports (Pacific Institute of Sports Excellence and Kidsport, Victoria West Community Centre), life skills for families (Salvation Army), youth training (Boys and Girls Club, Individual Pursuits’ group home for youth with developmental disabilities, Bladerunners’ employment training for at-risk youth), Parent Education Nights hosted by PAC, and events related to food security, urban agriculture, community gardens and the community orchard.

Characteristic 5: The neighbourhood values diversity and is inclusive of all populations and perspectives.

People from all walks of life are welcomed and included in the neighbourhood



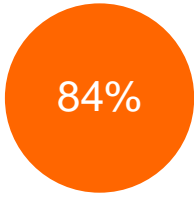
Most respondents described Victoria West as a highly welcoming and inclusive neighbourhood; however, some respondents noted public debates about the boat homes next to Banfield Park, and their own sense of a divide in the neighbourhood between income levels and “sub-neighbourhoods” representing different socio-economic demographics. One respondent commented that people are “welcomed but not included”.

“The people who live on boats on the water next to Banfield park are definitely not included ... the issue of the people in boats beside Banfield Park seems to be a class issue. I am embarrassed to say that.... I don't agree with chasing these people away, and there are many in the community who also think it's okay that the boat people stay”.

“Funny divide and socio-economic mix. There is a welcome, but people don't necessarily feel included – higher income people actually feel like the underdog in the neighbourhood”

“Used to be “wrong side of the tracks”, the school was considered an “inner city” school, and this is very entrenched. There is a need to blend to make the community and school stronger. Probably only ½ of the people who live here send their kids to the local school – it needs parents with resources, but there is a perception of mixed income challenges”.

Characteristic 6: Citizens demonstrate respect for ecological limits.



84% of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that residents of Victoria West demonstrate water and energy conservation behaviours.

Although most respondents agreed with this statement with respect to individual actions, few could describe many group or neighbourhood-wide conservation initiatives.

“The rain garden at the school is great education. People visit it a lot. The reputation of the school has changed from one of “need” which it had when this was built”.

“A vocal smaller group does a lot; however, there is a big divide between single and multi-family units [in terms of conservation behaviours]”.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Characteristic 7: Healthy ecosystems and greenspace are valued and accessible

95%

95% of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed (with almost 70% strongly agreeing) that ecosystems and greenspaces are valued and accessible in the neighbourhood.

Respondents named the following groups working on protecting or maintaining ecosystems and greenspace: the Victoria West Community Association, Victoria West Elementary School, Ivy League, Victoria West Food Security Collective, Dockside Green and Bayview Place.

Characteristic 8: Community gathering spaces exist and are well used.

79%

79% of leader interviewees agreed that public and private spaces are well used in the neighbourhood

Most respondents could name many places for people to meet, socialize and recreate in the neighbourhood such as Banfield Park and Spiral Cafe.

Characteristic 9: There is attention paid to creating an accessible village core and essential services.

75%

of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that essential services such as drug stores, clinics, day care and grocery stores are available and accessible within the neighbourhood,

25% disagreed or strongly disagreed

The most common reason to disagree with this statement was desire for a particular service that was not accessible. Leader interviewees indicated that they would like to see more amenities generally, including green grocers, bookstores, restaurants, bulk-buying opportunities, a neighbourhood emailing system or online platform, and places for neighbours to sell things that they grow.

Craigflower Village was most commonly cited as the Village Core, followed by Westside Village. Some leader interviewees expressed questions and concerns about Victoria West having “two different cores”.

“Craigflower Village NOT Westside Village – this is so private they won’t even allow us to put up signs”.

Survey respondents were also asked what they’d most like to add or change in the neighbourhood, and they most commonly highlighted concerns about traffic, followed by a lack of affordable housing.

Characteristic 10: There is a plan to ensure that land tenures and uses provide for affordable housing and food security.

Victoria West is an affordable place to live (survey responses)



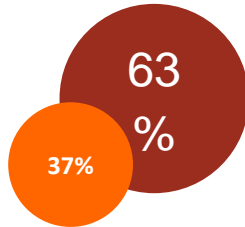
While most survey respondents felt Victoria West is an affordable neighbourhood, some comments reflected concern that residents are increasingly stretched. A large number of interview respondents expressed concern about possible neighbourhood gentrification and housing affordability moving into the future.

“A lot of people living on edge of Victoria West... apartment dwellers, families, poorer, and we don’t see them because they’re struggling to survive”.

Leader interviewees identified a number of groups and organizations providing leadership to key planning initiatives in the neighbourhood. These included the Victoria West Community Association Land Use Committee and Transportation Committee, along with the Food Security Collective, Vic West Urban Farmers and Lifecycles. No one could name any neighbourhood groups dedicated to community-wide energy issues, housing, or economic development. Some respondents also mentioned the Victoria West 2003 Visions Map, and the City of Victoria’s Official Community Plan and the related Victoria West Neighbourhood and City of Victoria and Boulevard Transportation plans, but stated that they are all in need of updating.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Characteristic 11: There is collaboration to ensure that all citizens basic needs are met.



63% of leader interviewees did not know whether there was collaboration in the neighbourhood to ensure the basic needs of all residents are met, while 37% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Characteristic 12: Major employers, assets and sources of finance are locally owned/controlled.

78%

of survey respondents are frequenting businesses in the neighbourhood once a week or more.

The exact meaning of “local” was not defined in this question, but respondents most often cited local coffee shops, eateries and bakeries, along with restaurants such as Spinnaker’s, and thrift shops. Less than a third of respondents could name any major local employers, and those that were named were predominantly very small businesses. Some respondents identified Victoria West Community Centre and Da Vinci Centre as locally-owned infrastructure.

Characteristic 13: There is ongoing effort to diversify the local economy.

No respondents knew of a coordinated plan to support local businesses or otherwise strengthen the neighbourhood economy, or knew of an organization or group with a specific mandate around local economic development in the neighbourhood. Similarly, no respondents identified any neighbourhood organizations that provide either employment training or supports for local business development. Respondents were uncertain if there were supports from regional organizations that might be available within Victoria West.

Characteristic 14: There is openness to informal types of exchange.



60%

Almost 60% of survey respondents have shared, traded or bartered something in the last 12 months.

Respondents noted many examples of informal sharing and bartering in the neighbourhood, including childcare, dog walking, car sharing, clothing exchanges, tool, garden and yard sharing, caring for each others animals and property, and book and toy exchanges. One respondent noted that the Balance Condo at Dockside Green has a “sharing” section within the building, and a small shared workshop.

“Trading childcare, cooking for each other, exchanging clothing, taking care of pets. The neighbourhood seems “old fashioned” in this way. People still walk places. We have noticed this as different from other neighbourhoods just with the number of people ...[residents] share pick ups and walk with groups of children”

Characteristic 15: The neighbourhood looks outside itself to collaborate, seek and secure strategic resources, policies, etc.

The neighbourhood is proactive in establishing partnerships with outside groups

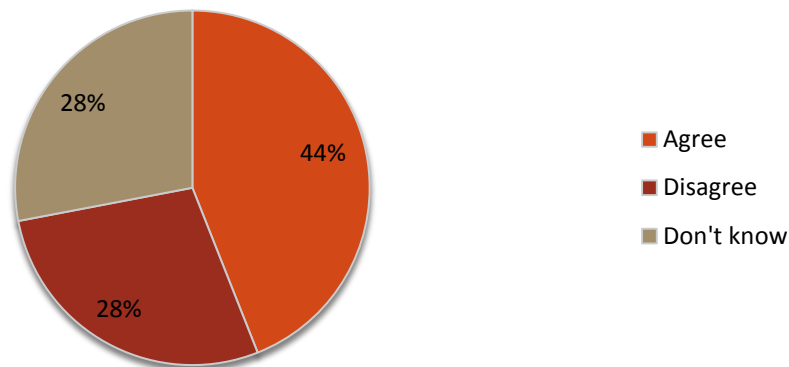


81% of leader interviewees agree or strongly agree

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY WIDE PLANNING

Characteristic 16: There is a common vision and goals for the future of the neighbourhood.

There is a common vision and goals for the future of the neighbourhood (leader interviews)



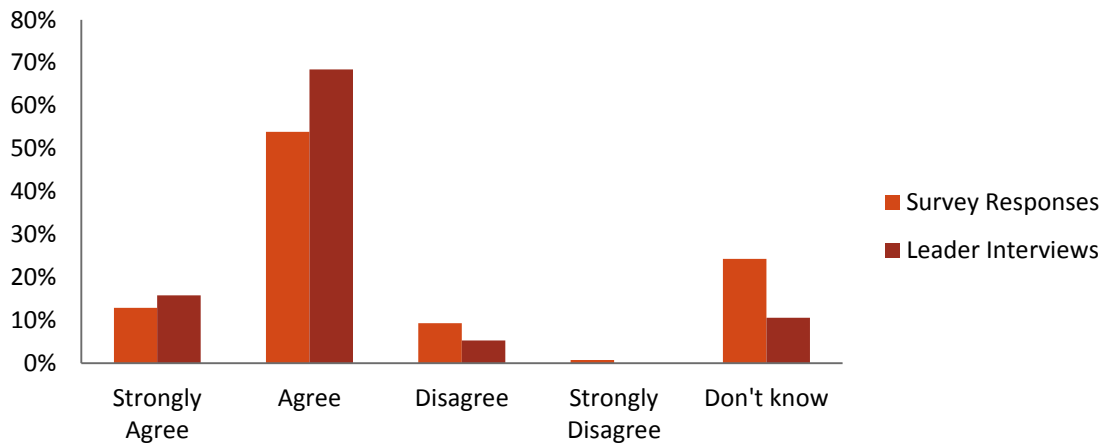
Most of the leader interviewees pointed to the Victoria West Community Association's public visioning process in 2003 that resulted in the current *Visions Map* for the neighbourhood. They noted that, while the map was updated in 2012, the action projects and vision have not yet been updated. They described groups that have formed around new objectives related to the Visions Map, and significant work that has been completed on these. However, the leader interviewees had a range of responses related to how representative they felt the vision is of the neighbourhood.

"Haven't had a visioning process since 2003-4 and we need one... The visioning that was started around this is specific to VWCA as an organization, and not for the neighbourhood as a whole – we need both".

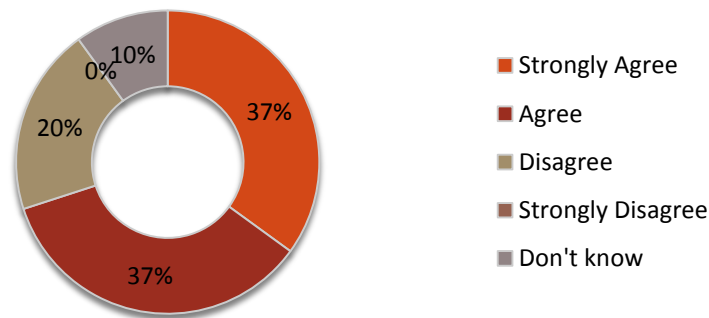
"There is a historical divide between the community centre and the community association. There is a lack of a common vision, but this might be changing. There is no common sense of who is responsible, no common understanding of who is driving the vision, who drives the community association/community centre".

Characteristic 17: There is proactive citizen engagement in planning and action around the goals.

Vic West residents are engaged and involved in planning for the future of the neighbourhood



My group or organization has been successful in engaging diverse residents in our work (leader interviews)



Leader interviewees seemed more aware of planning and action initiatives than non-leaders, and some respondents felt some people face barriers to participation such as financial constraints. Notably, answers to these questions were strongly influenced by

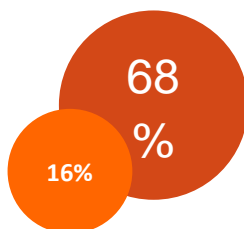
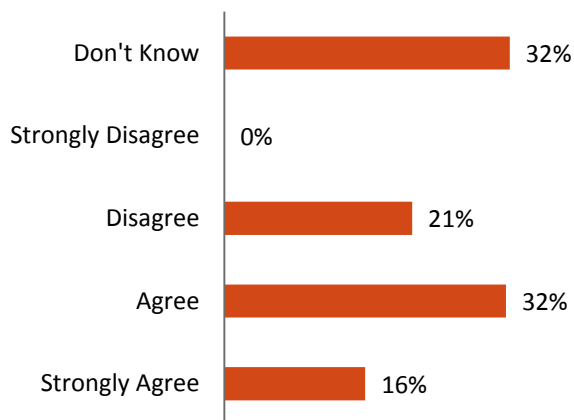
the recent advocacy efforts around the proposed sewage treatment plant, which had a high profile and engaged many people and new leaders.

“Sewage (issue) gave people a feeling of empowerment. People were exhausted after – there was fatigue, but connections, and the human infrastructure are there – people have articulated what their neighbourhood means to them”.

“I think there is a very strong core group of residents who are active in planning/resolving community issues, but there are many voices missing. I am curious about renters and other less commonly engaged citizens.”

Characteristic 18: Groups and organizations collaborate with each other around common goals.

Groups and organizations in Vic West regularly collaborate with each other (leader interviews)



68% of leader interviewees felt that there is effort to resolve conflict and build consensus between residents, groups and organizations in the neighbourhood. 16% disagreed. 21% did not know.

“If there were a problem in my neighbourhood where people had different opinions (like cars driving too fast or people not taking care of their property) residents would work together to solve the problem”

64% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree

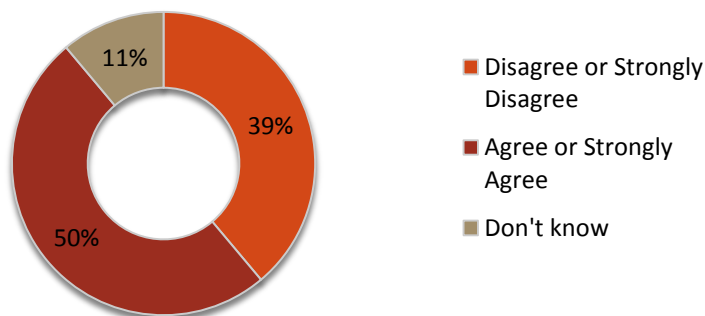
Programs and events offered through the VWCA and community centre were often cited as examples of collaborating to offer services or respond to community needs. However, many respondents had suggestions and comments about how neighbourhood consensus building could be strengthened.

“Land use is still a disconnect for some. The land use committee is not as visible or active in VWCA now”.

“(There are) attitudes like “developers are bad or city is bad” that get carried over – more combative than collaborative”.

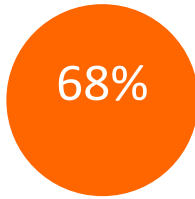
Characteristic 19: There is proactive and ongoing leadership recruitment and development.

Volunteers and leaders in the neighbourhood are diversified and representative of the population (leader interviews)



Respondents could only name a few examples of leadership training opportunities available in the neighbourhood. They noted that the Boys and Girls Club offers some youth leadership training, and a few staff within neighbourhood organizations have taken courses with Leadership Victoria.

Characteristic 20: There is a sense of experimentation that contributes to a culture of continuous learning.



68% of leader interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that there is a culture of experimentation and learning among groups and organizations in Victoria West

“Taking on running the community centre was an experiment. ... Community Dinners were also an experiment and we learned how to make that work. Another good example is the Food Security group, gardens and urban farmers”.
