

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

### Summary of Discussions from the Community Conversation

#### CAMBRIDGE + NORTH DUMFRIES

#### DETAILS

THURSDAY, APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup>

Number of participants – 76

Host/Interviewer - Lisa Short – Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation

Guest Speakers - Joan Fisk – WWLHIN, Eric Bolton – E-Bolt Music

#### WHY COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation, Wellbeing Waterloo Region, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation and the United Way Kitchener Waterloo & Area partnered to host a series of four **Community Conversations**.

The goals of the Community Conversations were:

- To continue the recent momentum related to the latest release of the Waterloo Region's Vital Signs® and other community priority focused discussions and work.
- To provide an opportunity for members of the community to provide input into the priority setting work of Wellbeing Waterloo Region.
- To discuss what wellbeing means to you!

#### HOW WILL THE INFORMATION GATHERED BE USED?

The information gathered from each of the four community conversations will be compiled with other input to help determine the priorities for Waterloo Region. The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation will also use the information in the next cycle of Waterloo Region's Vital Signs® reports.

#### WHAT DID WE TALK ABOUT?

Each community conversation was structured in two parts. The first part featured a conversation with community leaders from Waterloo Region, which set the stage for the second part, where the participants were invited to have a conversation with others at their table.

The following questions were asked by a volunteer facilitator at each of the tables:

- What is your vision for wellbeing in Waterloo Region?
- What are the things that make living in Waterloo Region great for you and your community?
- What gets in the way of wellbeing for you and your community?
- What can you do for yourself or for your community to improve wellbeing?

A volunteer scribe recorded conversations and the results are below.

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The following are the major themes that were discussed at this community conversation. The actual responses of participants from each discussion follow in the subsequent pages:

1. **Cost of Living:** The cost of living (e.g., housing and food security) as it relates to community building and connectedness is a strong theme. Community engagement often takes a back seat to day-to-day economic pressures. *"If you are concerned with a job, home, or next meal, you are not worried about getting out to events"*
2. **Technology:** The use and challenge of technology in community building and connectedness is a strong theme. Technology is often seen as a social isolator and the role of technology as a means of spreading community awareness is criticized. *"Technology is distracting and wonderful. But it is isolating and overstimulating us. It is becoming a problem at a very young age- people aren't checking in and being present- we need to center ourselves and check in away from tech"*
3. **Education:** The desire for and value of a strong educational system is a common theme. This includes the desire to expand post-secondary options in the region. *"Amazing people, universities, colleges can help wellbeing."*
4. **Community Awareness:** The need to spread awareness about community-building events and services is a common theme. *"(We Need) increased awareness of what is going on in Cambridge or the services available to local residents for all kinds of needs."*
5. **Committed Volunteerism:** Consistent, quality community volunteer resources/placement is a recurring theme, specifically, the need for more willing and able volunteers. *"(We Need) individuals who actually care enough to stay and be consistent in their volunteer work."*
6. **Service Integration:** The need to integrate the various social services, including health services is a recurring theme. *"There are many organisations that provide services to support the community (but need to cooperate and coordinate to provide integrated services)"*

The following information was collected from participants.

1. **What is your vision for wellbeing in Waterloo Region?**
  - Access all around
  - Safety
  - Connections
  - Inclusive
  - Resources
  - Equal wealth =better health-countries with a better grasp on this have better wellbeing. We are failing our wellbeing of children.
  - Everyone in it together
  - See everybody accept everyone else-people are excluded



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Integration of different classes and different population( seniors and children in the same facility)
- People having a voice (or having someone speaking on your behalf)
- Knowledge –knowledge of access and programs
- A network to connect to
- A step away from technology and having more face to face connections
- Love instead of fear
- What about poverty? So many people live below the poverty level.
- A great deal of people are marginalized by poverty. Affluent people seem to ease into end of life more-so than those that live in poverty.
- Festivals in neighbourhood. Promotes people to get together, in person, engagement.
- Build resilient communities.
- Compassionate community. Worried that quick transformation, communities growing quickly, people not being engaged, becoming a bedroom community for GTA folks that commute, hope we don't lose compassion.
- Finding employment and being able to afford housing.
- Public transportation is not as accessible for people in Cambridge. We need a Go Train. Should not only be in Kitchener.
- More engagement in the natural resources. The river is not utilized appropriately.
- Services should be accessible to everybody. Not just available online. Not everyone has access to computers or the skills to use.
- Affordability. Not able to afford housing- both rentals and home ownership.
- Affordable entertainment. Free community events.
- Updated sports facilities needed.
- Large community development focus – neighborhood of associations wasn't able to keep up. Need more organizations across the city while the city grows.
- More neighborhood associations – geographic boundaries could be cut in half and it would be more functional – the larger the city gets it becomes difficult for city to connect
- Wellbeing is about connected.
- Technology having a negative impact on face to face connection
- Trusting the neighbourhood – taking a chance in exchanging personal information
- New generation takes chances – we need to be more like that
- Getting to know your neighbour
- Connections with nature – appreciating that there is land that people can utilize and be a part of the community
- Getting people to take advantage of nature
- Forest Bathing – connecting with nature and the environment
- People are forgetting how to connect with nature because they are so dependant on technology
- People need to be disconnected from technology to meet people
- Rules about where people can go – almost discourage people from using public spacing
- Negative attitudes from older adults towards children
- Getting people out and connected
- Driven by demographics – age
- Though of ageless, raceless, all encompassing thing – inclusive



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Ideally
- From perspective- demographics are less specific and more broad – no young children in programs but I know about them- very important to a community – for accessibility
- Have to access health services – and everything in between
- Don't go to church but it is important for those whoever their faith is – not just religion – assets in the city are all here but they don't know about it
- Awareness of availability
- Broad question – wellbeing – sense of being in touch with the community – knowing I have good neighbours, good hospital, knowing ---- which one to go to, dependant on sources --- having access to facilities and having people that are aware to guide you
- Be in touch with volunteer endeavours (Cambridge concert) be happy to live where I'm living
- Belonging to a community – connection with neighbour
- Vision is a community where people can access what they need where and when they need it – programing, child care, senior programming
- Region responsive enough to access what they need and connected to each other enough that we can get people to where they need
- Social media is great but – not where – depends what you're interested in – ex theatre- best theatre I will ask friend – same with sports bar...etc.- want to talk to someone – who is the community to go to live music – talk to people about what is best and import
- Social media and webpage – not the best – we don't talk to each other face to face – see people who think same as we do – don't get above ourselves
- Well rounded community and connecting to things we never would – engage with each other
- Synergy- cant get from social media – cant have a conversation – can be one dimensional and anonymous and brutal very quick
- Partnerships and alliances – hospitals know where they may go depending on what is built and awareness
- Talking about connecting – and communicating and conversing with one another
- -- Many people find it difficult – what do we do about the isolated, newcomers, and children?  
–
- ---- Not scary for people to talk to one another – make it safe – may not feel it is safe to come out and express and opinion and- about welcoming people and listening to them --- very hard to do ---
- Interesting to – worked here all my life – I remember when there was a vibrant downtown – 50s/60s- mall changed all of that – what is happening now is – empty stores but people don't go downtown – for that reason-
  - --- Eric does stuff downtown that is amazing – when more of that happens downtown amazing things will happen – not like Tim Horton's – coffee shops downtown – I see that as time, takes time – helps to address and reach out and talk to each other face to face
    - I think downtown cores – 4 of them – central gathering places – I see the resurgence of downtowns may take another 10-20 years - much of what this is about
- Hard to understanding what well-being in waterloo region is?
  - What does the well-being waterloo do?
  - What does it mean? What are the priorities?
  - What are the things that are important to us?



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- How is it funded?
- What is its purpose?
- Current infrastructure is limited in size → can't support everyone
- Whatever you need as person, you can get it and you can find it
- Wellbeing is something where someone is able to contribute in a meaningful way or contribute to the community in a meaningful way
  - Ex. Working/using talents to contribute in meaningful way
  - Some people may have access to programs but can't find a way to meaningful contribute
    - It's a two part solution
  - Concept that brings together the community
  - Share understanding what community is
  - What is the community working towards to
  - Something that inspires the community
  - Accessibility should be the vision
- Vulnerable sectors and how they are going to access resources
  - Youths – parents who can't afford everything
  - Housing – accessibility of housing for the vulnerable
- Wellbeing is something that everyone is responsible for; not just for the providers
- Using community gifts and strengths to help create a sense of belonging
- Wellbeing needs to be embedded in everything we do and should be done with intent
- Constant growth of person, not just the vulnerable population; it's something everyone should strive for
- Learning, sharing, growing is all part of wellbeing
- When people are absent for the community, our communities are missing out. Everyone has something to contribute
- Where do we want to get to and who are going to trying to reach out to?
- Wellbeing is generally associated with health but our Canadian definition expands the definition to be taking care of other people (strengthening individuals)
- Where you live is your community
- Wellbeing doesn't always "Fit" for everyone
- **\*Access** – some people (like vulnerable people) don't know how to reach the correct channels, or how to stretch their pay
- **Access** – not everyone has the capabilities, knowledge, capabilities, to understand how to reach those channels
- Integrating services (example, food bank with other organizations with big sisters, or other organizations that can help to supply food)
- Too much food wasted – Directing wasted food towards more useful avenues
- "silo" focused vs systems approach with organizations. Organizations can be helping and supporting one another
- Homelessness: maybe choice, may not. Not enough attention. Turning blind eye
- Homelessness – developing programs that support their ability to access services that are available
- Changing the conversation (how-to) to be more personal (**relationship-based**)



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Navigating system by information – you may not know about services, can't also assume services. Skepticism
- Sift through, influence, and volunteering to encourage friends, family, community to support one another – building a community that individuals care for one another
- Volunteering is a way to build a caring heart
- Having mentors in the community to guide people to lead/support others
- Spreading the word
- **Enabling** those who need to succeed. Example: providing iPads to students to assist in their studies has increased their ability be successful educations
- The ability to manage to get around (Access)
- Communication
- Removing barriers – connecting with people, and people with resources
- **BELONGING** – if you feel you belong you have someone you can rely on for support
- Perception of “right to have”
- **Inclusiveness** – Example: Mennonites and new Canadians
- Providing support (for new Canadians)
- Proactive measures by going to participants (going to populations who aren't represented in these types of community conversations)
- Providing dignity for people – this person is a person
- Environmental & Green space– example: clean water is a right
- Literacy: openings doors to opportunities. Without closes and boxes you in. More important now that we in a technology age
- Initiate and implement Change
- Citizens within Cambridge to be more engaged
- Individuals who actually care enough to stay and be consistent in their volunteer work
- Unlike high school students who are nowadays forced to volunteer due to the required 40 hours, we need more volunteers who really are volunteering out of their passion, and not out of requirement
- People getting out of their house or their isolation to engage in public events/community events
- People not afraid to reach out and invite other people to go and volunteer together or engage in community events together
- More interconnection especially within the city
- Easy access to services in the community: “How do we know what services are available in the community?”
- Increased awareness of what is going on in Cambridge or the services available to local residents for all kinds of needs
- Creating a hub in Cambridge where all services are coordinated and people know where to go to find information
- Physical and mental health
- Opportunities for all local citizens/residents and easy access to knowledge of all community events, services and programs
- It's hard to be regional for Cambridge because of its loyalty





## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Greater collaboration and networking so to end up with less duplication of programs and services
- Better healthcare system: "Patient-centred"
- Less stigma in the community when local residents access local services
- A single downtown core for Cambridge
- Community where people don't have to go without
- Waterloo Region is great place to live, work, play-but not for everyone. Poverty reduction, wealthy region
- Core thing- housing, healthcare, spirituality, family, friends, networks.
- People who push through- tenacity
- Access to supports
- Many services focussed on Cambridge fentanyl crisis, region wide. Concentration on problem.
- People who have everything- but there are also barriers
- Whatever makes you happy, you are allowed to do
- Finding strategies that work for the individual
- Not one box, one size fits all
- Not one vision
- Wellbeing is deteriorating- democracy equals lack of equality
- Concept of community to build and achieve a vision
- Make sure WR health and wellbeing
- Access to spirituality, arts, and culture
- Networking with friends
- Help people in shelters
- People struggling for housing- challenges and solutions
- Wellbeing and barriers: health issues, depression, loneliness
- Individual personalities, achievements, engagement in community
- Cambridge no longer good to live and raise kids-equity (social and health)
- More access to health care facilities
- Clean air
- Transportation- connecting with neighbours/community
- Rivers, trails, parks
- Know new residents in your neighbourhood
- Person to person connections
- Listen, learn, lead

### 2. What are the things that make living in Waterloo Region great for you and your community?

- Moving from a large area (Toronto) its nice to be able to feel part of the community and to be able to get involved
- Finding out what the community has to offer
- All of the events-un-silent night
- The libraries- so many good programs and courses-its not just a library-it has so many good services



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- The library is so open and welcoming-it's a good hub
- Facilities- we have many spaces that are open and welcome
- Connection to the arts- there is always music and arts going on
- These services that the libraries offer it fosters connections-opens more doors and gives a sense of belonging
- The rivers and the trails-connection to nature
- Transit(almost)
- Lots of programs in the community centres-lots of things to do as a senior
- Neighbourhood associations ( Langs) they are supporting their local communities
- Its close( used to live in Toronto) it doesn't take 10 min to get to anywhere- everything is easy to get to-not a lot of commute
- Freedom to practice own faith- mental health and wellbeing is connected to being accepted
- Classrooms are so multicultural and accepting- in that community the children are so welcoming and helpful- the differences are celebrated and valued
- Acceptance
- The market- local food, gathering place- regular vendors-creates connections and relationships. It's a place to go and be without having to pay for something-people who are homeless can go and not feel like they have to pay for something to be there-they are a part of the community
- The ability to go somewhere every weekend for free and see something new each time- and be connected with the art and with the people
- Festivals- eg. mill race, blues fest-its an opportunity to explore and become
- The region is very progressive-eg brining mindfulness and meditation into classrooms- eg. The google building in KW
- We are progressive but we also have been strong in keeping our old buildings
- Strong foundation to build on
- The architecture school
- Converting the older buildings into newer spaces
- Good services in the hospital
- As a region we work well together- all of our Collaboratives work well to support one another
- Hespeler reunion. Community get together.
- Safety. For the most part, feel safe in Cambridge.
- Strong infrastructure: really good policing, public education, healthcare
- Inclusive community.
- The churches- welcoming atmosphere, lots of outreach.
- Small town flavour.
- Strong sense of community.
- The trails- biking, walking. Good use of public funds.
- Generous community- philanthropy, leadership.
- Lots of public space.
- Neighbourhood resources- community health centres, neighbourhood associations.
- Festivals ex) "Christmas in Cambridge" amount of community at the event
- Large parks – not a lot of people there despite the great area
- You have a great community, what is your role that makes it great?
- People are willing to come out but they need a community organizer





## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Responsive administration – if people communicate and get engaged – council wants to listen.
- Cambridge is very connected – trails and bike parks
- Sustainable living
- Recycling
- “Acts of Cambridge”
- RARE
- Good outdoor options with easy access
- Attempts to connect where interesting is happening
- Live Cambridge – socially connected activities
- Riverside Park
- Skate park
- Playgrounds
- Baseball diamonds and soccer fields that are accessible to the community – easy to rent the space for a reasonable price to run community events
- Churchill Park
- Library
- Opportunities to connect when children are young and fostering relationships
- Diverse set of resources depending on what is interest
- Diverse number of activities and way to connect
- Live music and festivals
- Yoga
- Holistic approach to the community
- Look at KW they have a mass because of the Universities – thousands of students, and RIM – spawned what is going on there today – don't have that in Cambridge – but may come
- Property – in that building – looks like Conestoga college will build a tech-centric group of people and upstairs will be incubator – small step
- University – architecture school will expand – don't happen overnight but it changes the dynamic downtown- high-rises will get people to live downtown- get them on the streets
- Universities as an asset for the community – not just education but a community feeling – I think that is a big asset
- -- We are lucky we have good schools here – daughters are well educated – wife GI- education is good – build a centre for hockey.... It'll get done – it's a process
- Choice not to live in Toronto – feels warm and cozy when I go home- an art community- we know each other- beautiful sense of community as flawed or not – something special about the area- unspoken – talking about the vibe – its that feeling - great things about Toronto but doesn't feel like home
- Engaging community – a lot of people here that want to help others and see the community grow – retail and residential – but also in the social side to support communities – unfortunately charitable \$ are dropping but in Cambridge it is growing- positive thing due to awareness – from awareness to action – like developers say we want to do this – good for the community – right now its heading in the right direction – many hills to climb (ex- fentanyl) – used to work with someone from Bridges – 7 overdoses last week – built for 48 people – have 120 – there's a movement a foot to improve that
- - What's what I see in the community – very engaged and actionable



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Caring community: that needs to be nurtured – when you compare it to Toronto it is more of a small town vibe – and because people are connected – still see people at the store you might know – I think people are really connected to the community and we have to nurture and extend it – for those of us who are connected – been here 35y and know these agencies – but it is the reaching out to new people and get them connected
- In this community – has a lot of physical challenges in coming together – rivers, major highway- things that separate everyone – 2 Santa clause parades, whole east side of town that works in TO but lives here and may not be able to find downtown or know what’s going on – taking on the challenge of that – how to bridge it – reach out to those people and say hey there’s something going on downtown – here’s a list – here’s a map – I do believe there is a core and other would like the connectedness but don’t know how to find it – makes it great because it is possible
- For me: little bit of other points – originally from GTA moved here 10 years ago – all of the amenities of big city in a small town – don’t have to go to GTA to get things its all here – to visit its not too far – good community – even though I’m from GTA I feel very accepted here – all the nice people! - Beautiful inclusion! – Lovely and helpful and caring – feel much of a part of Cambridge – in region in general it is a great region – so much great things going on in waterloo – very unique place
- Rural townships around us as well –
- Much closer to the country and fresh air
- Anywhere here can go fruit picking – syrup- back roads, beautiful farms
- Connectedness to rural is important – history – keeps everyone grounded
- Interesting: profession: Kitchener region used as a test market for cosmetics- if it flies in KW – fly anywhere else – interesting – think about from corporate – demographic and why – micro chasm
- Get a cross section of everything of urban, rural, multicultural, old world, Mennonites, yuppies in tech industry – very diverse
- Allows me to do what I want when I retire – plan with exception of travelling its all here for me – allows me to do what I want – amenities
- A block away from the country- cross country skiing- don’t have to drive too far to do what I want
- Mayor- trying to connect with youth and social media- talk about mayor – I like that – he is a prime example of people who are willing to innovate and try things and put themselves out there
- Favourite thing: change: building high-rises- want a downtown to thrive people have to live there – need stories designs and built properly- excites me – I see young people- intergenerational friendships – change is exciting and takes time but it is exciting
- Eating in Cambridge: lots of good places to eat – KW in general great food options – good range
- More mom & pop stores – different micro community hubs
- The challenging part of our region is the growing tech sector and more in general, it’s hard to imagine as a small community.
  - Its hard to pay attention to use our small communities
  - The drawing factors are:
  - Housing affordability

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Killer art scene
- Where neighbours interact
- Our school system is a big draw our community
- Our unique characteristics comes from our collective communities
- There are options to interact in a neighbourhood, city or regional level and the ability to choose which level we want to participate at
- Diversity is our asset
  - There are many events that cater to many demographics
  - Recognizing and celebrating our diversity
  - Events could be all seasons though
  - Cambridge does not appear to be as diverse
    - Although there is a significant population of ethnic population
  - Housing options are also not as diverse
  - Other cities in the Region are more diverse
  - Lots of green space
  - Distinction of different communities within communities
- Safe community
- Caring community – many different community organizations that offer so many different activities
- Still feels like a small community but with global amenities
- Good environment to raise children
- Visually, the most vulnerable population appears to better than taken care of
- Time to be alone
- Scenery
- Life is simple here
- Opportunities for self-improvement, education opportunities, supportive and respectful environment
- People Power (the ability to build relationship with others)
- Being a great neighbour
- A welcoming community – able to join communities you typically don't identify with
- Diversity – Being able to connect with others through similarities and differences
- Knowing what you've got and knowing how to use it
- Connecting with others through community, and public events
- Encouraging others to participate
- Connecting through personal interests
- Supporting cultural identifications – example festivals, cultural celebrations
- Many organisations that provide services to support the community (but need to cooperate and coordinate to provide integrated services)
- Small-town feel compared to big cities like Toronto
- Proximity to awesome outdoors, nature and environmental spaces
- There are lots of programs for seniors, young families, kids, teens
- Lots of outdoor activities like hiking, trails, fishing, etc.
- Cambridge is a place of good intentions, good infrastructure, innovations
- Positive vibes in Cambridge
- Lots of volunteer opportunities in the community



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- “Hometown” feel in Cambridge and Waterloo Region as a whole, because of the diversity of volunteer opportunities in the community that gets people feeling connected to the city
- Business companies encourage their employees to get socially engaged
- Better access to transit between 3 cities
- Collaboration and engagement
- People at the foodbank: they empower people to succeed and are compassionately caring for others
- Uniqueness of 3 mid-large cities, townships harness and use for greater good
- Identity
- Listening and responsive regional government-caring region
- Be in any area-culture and the mix of people. Everything you need, amazing people, great place
- Food bank empowering people through co-op
- Regions perspective on discretionary benefits
- Love the regions restaurants, pubs, music, theater. Amazing people and huge diversity
- Wellbeing can never be perfect but closer
- Feel safe and home when you are back from Toronto.
- Amazing people, universities, colleges can help wellbeing
- Waterloo region is a caring community
- Be what you are and be accepted
- People choose waterloo region to settle

### 3. What gets in the way of wellbeing for you and your community?

- Seeing homeless begging for money/ safety
- Community safety
- Group homes being shut down-where do these people go? Is our community safe?
- Growing gap between rich and poor
- Ageism –all these assumptions about older people
- Recognition and support for the older population
- Greed- we take a lot from the older population
- Not enough direct access- from small issues like parking to bigger-we don’t want to tell our story 5 times and have to go through many different people before getting answer
- Gaps in the school board
- Seeing barriers due to language
- Money-eg- medical supplies in the hospital- needed a certain bandage and couldn’t have it because it was 6000\$ and had to stay in the hospital longer due to this.
- Real estate- cost/housing market
- Housing- bad tenants, not enough control- no one cares, they just rent out the house and leave the tenants-neighbours are left to deal with them



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Having a vehicle is necessary if not in the main downtown area. It's a design issue. If you can walk places you are more healthy, but we don't have many areas where this is possible
- We need to move from designing buildings to designing cities (eg more bike lanes)
- Local businesses are suffering due to construction and the amount of big chain stores
- Knowledge and access
- Funding tends to be program specific and this is where gaps happen. It needs to be person centered
- Funders drive proposals- we need to fund the need and **person centred vs. funder driven**
- If we want to make a change in the wellbeing of community we need to make a shift in what wellbeing means
- Technology is distracting and wonderful. But it is isolating and overstimulating us. It is becoming a problem at a very young age- people aren't checking in and being present- we need to center ourselves and check in away from tech.
- Eg- when Eric said he didn't see the add because he probably skimmed over it- this is a clear example of how we are so bombarded with so much on Facebook and twitter and other social media outlets that we get to appoint where our brain doesn't even register it anymore.
- Connections with people face to face are what help your wellbeing and mental health, technology is ruining our connections. How can we make those connections in the community without using technology?
- Technology has the same affects on our brain that drugs or alcohol do. We should be fostering connections with art and literature
- People live in isolation and aren't engaged – you hardly see your neighbour- the “garage door opener” society
- People tend to be responsible for just themselves
- People are afraid to make connections and put themselves out there- we can hide behind a screen and can say what we want without getting personal backlash from someone else
- We need to re-center ourselves
- The outward appearance is judged before the inner (eg youth- we judge them too quickly if they look different)
- Lack of living wage- unrestrained capital living isn't working-we need a living wage
- Expensive.
- Still lots of poverty.
- Access to resources.
- Funding.
- Still see prejudices' - poverty, new comers.
- Influx of population- need to integrate, feel like they belong.
- Housing costs and needs.
- Integration takes a few years.
- Ownership in the community- be a part, volunteer, have a sense that this community belongs to you.
- Getting people in, and relating.
- Participating.
- Need people to vote, get involved in municipal level.
- Need to integrate new population- population will increase significantly in the years to come.
- Education- you don't know what you don't know.



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Cambridge has the highest level of illiteracy in the Region.
- Stigma – barrier
- People are unable to access services
- Accessibility of buildings, events and activities is bad
- Bad access for people with disabilities for transportation and building access
- Population becoming isolated as it ages
- They've been designed out of the communities
- Work is done to minimum standard
- High cost
- Difficult for people afford
- Booking cabs for people with disabilities, very difficult
- Standards are built in not having everyone included
- Cutting off population to English speaking/well-bodied people
- Communities don't feel welcome if they are a visible minority
- RARE is not on a bus route
- From trails to the office people need to have vehicles
- Transportation issues
- Parking issues
- Efficiency issues
- Assumptions of communication – how much people rely on online access
- Some people do not have internet access
- Most agencies are electronic
- Media scares people ex) the world is the safest it has ever been but the media talks about it too often and makes people feel unsafe
- Community newspapers do not report on issues that relate to community wellness
- Need positive news stories not just negative ones
- What we choose to consume is based out of fear, frustration, anxiety, that is what sells papers
- Problem around perception – we are told everything is unsafe and is a liability
- Communication gets in the way of wellbeing
- People don't trust one another anymore
- Events and services aren't tailored to people who are marginalized are
- People need multiple jobs to make ends meet – living wage
- Not enough meaningful jobs – people are busy working
- As a community we don't address bottom things well ex) food, housing
- Primary care givers cannot get out – (seniors)
- Are we targeting all pockets of our community? Or is it the same people
- Dealing w Syrian families
- If you are concerned with a job, home, or next meal, you are not worried about getting out to events

### One thing you can change about your community?

- More people outside
- More natural gatherings – not coordinated





## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- People want space from neighbors
- Backyard fences prevent people from meeting each other
- Allow ourselves to have more free time – everyone is on a schedule
- Encourage people to throw parties in their neighbourhood
- Sign up for a source where people can contribute events
- The method is there ex) amber alerts – just how to figure out how to coordinate it
- Major announcements from one source
- Nothing gets in the way of wellbeing – outgoing individual – I can get into peoples space – but I can see where they may be problems – communication in a larger way
- People reaching out of their safety net – I feel comfortable reaching out but not everyone does
- - I go to monogram coffee- what I like is that I see some familiar faces but I don't see many familiar faces it is stimulating
- Information kiosk at the mall- what do you want to know about Cambridge? – Connect!
- Can be easy or hard – for me nothing – I worked T.O for 20 y – nice things to offer – never going to move- core of people that are very tight- that doesn't come easily – I can make friends but that doesn't come easy – I enjoy going to Toronto but I live here
- Seniors: mobility – perhaps a piece to it especially if they are alone – isolation – getting out its hard – in the winter too – don't walk so well, shortness of breath – all of a sudden no community
- Human connection with meals on wheels – connectedness-
- Barrier – growth rate of community – no secret people are coming from outside of this area to settle – with that I think we run the risk of losing inclusion – some cases come from foreign areas- keep to themselves – by doing that they are not aware of what is happening in the community – what it has to offer – don't come downtown – that is something I believe is a long term barrier for the wellbeing of the community – I see in Hespeler – people moving in there in new division 80% are commuters- involved when it comes to children but outside of that – unless they are outgoing it is hard to reach out and get them to participate – do we try to address it? Yet- activities? Yes music festivals, fairs, farmers market- all of the activities are there but they have to take that initiative or as a neighbour include and invite
- I do think the next generation – as long as the kids are connected and bond with it – back in the 50s/60s when the Portuguese came in and settled in SW – enclave and have a club- very together but kids fully integrated – still very close knit community but not isolated the way they were – but it took a generation – about integrating, reaching out and making sure the kids are connected
- When my kid graduated – Cambridge embarrassing – not much in Cambridge to keep you here
- For youth – Cambridge was small town – not much there for teens
- Once you go to university- opportunities to work are changing – blue collar town – 1/3 of the number of people working
- Consciousness of who don't feel connected- get expertise and integrate them – reach out
- Moved here for work and my mother said – waterloo region – don't move because you'll be too far – look around region where to live- Cambridge just felt most real and accessible – close to highway – we felt it would work here – close to go to GTA, different vibe – its the feeling that



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

makes me feel connected – I feel I connect more – I did some volunteer endeavours, joined a band- just become home – happy here

- Huge difference house and home- that is well being – belonging
- Work right now in a place who's office is in Kitchener but serves waterloo region – trying to do programming in Cambridge and there is a wall (401) – if you don't have an office here – they don't want to talk to you even though you are trying to provide a service
- Barrier when you're trying to do service – Cambridge can be insulated – you have to have an office in Cambridge – same things happen with other NGO's trying to provide service and can't – Cambridge is a little "you're not one of us" "you're an outsider" – part of the strength of Cambridge – but it also fights being part of WR – not Kitchener Waterloo – both a strength and a barrier – can be a bit of a challenge- it has to be about being *from here* or somehow not being loyal
- However- we talk about the welcoming spirit of people to their neighbours- but not services
- I think that we felt here – had to protect ourselves from WR – bigger, better, more going on – have universities – I think that's why the attitude- I see it here – politically-
- Last year – announced "Sub regions" as Cambridge – try to convince they are part of the region
- I think its changing though- generations I in-between have gone to school somewhere else some come back and learn and expand horizons – better to be together
- Visual presence of "street people" why have things increased? Is there a reason for that? – Affordable housing hard to find – with revitalization – lose social housing – if it was rooming- low income apt- revitalized – lost that – it doesn't get replaced – mental health – more than we know
- Involvement of youth in programs to discourage participation in less-than-ideal activities
- In South Korea, neighbourhood association meetings occur once a month and are mandatory to talk about any issues/problems
- When we are stewards of one another, there are no distinctions of who should be responsible for one another (that is what wellbeing is)
  - We defer the responsibility to other people when we are uncomfortable with dealing with particular group
  - Ex. A person with special needs – some people are uncomfortable with dealing with them because they don't know how to treat them
  - Comfort levels with others can be a strong deterrent to how people participate within their community
  - We are content with locking ourselves within our own world and don't reach beyond
- Most things in life are relationship based
  - Social media and technology is sometimes a hindrance. We are losing our ability to put ourselves in conversation and in difficult situations
- Lack of housing
- Accessing information and services: assistant for lifestyle access and medical access
- Hospitals perform 5% of care – it's not where you receive other types of care that are more predominate in your life
- Medical wait times
- Being efficient - We do more unneeded testing than needed (medical)
- Wasteful resources (food – many organizations/companies throwing out good food)



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Some people may feel they don't "Fit" to participate [in these (community conversations) events]
- People not always given dignity – homelessness
- There's a selfishness "we pay taxes, it should benefit us"
- Can't assume everyone has access – example: teachers may use materials that require technology, but not every student has access to it
- Operating in isolation
- How to work together to connect and not duplicating
- Accessibility
- Lack of financial support/funding
- The current healthcare system
- Fear of job loss or fear of change that prevents vital collaborations, which could possibly improve services and access to these services in the community
- Lack of volunteer resources> Again, this problem can be solved through vital collaborations
- Lack of communication within neighbourhoods or small pockets of community in Cambridge
- Stigma on people who access services in the community
- Fear of vulnerability, threat of shame, sense of intimidation
- Lack of ability to access information online or through other media
- Our local government is not encouraging innovation, variation in housing, or accommodating enough to business start-ups and new business ideas
- Cambridge government is staying so behind in building the business sector/scene in the city
- Increased "tech lifestyle" that increases a sedentary lifestyle, keeping everyone more indoors and isolated
- Infrastructure
- Family outing space or appealing things in the small pockets of the community that inspire people to come out, take strolls, and enjoy the outdoors
- Disruption. Loosing social norms in the community
- Increased violence, change in society
- How do we help neighbours through difficult times
- Loneliness
- Suburbs, different layout/design of communities
- Too much space gets in the way
- Seniors-living in suburbs-who cant drive anymore
- Ourselves
- Not good at planning
- Growth-so many people
- Lack of communication
- Too much communitcation-24 hours information
- Sense of something bad will happen to you
- Over protection
- Over programming children
- Solve your own problem
- People loosing autonomy
- More risk adverse parenting-children are not given the opportunities to learn grow achieve on their own- sense of independence

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Poverty
- Social barriers-e.g. Man in shelter beating his wife-how to help your neighbour
- Loneliness of all age groups
- Layout of suburban homes/ townhouses/ proximity-e.g. People just get in their cars
- Melting pots-now simmering and boiling
- Ageing population
- Community empowers people
- Too many engagements/ chores
- Holidays to get rid of emails/social media
- Electronics and technology +/-
- Violence on media
- Generation gap
- Biking as accomplishment/ independence but we feel powerless when it comes to our kids
- New generation too much occupied and over scheduled. Either facilitate or get in the way
- Increasing mental health issues
- People in Waterloo region are passionate to contribute to the community of Waterloo region. Wellbeing can utilize this potential

**Participants were asked for final thoughts after the conversation. The following are comments from the audience.**

- Different generations represented. First question on specific needs as you get older
- Somethings needed are race-less, age-less
- Passionate about living in Cambridge. Commuting to Toronto don't have the time to connect
- Need time to connect...this event helped to connect me.
- Accessibility here – transportation issues- reduce wellness because they can't get around either because of transportation or age issue
- Outdoor benefits of Cambridge
- Neighbourhood org/ green spaces
- Good discussion about accessibility
- River, trails and resources that are available nice in Cambridge
- Engagement- do we know our neighbours? How do you meet neighbours? If new to Cambridge-don't know what is available.



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Appreciation about what we have\
- Changing our overall mindset on wellbeing. Increase in mental health issue/ anxiety/ depression at young age. What is impacting it? Technology has impacted wellbeing
- People are not talking to each other because of their technology
- Need to get out to festivals/ library. You make connections & make real connections with people and not computer screens
- Caring community- people sharing concerns and some being heard.
- Vision-individuals doing work towards wellbeing in whatever way is meaningful to them
- We have travelled and lived all over the world but we choose to be here in this community.
- Sharing good reasons to live in this community will help with our wellbeing
- Share reasons
- Access. Education, and literacy
- Perceptions of what people have a right to have. E.g. who has access to library and food bank
- iPad donations from food bank really helped to connect people
- Technology not always bad
- Need to broaden this conversation going out in other areas
- Caring community, connecting with your neighbour, be intentional.
- Why you do it- waterloo region and yet we are very connected to our community in Cambridge
- How do we brand ourselves as WR.
- Have a well region made up of all our communities.

### Cambridge Community Conversation Flags

Participants were asked to write one thing they could do for themselves or for their community. The following responses were placed on flags and were hung up around the room.

- Remember: that it takes concerned citizens to make change, that we live in abundance, that each of us has so much to share
- Get involved-Be open minded
- Make more time to help others volunteer
- Host a community BBQ
- Collaboration, communication, inclusion ☺
- Be patient! Change will come with the discussions!
- Reduce Loneliness and social isolation
- Reach out
- To inform residents of the region about information that I am aware of



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- 1) More proactive discussions with community. 2) Seek to build more opportunities to engage community and build conversations. 3) Take more holistic perspective to community reflection
- Hold a street gathering-help a neighbour
- Connect as many people within the community as possible. Through work, play, and daily life. Consciously every day.
- Get outside
- More. Talk, ask, share, listen
- Engage more people in the community and be aware of the wants and needs and act upon them
- Connect- Invite people who have barriers to participate. Holistic view to wellbeing bot just physical barriers
- Creating meaningful relationships and encouraging others to do the same.
- Advocate
- Reach out to newcomers
- Invite my neighbour to go for a walk every night
- Wellbeing can be best improved by all people accepting all people especially age related. Old connection with young. Midlife with old persons, all connecting to all.
- Go door to door in my work neighbourhood and personally invite them out
- Listen, love, lead
- Engage and welcome neighbours in my community
- I can say "hi" to a stranger. Hi there!
- Going out and be in the community (whether taking a walk or participating in an event)
- Be open. Be a friend. Be a 'Doer'
- Make more meaningful connections
- Engage in/with the community
- Become directly involved in an organization I feel strongly about
- Smile and say hello to a stranger every week!
- Participate, engage, volunteer, be present
- I will continue to volunteer and advocate for those who cannot be heard
- Introduce new neighbours
- Communicate, engage, connect
- Invite a neighbour to walk in the park and "forest bathe"
- Teach my son to give back
- Actively listen
- Learn what my community has to offer and helping others learn how to get the help they may need
- Get more involved
- I would like to become a more skilled DBT clinician, a good neighbour and an active church member
- Volunteer!
- Participate more in community activities and encourage others to join me
- Promote natural gatherings





## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Give and take. Do both
- Be mindful to build a connection/ strike a conversation with someone new everyday
- Reach out to a neighbour for stronger connection
- I could spend more time with elderly community members to have a conversation and share a caring moment
- Find a new place where I can volunteer
- Reach out with a helping hand to my neighbour
- Participate and encourage others to participate more fully in the community
- Promote opportunities to be outside in nature
- Reach out to newcomers in the region and engage in conversations to make them feel welcome.

### SPONSORS

We are grateful for the support from our sponsors for their support of the Wellbeing Waterloo Region Community Conversation series.



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA

**VitalSigns.**



Equitable Life  
of Canada®

Additional information on the Wellbeing Waterloo Region program is available at:

[www.wellbeingwr.ca](http://www.wellbeingwr.ca).