Wellbeing Waterloo Community Forum Notes

May 2017

On May 24, Wellbeing Waterloo Region held its third community forum. At this forum 60 service providers and community members from across the region were engaged in a conversation about the input and feedback from the Wellbeing Waterloo Region (WWR) Community engagement process so far. (This feedback is summarized in Appendix 1). The conversation followed a "What? So what? Now what?" process as a way to start to make sense of what has been heard so far.

This document shares the notes from that conversation.

WHAT

What resonates for you about the community engagement feedback so far?

- The list of priorities is overwhelming and daunting
- Housing and affordable housing at every income level is important to note
- So many issues are already being addressed, what keeps them on this list?
- So many discreet and different communities with individual needs
- There is an elephant in the room regarding the efficiencies (lack of) between levels governments
- Community Vitality is so dominant
- Community Vitality is a distinct area that other impact
- Relational factors, high number of issues are linked
- Social determinants of health
- Early literacy- is an important factor, everyone can help here
- Vibrant city: how do you pull "small" community into this larger picture of vitality
- Collaboration is very good – trust is good: things get done
- How does this live or evolve over time – Adaptive Cycle
- "Belonging" and "Community Vitality" are the current buzz in the region
- Work-live balance v. Work-life harmony, prefer work-life harmony
- Time-management feels like a personal struggle, may not relate to the broader community
- Inclusion and equity are throughout
- Community Vitality has the potential to galvanize most agendas

- How can we get the private sector to come together socially and play a role in supporting wellbeing; there is a missing link between the private and public sectors
- Belonging and connection – relationships
- Inter-generational
- Keeping it broad for dialogue to be inclusive
- More upstream work is needed

What surprised you about the community engagement feedback so far?

- Surprised living standards were not at the top of the list
- Surprised there isn't more focus on indigenous
- Why did more basics like health care not come forward more?
- Time use/culture has most impact on wellbeing according to the CIW yet that did not come out here; maybe because people around the table have "standard" work hours
- Lack of connections to initiatives and awareness

In addition to these reflections, there was consistent feedback regarding the need to see more diversity and community voices in the feedback. It was recognized that to date, much of the feedback has come from service providers. Currently, community engagement is underway and future sense-making will bring that input together with what we have heard so far.

SO WHAT

So what does this mean for your work?

- Whose responsibility – federal?, provincial?, municipal? - is it to communicate about services?
- Stigma is a barrier to using services – do we need a change in service models? More confidentiality?
- Could we find an early prevention initiative and then one in the middle of the lifecycle?
- Stronger neighbourhoods and connections to people
- Hope, help, healing – anyone can own this this
- Need to remain curious
- System needs to be made more accessible
- Ministries need to allow flexibility
- Bring partners together
- There are lots of orgs already working towards health and wellbeing; need an inventory or map of existing supporters/activities

- There are lots of good services but we can't navigate them all
- Leverage what we do, be open to new and innovative partnerships that wrap around a family or person
- Person/family/child-centered approach to using existing assets as opportunities to do more
- Social determinants of health link with this
- Focus on patient-centered care now and see how that impacts social determinants
- Quantity service approach vs. quality because there isn't enough times or awareness of community services
- Sustainable change comes from citizens not service providers
- People will need to feel safe that they belong in order to contribute to WWR
- Artificial middle class – mortgages are too big, debt too deep, cost of living going up, its' not sustainable
- Young single people struggle more than people realize

What needs new attention and energy?

- Rural communities need attention
- Businesses need to have a greater appreciation for wellbeing
- Need to address absolute basic needs first
- Childcare, poverty affordable housing, employment, living wage all need attention
- Equity – could be a key focus area
- Need to overhaul service environment
- Why can't there be an access point that gets a person all they need in services – need one entry point
- Need a higher level of collaboration among services, there are too many silos within and between services
- Focus on preservation and access to Grand River Lands (are these only for the rich?)
- Need to increase civic democratic engagement
- Now we need to focus on mechanisms and vehicles and cultures to support these existing energies by creating relationships, access to resources, sharing networks and extending the work already being done to enough authentic evolution of neighbourhoods
- Tapping into business community to advocate for change; provide access to spaces for groups; see employees as people with needs; see selves as participants in root causes and enablers for change; "adopt" a program or service or need
- Start with Waterloo Economic Development Group or Chamber, Communitech, Centre for Family Business
- Affordable housing
- More time understand or different communities, culture, age-based so we do not create more gaps in understanding
- Addictions and mental health services
- Mental health in much younger ages; need to be doing the real work, not putting a bandaid on it; need to focus on mental health and preparing youth for the future because lack of preparation can impact so much

NOW WHAT

Slight Impact

- Saying hello

Noticeable Impact:

- Belonging
- Workshops on mental health
- Educate other sectors about resources available
- Teaching other sectors world-views
- Youth voice
- Engage the tech sector
- Play
- Walking to school
- Fitness, diet – Spirit, Mind and Body
- Local neighbourhood grocery stores
- Collaboration between neighbourhoods and populations to create a different, more diverse community
- Bike trails through neighbourhoods

Game-Changing Impact:

- Connectivity Tables
- Increasing Civic Democratic Engagement
- Living Wage
- Businesses valuing wellbeing
- Adult mental health
- Youth mental health
- Affordable housing
- Early child mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Graduation rates – every kid graduates from high school
- Listen to lead
- Let us lead
- More social enterprise
- Working center
- Think aspirational, not issues

- Remain curious, adaptive, resilient, it's about the approach
- Taking cues from indigenous populations
- True, full engagement of families
- Healthy kids
- Access to recreation for everybody
- Access to fresh food
- Being the healthiest community in the country
- Finding the first step to bring real action to supporting wellbeing in the private sector
- Job security
- Mental Health: removing stigma; no more wait lists; changing the conversation; resiliency
- Affordable, flexible, accessible, quality daycare
- Affordable housing, meets the needs of all people
- Guaranteed basic income
- Eliminate preventable trauma
- Platform/framework for integration of collaboration initiatives

Appendix 1: Community Engagement Feedback (As of May 2017)

Engagement activities as of May 2017 have gathered almost 2000 responses on wellbeing in Waterloo Region. Engagement is ongoing and will include further community conversations and community surveys. The following tables align community input with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing[1] (CIW). The CIW is a composite index that measures quality of life through eight interrelated domains as follows:

→ **Community vitality:** Social engagement, social support, community safety, attitudes towards others and community

→ **Democratic engagement:** democratic process; political institutions, participation in political activities, expression of political views, relationships with governments; trust; citizen participation

→ **Education:** Social and emotional competencies, basic educational knowledge and skills, overall academic achievement, attainment and participation

→ **Environment:** natural resources, clean air, clean water, available energy and raw materials, the amount of wilderness, diversity of species, and natural assets

→ **Healthy populations:** Personal wellbeing, physical health conditions, life expectancy/mortality, mental health, functional health, lifestyle and behaviours, public health, health care.

→ **Leisure and culture:** Participation, perceptions, experiences, opportunities (social leisure, arts and culture, physical activity)

→ **Living standards:** Average and median income and wealth, income and wealth distribution, income volatility, economic security.

→ **Time use:** Time, timing (control over timing of one's day), tempo (pace), temporality (biological rhythms).

We used the CIW code and the response data from all engagement sessions (forum, community conversations and surveys) up to the beginning of May. In addition to these domains, we also identified feedback and advice that related to how systems and sectors work together across domains, which is included in the summary below as relevant to all domains.

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[1] https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/

Need to focus on…

Community Vitality	Democratic Engagement	Education
A community that is safe, prosperous and promising	Action	Acknowledgement of education and degrees from other countries
A place to live, work and play	Community empowerment	Attachment
Access and accessibility	**Community engagement**	**Cultural inclusivity**
Authentic interactions	Community organizer	**Early childhood development and education**
Belonging	Grassroots	Education to reduce stigma and discrimination
Celebration of diversity	Having voices heard	Educational places to visit
Communities for all ages	"Joined up" structures (all of government; all of community)	**Equitable access to education**
Compassionate communities	Listening and responsive regional government	Graduation rates seen as everyone's responsibility (not just school board)
Connectedness	More people vote and get involved at municipal level	Incubation and acceleration of innovations
Engagement between older adults with young people	**Neighbourhood leaders**	Intergenerational knowledge transfer
Help for new immigrants/refugees	Nothing about me without me	**Investment in children and youth**
Inclusion	Power	Learn from individuals with lived experience (homelessness/poverty)
Inter-generational living	Regional, municipal + townships work together	Lifelong learning
More neighborhood associations	Trust	**Literacy,** early literacy, literacy for all
Neighbourhood hubs		No bullying in schools
Saying hello		Non-traditional perspectives and ideas
Sense of community		Positive parenting, parent education
Social spaces that promote authentic human interactions		Success in school, especially for immigrants/refugees
Strong neighbourhoods		
Youth and family engagement		
Volunteers		

Need to focus on…

Environment	Healthy Populations	Leisure and Culture
Bike friendly communities	**Access** to health care	Accessibility
Connecting suburbs to downtown	**Addictions**, and addiction support services, harm reduction	Addressing intolerance and fear of refugees/immigrant communities
Connection to nature, to land and river	Aging population	Arts, symphony, theatre scene
Environmental sustainability	Effects of technology on health and mental health	Awareness and promotion of community resources/events
Famers' markets	End to **homelessness**	Community centres
Less land dedicated to the automobile, fewer empty parking lots	**Food security**	**Cultural diversity**, embracing diversity
Long-term sustainability	**Health equity**	Family-friendly spaces and events
Overcoming 401 divide	**Healthy child development**	**Festivals and events**, free events
Parks, playgrounds	Healthy food	Inaccessible events/spaces to people with disabilities
Public spaces, place-making	Holistic (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) health	Inter-generational events
Recycling	**Mental health** and access to mental health services, including for youth	**Keeping small town feel** while developing big city amenities
Rural/urban connection	**More active lifestyles**	Libraries as community hubs
Stewardship	Oral and pharma care for low income	More inclusive programming and opportunities
Technology and technological environments	Patient-centred care	**Neighbourhoods** with community gardens, centres, ice rinks; neighbourhood events
Trails	Prevention	Programming for children, youth, adults and older adults
Understanding natural resources are limited (e.g. ground water)	Rural access to service	Rentals of community fields (baseball/soccer) for events, easier, more reasonable cost
Urban planning, rural planning	Seven Generation healing	Repurposing historic buildings
Walkable communities	Social determinants	Schools as community hubs
	Social isolation	Vibrancy of downtowns
	Supports and care for dementia	
	Waitlists for health, mental health, addictions services	

Need to focus on…

Living Standards	Time Use	Relevant Across all Domains
Affordable housing	Buses late, feeling like are spending all one's time waiting for a bus	**Accessibility of services**
Commuter culture – are too exhausted to participate in community	Getting people out of their houses	**Awareness of services and community assets**
Cost of bus pass – should be free for those on income support	Limiting dependence on technology	Children
Discretionary benefits	Making time for face-to-face connections	Concern for the future – what will it look like for children and grandchildren
Employment in the townships	Technology	Diversity
Exclusion of those living in poverty	Work/life balance	Engaging business community
Gap between rich and poor/disparity between haves and have-nots		**Equity**
Homelessness		Inclusion
Housing, rising costs and pressure on market		More diverse leadership
Inaccessible transportation for people with disabilities (difficulty getting cabs)		**More meaningful collaboration**
Increasing number of people are struggling		Poverty
Living wage		Refugee settlement
Meeting basic needs		Older adults
Precarious employment		Youth
Region is becoming unaffordable for older adults		
Rising cost of utilities		
Transportation, availability, accessibility		
Unemployment		
Unemployment services		
Urban/rural connections, getting the right blend		