



November 2020



COVID-19 Recovery Public Engagement Summary Report

November 2, 2020

Background

On May 11, 2020 New Westminster City Council passed a motion directing City staff to “prepare a public engagement strategy for involving the community in COVID-19 recovery planning with particular focus on addressing systemic inequities and building a stronger, more vibrant and connected, climate change resilient community.”

Council also directed staff that the engagement plan propose “ways to address barriers to participation that have resulted in lack of representation by communities of colour, tenants and under-housed, lower income community members, disabled people, and other under-represented groups that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.”

Through May and June 2020, Public Engagement staff developed the engagement strategy in consultation with a wide variety of City staff across departments, as well as the City’s COVID-19 working groups (task forces), which include community members and representatives from local organizations and other government agencies. City Council endorsed the Engagement Objectives and Guiding Principles at its June 1, 2020 meeting. [Click here](#) to review the June 1, 2020 Council report.

From July through early October 2020, the engagement plan was implemented and a variety of engagement activities – online survey, small-group discussions, direct outreach and interviews, youth survey – took place to gather input from the community. The purpose of the engagement was to hear from community members about what was important for the City to focus on during COVID-19 recovery, and to seek ideas and suggestions for building a stronger New Westminster coming out of the pandemic.

Report Contents

The purpose of this summary report is to share with City Council, engagement participants, and the New Westminster community:

1. [A high-level summary of engagement activities and what we heard](#)
2. [Objectives of the engagement process](#)
3. [What engagement activities were completed](#)
4. [What we heard through each of the different engagement methods](#)
 - a. Online Survey (page 9)
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1. Summary

BE HEARD
NEW WEST



COVID-19 Recovery Engagement Summary

Process

- July - October 2020
- 2 surveys
- 6 small group discussion sessions
- 36 interviews with seldom-heard voices

1,300 participants

Purpose

To hear from community members about what's important for the City to focus on during COVID-19 recovery, and to seek ideas for building a stronger New Westminster coming out of the pandemic.



Impacts of COVID

From the Survey



Support or somewhat support the City's Recovery Plan Principles

Say Council Strategic Priorities are equally or more important than pre-COVID

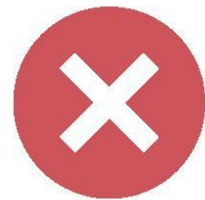
79%



Support or somewhat support decisive action towards transformation



- More time at home and slowing down
- Community spirit and supporting each other
- More time outdoors



- Isolation and loneliness
- Disrupted routines and lost connections
- Employment and financial impacts





"Parks are the
new community
centres."



The pandemic
has shown the
importance of
outdoor public
spaces

- Strong support for Streets for People, parklets, and room to move (and some opposition)
- Need for covered outdoor spaces for year-round access
- Need for more public washrooms and public WiFi



Ideas for a Stronger, Fairer New Westminster:

Access to safe,
affordable
housing for all



Support for those who
are struggling:

- Small business owners
- Seniors
- Food insecure
- Homeless



Opportunities and
public spaces for
community
connection, more
information and more
dialogue

Improve access to
and safety of active
transportation and
transit



2. Engagement Objectives

The following objectives were targeted for completion by October 2020:

1. To identify the challenges and inequities in the New Westminster community that have been highlighted or amplified through the COVID-19 pandemic – and additional impacts that may surface as the pandemic continues – so that the City and community can understand how different people and groups have been impacted differently.
2. To gather feedback from New Westminster residents, local faith and non-profit organizations, and business owners on the City's Recovery Plan Principles, to determine level of support for the principles and consider any adjustments / additions based on feedback.
3. To gather feedback on how the City's current established priorities, as articulated in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and the Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action, apply in the new pandemic reality, and whether any adjustments are suggested, so that the City can understand and consider the community's priorities as we move into pandemic recovery.
4. To consult the community on what climate action strategies, as identified within the Seven Bold Steps, are most important to them as we move into pandemic recovery, so that the City can understand and consider the community's priorities in its ongoing climate emergency response.
5. To gather input on what physical changes community members would like to see in their city and neighbourhoods through the recovery and post-pandemic, in light of recent Council direction such as maximizing public space for active transportation and parklets, so the City can consider these ideas in its recovery planning / implementation.
6. To gather ideas on how we can all create a more equitable, stronger, more vibrant, connected, resilient community – with the understanding that there are some areas where the City can take a leading role within its scope and mandate as a local government, and others where the City may consider support or advocacy for others to lead – so that a list of ideas can be shared back with the community and considered for collective action.

7. To improve and strengthen public engagement practices in New Westminster, test and evaluate different engagement methods, and increase diversity of participation in engagement processes, so that community connections are built and democracy is strengthened.

3. Engagement Process

Across 12 engagement opportunities, approximately 1,300 community members provided their input.

- **Online survey: 1,164 responses**
 - Of these, 673 participants completed the full survey (partial responses are also included in reporting)
 - Survey was open from July 7 through August 3, 2020
- **Interviews with seldom-heard voices: 36 participants**
 - Direct outreach was conducted with a variety of local non-profit organizations
 - Some non-profit participants conducted interviews with their clients, and provided the responses back to the City
 - A number of participants were also recruited through peer-to-peer connections
 - City staff and volunteers also conducted some of the interviews directly with other groups / contacts
 - Participants included isolated seniors, people with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, people of colour, tenants, and New Westminster community members with direct lived or living experience of poverty, homelessness, mental health and/or substance use
- **Small-group dialogue sessions: 49 participants**
 - Six sessions were held between September 10 and 26, 2020
 - Two sessions were held in-person, outdoors with physical distancing – in Sapperton (Hume Park) and Queensborough (Port Royal Park)
 - Three sessions were held online via Zoom videoconferencing
 - One session was held by teleconference

- **Youth survey: 45 responses**

- Survey was open from September 25 through October 5, 2020
- Responses were collected through the Youth Centre, and also through direct outreach to New Westminster Secondary School contacts

In addition to input received through the above methods, a few residents also submitted feedback via email.

Opportunities to participate were communicated through the following methods:

- City Page (email blast and printed in the Record newspaper)
- City website (events calendar, homepage, Public Engagement Opportunities page, etc.)
- Social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Paid social media posts (Facebook, Instagram)
- Email blast to local businesses through the Invest New West e-newsletter
- Direct outreach to a wide variety of local groups and organizations including City's COVID-19 Working Groups, City Advisory Committee members, Residents' Associations, non-profit organizations, active local Facebook groups (New West Helping Hands, New West Moms Group, New Westies are the Besties, etc.), climate and environmental groups, etc.
- One-on-one meetings with non-profit and community leaders, with a particular focus on reaching and including the groups identified in the May Council motion

Important Note: this summary of engagement input does not reflect a representative sample of the New Westminster community. The input captured here reflects the views of those who self-selected to participate in the engagement process, and may not be representative of the views of other community members and stakeholders. Please see section six – About Participants, starting on Page 36 – for some demographic information provided primarily by survey participants.

4. What We Heard by Engagement Method

Online Survey

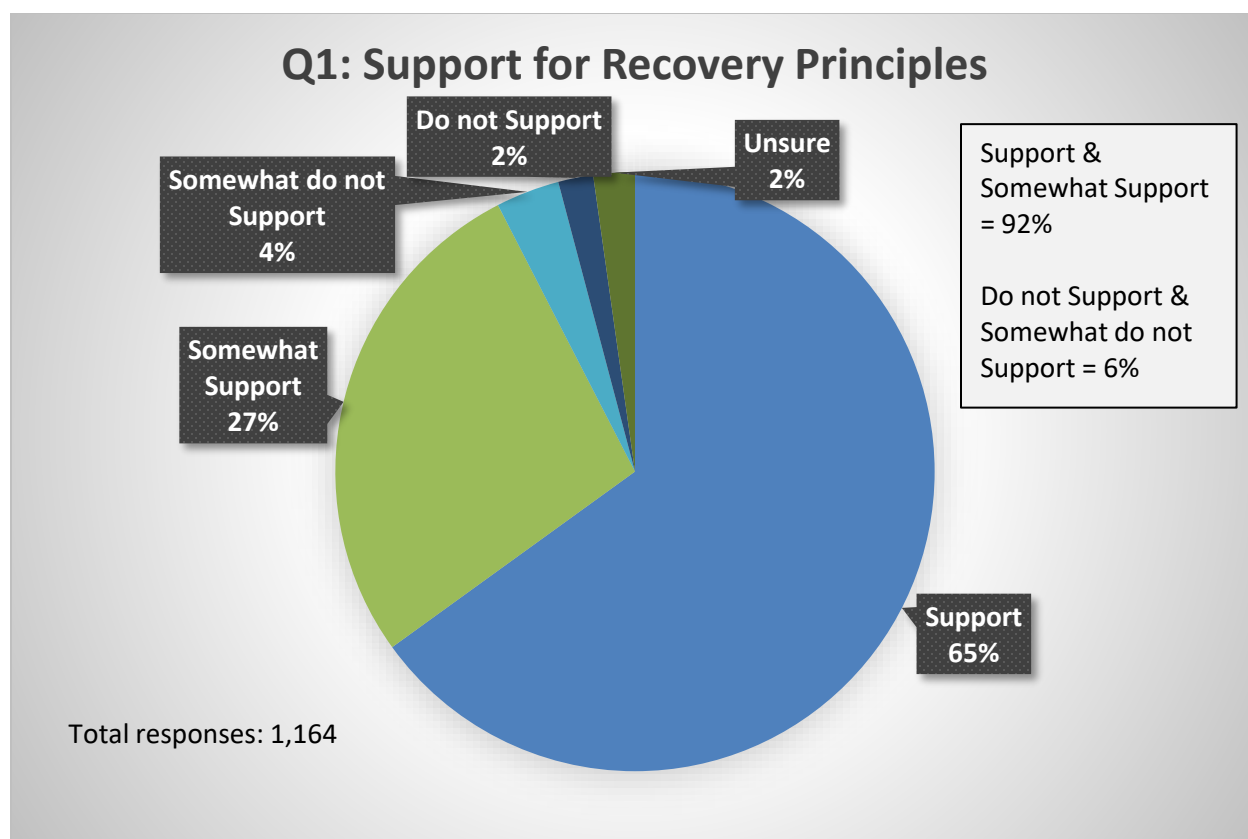
The online survey was open from July 7 through August 3, 2020 and received 1,164 responses. Below is a summary of the results. For the full survey report, including all verbatim open-text input, please [visit the online project page](#) and look for the Documents menu on the right side.

Question 1: New Westminster City Council has developed nine principles to help guide the City of New Westminster's pandemic Recovery Plan. These principles are based on balancing three key aspects: Health and Safety; Economic Impacts and Recovery (both City finances and local economy); Community Need.

Recovery Plan Principles:

- Prioritize highest the health and safety of the public and employees under COVID-19
- Maintain the City's ability to be responsive to Provincial health orders
- Prioritize recovery/resumption efforts that align with our cost-saving measures
- Deviate from cost-saving measures only where resulting community benefits are high
- Align or reconcile with priorities set out within the COVID Response Task Forces
- Prioritize programs and services that can meet the needs of more than one user group
- Prioritize facilities that provide some form of respite for vulnerable groups
- Ensure recovery plan reflects seasonal realities and opportunities
- Be empowered to find visionary, innovative ways to move forward without being constrained by previous practices

To what degree do you support these guiding principles?



Question 2: OPTIONAL – Is there anything you would suggest changing or adding to the recovery principles?

A total of 247 comments were provided in response to this question. Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes can be applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times.

Themes with fewer than 10 mentions are not included for the purposes of this summary report. Additional themes with fewer than 10 mentions include: More support for vulnerable populations; enforce road safety; the principles are good; better communication / information.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Too vague / need more specific information	28	- "It's hard to argue with such apple pie principles but they are vulnerable to being subjectively interpreted and misused to justify actions and decisions that cause harm to a minority."

		- "Access to more info re each of the guiding principles, and perhaps examples."
Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19: make masks mandatory, reminders about physical distancing, hygiene, etc.	24	- "Mandatory masks in public indoor areas." - "More reminders about physical distancing and good hygiene."
Focus on environmental issues / climate change	17	- "Would love a statement about environmental responsibility." - "Adding a principle for aligning with climate change goals."
Spend money wisely / consider financial impact / do not increase taxes	17	- "Reduce Property Taxes to align with the new economic reality faced by residents and businesses." - "Everybody is tightening personal financial belt to deal with Covid. City should've doing the same."
Less emphasis on cost savings	15	- "Too much focus on cost-savings, the focus should be on relative community impact. Some respite for families would be nice..." - "I have concerns about cost-saving being so heavily emphasized. Cost-saving should be secondary to public health and safety and overall community wellbeing."
Get back to normal / open facilities (public, recreational)	15	- "Open rec centres and ice rinks with appropriate measures. It's not hard." - "Prioritizing the reinstatement of services, programs and facilities that were in place prior to the pandemic."
Make principles easier to understand (too confusing right now)	14	- "The principles need to be stated in plainer language. For example - what do you mean by 'deviate from cost-saving measures only where...'" - "Be clear. Be timely. Keep it simple."
Support small businesses	11	- "I would like to see clearer language around encouraging or supporting the local economy." - "More focus on small business and their survival."
Mental health support	10	- "Make community mental health a priority." - "Prioritize the health and mental well being of the public. Exercise and programs for all age groups is extremely important."

Question 3: In responding to the pandemic, the City has worked quickly to put physical changes and supports in place to help manage impacts in the community. Some examples include changes to roadways to allow more space for pedestrians and cyclists, allowing expanded patio space for restaurants, and exploring creation of new parklets (outdoor seating areas, etc. that are not connected with a specific business / no purchase required).

In May, City Council passed a resolution to “move quickly in 2020 to expand road re-allocation toward pedestrian, cyclist, and public gathering space, using temporary measures where necessary with a mind towards more permanent solutions that can be applied after the period of crisis has passed.”

Please share any ideas for additional physical changes, or other innovations, you would like the City to consider in your neighbourhood or within New Westminster as we move through the recovery period and plan for the post-pandemic future.

A total of 503 comments were provided in response to this question. Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times.

Themes with fewer than 20 mentions are not included for the purposes of this summary report. Additional themes with fewer than 20 mentions include: more/better signage and pedestrian controls (i.e. one-way sidewalks); reinstate the Q2Q Ferry; allow alcohol consumption in parks; more green spaces; keep bike lanes and pedestrian lanes separate.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
More space / walking space for pedestrians / expand sidewalks	91	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Make more roads pedestrian friendly. Prioritize walking over cycling — bicycles are extremely dangerous to walkers.”- “Continue to open roadways to multi-modal transportation and de-prioritize public space for vehicles.”- “I would like to see new requirements for wider sidewalks in all construction going forward. No exceptions, even if it compromises street parking.”

General support / doing a good job / agree with/like the idea	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I really love that the city is working these initiatives. In the long run it benefits our community to have people walking more, and cycling more." - "The expansion and re-allocation of roadways is a good idea; however, putting up orange cones with no instruction for traffic changes was/is confusing." "I absolutely love this idea and hope it lasts in some way."
General opposition / unnecessary / don't agree with / waste of resources/tax-payers money	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Quit trying to slow down traffic in the city, people need to travel through the city. The city of no left turns." - "As a senior citizen I am concerned that a bias toward cycling (against automobiles) will impact my access to New Westminster shopping and facilities. Cycling is not an option for me."
More/expanded bike lanes / paths	53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "More road re-allocation! Road narrowing, bike lanes, greenways. New Westminster could, and should, be the Netherlands of the lower mainland." - "Have dedicated space for cyclists on all roads. Start by making recent space allotments permanent."
More/expanded patios / outdoor seating/eating areas / parklets	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "More outdoor patios, permanent, would be great!" - "Allow outside seating wherever possible and then keep them even after the end of COVID." - "Parklets in busy areas so people can take a load off their feet."
Relax the road / lane closures / give roads back to cars / closed areas hardly used	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Stop closing streets!! Transit is extremely unsafe now and you should be encouraging use of cars to prevent the spread of COVID" - "The uptown street areas that have been converted to pedestrian use do not seem to be used much. "
Preserve even after pandemic	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Keeping these spaces in our neighborhoods would be good. It's a good way to build community." - "Permanently keeping some areas pedestrian only, even if on certain days only like Saturdays in uptown, or weekends on front Street. Gradually get people used to it if they are opposed."
More / proper consultation should be required before	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Need to consult with neighborhood before making changes permanent."

making changes / plans must include safety / better planning		- "I would hope that the city monitors constantly for how these changes affect rush hour traffic and is able to respond."
More no-car areas / shut down roads for the weekend	24	- "I would like to have more car free streets similar to the sixth street on Saturdays" - "More closed roads and bike lanes and room for folks. We love the closure of Front St. Make it permanent!"
Mandatory masks / proper physical distancing	23	- "Generally people are pretty good around here, but I would 100% support a bylaw to make the wearing of cloth or disposable masks mandatory inside commercial establishments." - "Mandate mask wearing in all public places."
Causing traffic issues	22	- "Just remember that as you close off roadways to cars that these do not disappear but a lot of the time all you do is put that traffic on to side and residential streets." - "Traffic is clogged all over due to the lane closures and some street closures. Its added to my commute and I've witnessed drivers become more aggressive from frustration."
Enforcing rules / someone to enforce rules	20	- "More controls in public places to ensure physical distancing. People seem to have given up controlling themselves." - "Please ask the police to enforce the noise laws. There are way too many modified mufflers on cars and motorcycles."

Question 4: Before the pandemic, New Westminster City Council declared a climate emergency and adopted Seven Bold Steps to guide the City's climate response. In a December 2019 City survey, the majority of participants (63%-76%) rated each of the bold steps as important or very important.

City Council has expressed its ongoing commitment to climate action through the pandemic recovery. Initiatives related to the Seven Bold Steps are intended to measurably reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but there are also opportunities for other community benefits. Community benefits related to the Seven Bold Steps include:

- Carbon Free Corporation: Decrease City utility bills; Improve outdoor air quality

- Car Light Community: Decrease road noise; Expand alternative transportation; Increase public safety; Improve outdoor air quality
- Carbon Free Homes and Buildings: Decrease household and business utility bills; Improve comfort; Improve indoor air quality; Increase home value; Support local jobs
- Pollution Free Vehicles: Improve outdoor air quality
- Carbon Free Energy: Support local jobs; Improve energy system reliability; Decrease household and business utility bills; Improve outdoor air quality
- Robust Urban Forest: Improve outdoor air quality; Improve health (shade/cooling, mental health, happiness, etc.); Support biodiversity and natural landscape
- People-Centred Public Realm: Increase public safety; Expand alternative transportation; Expand outdoor community gathering options; Improve outdoor air quality; Improve health (shade/cooling, mental health, happiness, etc.)

Please rank the community benefits from the most important to you, to least important:

A total of 723 responses were received for this question.

Community Benefit Related to the Seven Bold Steps	Overall Rank
Improve air quality (outdoor & indoor)	1 (most important)
Expand alternative transportation & outdoor community space	2
Improve health & comfort (shade/cooling, mental health, happiness, etc.)	3 (tie)
Support local jobs	3 (tie)
Increase public safety	5
Decrease utility bills (household, business & City)	6
Support biodiversity & natural landscape	7
Decrease road noise	8

Improve energy system reliability	9
Increase home value	10 (least important)

Question 5: Given the pandemic, and thinking about community members most impacted, are there any particular climate action activities you believe the City should prioritize through the recovery period?

A total of 312 comments were provided in response to this question. Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times.

Themes with fewer than 15 mentions are not included for the purposes of this summary report. Additional themes with fewer than 15 mentions include: support job creation; improve air quality; encourage / support electric vehicles; reduce taxes / city spending / utility bills; support for seniors and other vulnerable populations.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Decrease usage of vehicles / close streets / reduce traffic	28	- "Focus on car light/car free community, make transportation and movement more pleasant for those who don't own cars." - "Reduce through traffic."
Outdoor community space/green space	26	- "Make public spaces open to everyone and a nice place to relax outside your house." - "Green space 'corridors' for walking and outdoor activity." - "People Centred (outdoor) public realm initiatives."
Expand bike routes / promote cycling	25	- "Improve the bike paths, ensure they are consistent and well connected." - "Fast track any cycling initiatives" - "Free bike share program."
Expand alternative transportation / promote sustainable transportation	24	- "Continue to promote active modes of transport and the reduction of vehicles." - "Incentives for people to give up their vehicles aka more walkable communities/local job opportunities/remote work opportunities/ transit incentives/ car share programs."

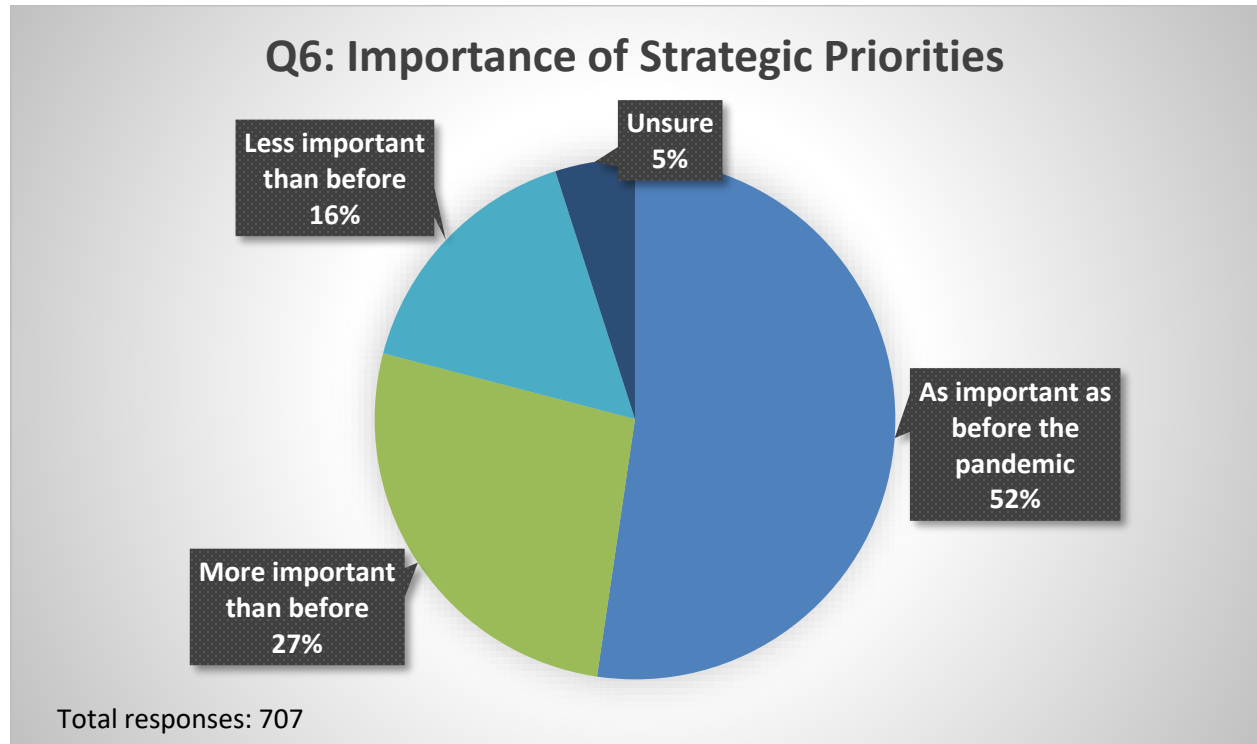
Expanded (wider) sidewalks / more pedestrians	21	- "Make walking better." - "More space to walk and physically distance on busy sidewalks."
Improve public health (physical, mental)	21	- "We must start looking at our mental health sector and how we can help those suffering and those who are experiencing situational depression due to covid." - "Air Quality, Physical and mental health resources."
Recycling facility / waste disposal program	18	- "Enabling ways for residents to easily reduce, reuse, and recycle." - "I think there should be more composting containers for the public, right beside garbage and recycling containers."
Do not focus too much on climate change / not City's jurisdiction	18	- "How does climate action relate to the pandemic at all." - "New West is a small city. We cannot stop global warming. We can ask provincial and federal governments to do climate change activities."
Ensure public safety	16	- "Public safety, we have had an increase in crime." - "Keeping people safe indoors." - "Air quality and public safety."
Access to public transit options	15	- "Free shuttles to get people drive less for short distances." - "We need to get people back on transit." - "Increase public transit investment generally."
Carbon-free energy / green energy / solar power	15	- "I would think its a smart time for governments (generally) to invest in renewable energy sources & community infrastructure." - "Promote and improve alternate energy sources that supplant those causing global warming. Solar should be easy!"
Reduce noise pollution (road/traffic, SkyTrain, construction, motorcycles)	15	- "Reducing traffic noise and associated pollution." - "Greening our city and cutting noise/pollution. The noise is the worst part about living here."

Question 6: New Westminster City Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan identifies seven priority areas:

1. Affordable Housing
2. Culture and Economic Development
3. Environment and Climate Action

4. Facilities, Infrastructure, and Public Realm
5. Reconciliation, Inclusion, and Engagement
6. Sustainable Transportation
7. Organizational Effectiveness

How important do you feel these priorities are now, in light of the new COVID-19 pandemic reality and thinking about recovery?



Question 7: What types of actions within these priority areas are most important to you, given the pandemic and considering those community members most impacted by the pandemic? Are there any new priorities that have come to light? Is anything less important right now?

A total of 401 comments were provided in response to this question. Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times.

Themes with fewer than 15 mentions are not included for the purposes of this summary report. Additional themes with fewer than 15 mentions include: more

recreational activities / areas; affordability / cost of living; improve walkways / bike ways; access / accessibility; address racism.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Affordable housing / housing stability	146	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "COVID-19 has really highlighted the need to protect the most vulnerable among us - food security, housing stability, affordability." - "Creating and maintaining affordable social housing for low income individuals and families. Supporting people struggling with mental health and addiction." - "Creating affordable housing, local sustainable jobs, and efficient transport to ensure that everyone is at an adequate economic level to care for their health, community, and put greater effort into environmental conservation."
Facilities / facilities, infrastructure and public realm (i.e. Strategic Priority #4)	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Facilities, Infrastructure, and Public Realm is more important now." - "Facilities re-opening safely." - "Adding and upgrading facilities is critical to give residents opportunity to get active."
Environment and climate action	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Environment and climate action - if recovery actions don't reduce emissions, we will lose the window of opportunity. Changes must occur now." - "The amount of waste has increased during the pandemic due to masks, gloves, etc. Climate change and the environment need to be a top priority." - "Environment and Climate Action is still the most important to me."
Sustainable transportation	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Sustainable transportation should receive more emphasis since so many in new west rely on public transportation, and yet infrastructure encourages motor use." - "Environmental action and alternate/sustainable transportation (ie cycling, walking) go hand in hand. I think they are extremely important now, more than ever given our need to distance from others. Being able to bike and walk the city much more efficiently and easily would take care of so many issues."

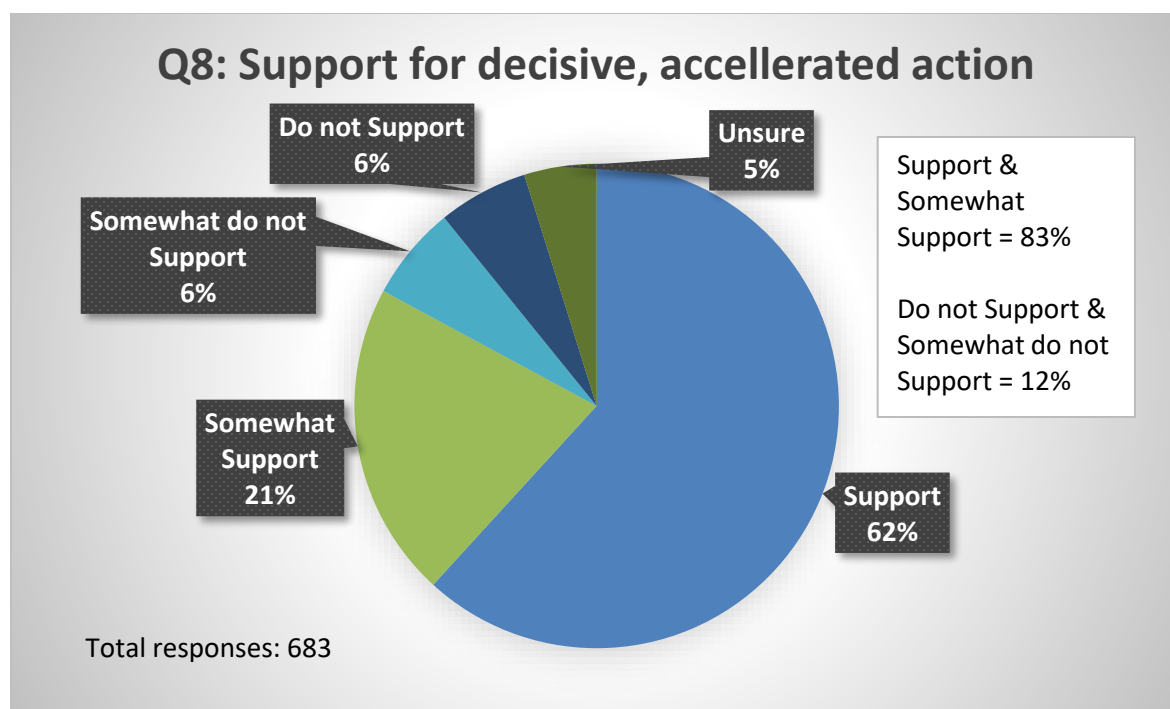
Public safety / safety of facilities, transit, etc. / health / healthcare	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Increasing public safety isn't on the list. It should be. The amount of increase of petty crime the GVRD has seen during COVID because addicted persons can't steal to find their drug habit has not being minor." - "Public safety #1." - "Ensuring that folks are safe from the current pandemic is the only priority." - "Opportunities/places for the public to come together in a safe way."
Reconciliation, inclusion and engagement	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "As a civilized society, 'Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement' is something we must do before we talk about other priorities. Without this foundational priority that we are in this together, other actions will only create further chasms in our community." - "Reconciliation, inclusion and engagement. I did not see any of city's response to the recent racism and the black lives matter movement. New west is becoming more diverse and we need the city to lead by example. " - "Reconciliation, Inclusion, and Engagement: how can we make the pandemic recovery something that involves the first peoples? Can we ensure that any economic benefits are equally distributed."
Economic development / culture and economic development (i.e. Strategic Priority #2)	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Economic development is most important right now." - "Economic recovery has heightened in importance; everything else is still as important." - "Focus on Cultural and Economic Development and Indigenous Reconciliation efforts"
More jobs / supports for people who have lost their jobs	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Local jobs, support local businesses, recreation areas for adults and kids." - "Job stability and supporting services (PPE, Testing etc.)" - "Most important thing here, is to save our businesses, jobs and liveability without affecting anyones health and safety."
Organizational effectiveness	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Organizational effectiveness should be a higher priority, as optimization will allow us to do more with less resources." - "Organizational effectiveness will enable more to happen faster so given financial losses this has to be prioritised higher now."

Mental health support / addictions	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I think we need to make mental health a priority. This has had a massive impact on everyone in the community and the best way to get the community back to a bit more stability is to increase their resilience and their ability to feel like they have at least a little bit of control." - "Drug overdose, people sleeping on the street, pan handling. This all has increased since COVID or maybe just there on the street, rather than getting help."
More outdoor spaces / parks / activities in the park	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Creating safe outdoor spaces for people to meet is important." - "Green space is at a premium. The new Canada games pool may have to be shelved." - "Building indoor spaces seems less important than outdoor ones at the moment due in part to Covid risk."

Question 8: The pandemic has increased and drawn attention to ongoing social issues and inequities in New Westminster, including economic inequality, systemic racism, quality of long-term care for and social isolation of elders and people with disabilities, the opioid overdose crisis, food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, employment inequities such as precarious jobs with no sick leave or other benefits, increasing poverty due to job loss, lack of affordable childcare, domestic violence, and others.

New Westminster City Council acknowledges that disruption caused by the pandemic offers opportunities for innovation and accelerated change. Mayor Jonathan Cote has signed onto the 2020 Declaration for Resilience in Canadian Cities, which lays out actions for more accessible, equitable, sustainable, and resilient cities.

To what degree do you support the City of New Westminster taking decisive, accelerated action and leadership towards transformation in our community and society through the pandemic recovery and beyond?



Question 9: What specific actions do you think the City could take to help build a more equitable, sustainable, resilient city?

A total of 323 comments were provided in response to this question. Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times.

Themes with fewer than 15 mentions are not included for the purposes of this summary report. Additional themes with fewer than 15 mentions include: support for mental health; support for local small business; limit development / stop high density development; work with other levels of government / focus on municipal issues; address homelessness; reconciliation and inclusion.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Affordable housing / rent control	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Additional steps to secure safe housing for all residents" - "More affordable rentals." - "Housing and supports for vulnerable and/or homeless populations." - "Provide more low income housing opportunities"

More open/public/outdoor spaces (community gardens, pedestrian spaces, repurpose streets)	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Widen the sidewalks, more car free neighbourhoods" - "Subsidize gardens for growing food, especially in yards of multi-family buildings." - "We need more gathering spaces that have seating and are covered. We need more public washrooms and drinking fountains. We need more covered bike parking spots."
Transportation (traffic, road safety, roundabouts, improve traffic flow, reduce cars on roads)	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "More car infrastructure converted to public realm" - "Bike lanes. Safe and secure bike racks/storage. Free vehicle parking." - "Less support for private vehicles."
Employment / wages	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Push for a government-provided basic income for all" - "Support remote job opportunities" - "more local jobs for people of all skill/experience levels"
Gather data via town meetings/surveys/focus groups / demographics	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Listen to everyone's opinion equally" - "By agreeing with accelerated action, to note, I still believe in due process. Unilateral decisions shouldn't be taken without public consultation as occurred with the removal of the Begbie statue at City Hall." - "Get the community on side, through town hall meetings/presentations, workshops, etc."
Better policing	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Have Police and Fire services take courses to strengthen their interactions with marginalized people." - "Definitely the police, as a start, and reallocate to social services including city-run shelters with supportive services including medical treatment" - "We particularly need more visible on-street policing"
Address racism	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Address systemic racism in policing and other city services." - "Eliminating systematic racism which compounds COVID 19 negative impacts to the health and safety of racialized members of community as well as other marginalized and minority groups. Stop studying it and actually do something." - "Make indigenous reconciliation, pride, and equality a top priority."

Support for seniors / senior care / address ageism	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Quality check seniors housing to ensure high quality of care." - "expansion of senior community center" - "Address issues around senior citizens care"
Support for people with disabilities / accessibility	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Improved and focused effort on accessibility for all." - "REMEMBER not all people living with disabilities use a wheel chair. Include those who have visual, hearing, mobility challenges." - "People with disabilities need help, the homeless need help."
Support climate change efforts (retrofit for sustainable energy practices, recycle)	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Things that will reduce our carbon footprint, and things that will create more inclusion." - "Efforts to support climate change (including waste reduction/elimination) most important." - "No plastic. No single-use."
COVID-19 issues	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Be the first city in BC to make face covering mandatory at indoor." - "Any pandemic related actions should be explicitly at the direction of health authorities. DO NOT freelance and restrict reopening beyond when Public Health tells you to." - "We are in a recession. This work should have been done pre covid when resources were ample. Need to balance recovery and investments to ensure long term sustainability."
Affordable/safe/reliable childcare	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Daycare" - "We need affordable, safe, reliable childcare" - "More childcare spaces and funding for childcare"
Food (i.e. food security, programs for children, grow own food)	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Continue to provide free space for food banks, encourage folks to grow food instead of lawns, streamline a way for folks to donate extra vegetables from their garden." - "Equal opportunity for all in regards to access to basic needs like food, water, shelter, jobs" - "Encourage more food grown in city."

Interviews with Seldom-Heard Voices

In an effort to ensure that commonly under-represented groups were included in the engagement process, and address Council's motion regarding groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, Public Engagement staff conducted direct and targeted outreach with a variety of local non-profit groups. Organizations that were contacted included those serving newcomers and immigrants; those serving community members experiencing poverty, homelessness, mental health and substance use; faith groups; parent support organizations; groups focused on food security; and organizations serving people with disabilities.

Not all organizations contacted replied, and some were not able to participate for a variety of reasons. Staff from the organizations that had capacity to support the City's engagement process were asked how best to connect with their clients and networks, and City staff worked to approach the engagement based on these recommendations. Therefore, a variety of outreach methods were implemented, including non-profit staff conducting interviews on behalf of the City, paper surveys conducted by peer-to-peer connections, volunteers with the City's Friendly Support Caller program interviewing their clients by telephone, and City staff conducting a focus-group discussion with a group of newcomer moms at their regular weekly gathering.

A total of 36 community members were engaged through these various activities, including isolated seniors, people with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, people of colour, tenants, and New West community members with direct lived or living experience of poverty, homelessness, mental health and/or substance use.

The interview questions were refined over the course of the active outreach period (July-September), based on feedback from non-profit staff and experience conducting the interviews. While the questions were a little different between the various engagement activities, they focused on hearing about the personal impacts of the pandemic on participants, and their suggestions for what the City should focus on during the pandemic and recovery periods. A summary of the key themes across all interviews is below. [Visit the online project page](#) to access the verbatim input, interviewers' notes and facilitators' notes from these engagement activities.

Key Themes: How has the pandemic impacted your life?

1. **Social isolation, loneliness, being stuck at home:** This theme was by far the most prominent among participants, with many sharing the challenges of being apart from family and friends, struggling with sadness or depression due to isolation, not having any fun activities such as celebrations to look forward to, and the challenges of being stuck at home with young children.
2. **Daily routines disrupted, connections and supports lost:** Participants shared a variety of ways their daily routines were changed, including their regular shops being closed, not being able to visit non-profit locations, not being able to access counselling services, and not being able to access supports.
3. **Restricted mobility:** Several participants shared that they stopped taking transit because of fears of the virus, while others spoke about travel restrictions.
4. **Job and financial impacts:** One participant shared that they lost their job, while others experienced job “slowdowns,” and another spoke about financial impacts.
5. **Struggling with wearing masks:** Several participants shared that they have trouble breathing in masks and generally that wearing them has been challenging.
6. **Not enough public washrooms:** Mothers of young children mentioned a lack of public washrooms at/near playgrounds in particular.

Key Themes: What do you think the City needs to focus on during this time? What could the City do to help make New West stronger and fairer for everyone?

1. **Access to safe housing / shelter for all:** This was the most prominent theme among responses, with comments about more affordable housing, more shelters, safe spaces for homeless to stay, safe social housing, etc.
2. **Public safety:** Safety was another strong theme among responses, with some comments focused on COVID-related safety measures such as masks, physical distancing, etc. Other participants focused more on street safety, with comments about concerns with open drug use, drug dealing, crime and “violence on the street”.

3. **Supports for those who are struggling:** Participants shared a range of responses related to supporting specific population groups, such as those experiencing homelessness, seniors, small-business owners, and people with mental and physical health needs. Other responses simply called for help for those less fortunate or those who are struggling. A few participants shared comments about being more positive, giving and sharing, making life better, and not judging people who are struggling.
4. **Transportation:** Some participants did not elaborate on their request for the City to focus on transportation, while others specifically mentioned fixing sidewalks that are hazardous to seniors and those visually challenged, transit safety in light of COVID-19, more bus shelters and benches, etc. Some participants shared concerns about specific transportation routes / areas such as narrow streets, crosswalk safety, and so on.
5. **Ways to connect / stay active in the community:** Several participants suggested finding ways to bring people together / connect the community in safe ways during COVID. In particular, parents identified the need for more affordable outdoor activities, play and recreation for families and kids. Some suggested covered outdoor play areas for access even when it's rainy. The need for safe, indoor public spaces was also raised, with seniors in particular looking to return to the library and Century House. *(Note: these comments were made when City facilities were closed; all facilities are now open with COVID measures in place.)* Other participants called for bringing people of all backgrounds together, and holding community meetings where everyone/anyone can contribute input.
6. **Happy with New West as-is:** At least a few participants said they feel New West is fine and had no suggestions.

Other comments by interview participants about what the City should focus on during this time included climate change, addressing racism, jobs, and daycare.

Small-Group Dialogue Sessions

A total of 49 community members participated across six dialogue sessions held through September. Three of these sessions were held by video-conference (Zoom), two were held in-person at park picnic shelters (Sapperton and Queensborough), and one by teleconference. The session schedule and the variety of in-person and remote formats were planned based on input from the online survey asking community members for their preferences.

The one-hour agenda for the small-group dialogue sessions included a short welcome, housekeeping and context-setting by the facilitator, followed by break-out group discussions of approximately five people each. Participants were asked to introduce themselves, sharing their first name, neighbourhood and something that has been positive for them about the pandemic. The bulk of discussion time was focused on a broad, open-ended question: **What actions can we take to make New West more connected, stronger, fairer for everyone?**

The question was purposely broad, and participants were encouraged to share what was important to them, and what motivated them to attend a session. A summary of the key themes across all six sessions is below. [Visit the online project page](#) to access the full facilitators' notes from each discussion session.

Key Themes: Something positive about COVID-19 for you

1. **Slowing down, quieter streets:** Many participants talked about being able to spend more time at home, being able to relax, enjoying the quieter streets and less traffic, spending less time commuting, and more flexibility at work.
2. **Community spirit, community supports:** Many participants shared that they have enjoyed seeing the community step up and come together through COVID-19, with online groups such as New West Helping Hands showing how regular people are ready to help each other. Participants mentioned new community connections through this time, more collaborations between non-profits, and enjoying the friendliness of strangers.
3. **More family time, connections:** More time with family, and deeper family connections, was another common theme in terms of positives about the pandemic.

4. **More time outdoors:** Participants shared they have enjoyed walking more, gardening more, exploring New West, and having more outdoor spaces to walk and meet up with the new parklets, etc.
5. **Creative solutions:** Several participants spoke about enjoying the creative use of outdoor spaces, expanded patios and walking areas, more shops offering curb-side pick-up, etc.

Key Themes: What actions can we take to make New West more connected, stronger, fairer for everyone?

1. **Foster and support community connections, more dialogue, better communication:** A strong theme across all of the discussions was the importance of and need for community connections, dialogue and communication. Participants spoke about how great ideas and action can come from connection, collaboration and bringing everyone together. Everyone needs a sense of belonging and connection, and everyone has skills and talents to contribute – even if they also need support/help. There was a related theme of hearing from more people, including all voices and supporting diversity. Several participants suggested that the City could support connection and collaboration, allowing the community to come together and make change. Related to this was the need for spaces to connect, and several participants spoke about the need for free or affordable community space so people can come together and develop solutions. The theme of better communication, more transparency and more access to information was also common, with several participants suggesting that should include promoting New West as a great place to come to work and play.
2. **More outdoor, public spaces to connect year round / importance of public spaces / need for covered outdoor spaces for winter:** Many participants spoke about how the importance of outdoor, people-centred public spaces has been highlighted through the pandemic. As one participant said, “Parks are the new community centres.” Support was expressed for the new parklets, free outdoor seating areas, etc. The theme of being able to continue gathering outdoors during the winter / in poor weather was also strong, with many participants suggesting the need for more picnic shelters,

covered areas, heated outdoor public places, etc. Some ideas shared included using parkades, or bringing in marquee tents for pop-ups on rainy weekends. Several participants stressed the need for outdoor programming year-round, especially for kids, and some suggested more outdoor community events. Several participants expressed the need for more public washrooms, and more free public Wi-Fi hubs related to this theme.

3. **Continue to discourage vehicle use and through-traffic; support for active transportation and street closures:** Another strong theme across all of the discussions was support for the City's Streets for People initiatives creating more space for walking and cycling, and street closures. Many participants requested more car-free days like the Front Street weekend closures, more expanded sidewalks, and making the expanded walking areas permanent. Several participants asked that the City do more to reduce through-traffic in New West, and to introduce more traffic-calming measures. Transit improvements were also mentioned by several participants, with calls for free transit for kids and youth, more frequent buses, and better connections. The need to fix sidewalks was also mentioned several times – with concerns raised about the dangers for seniors and others with mobility challenges.
4. **Addressing homelessness, the need for affordable housing, access to safe housing for all:** Concerns about increasing homelessness due to COVID-19, and the need for more affordable housing in New West was another strong theme in all of the discussions. Participants called for rent controls, more housing co-ops, more affordable rents, and more affordable housing. Affordability and growing economic disparity was raised as a concern in general, and participants said we need more supports for under-housed, seniors, and those with mental health and substance use.
5. **Supporting small businesses, and growing a vibrant local economy:** Many participants expressed concerns for small-business owners struggling because of the pandemic, and how supporting a vibrant local economy contributes to the health of the community overall. For example, having a vibrant mix of local shops in walkable areas (i.e. Columbia Street, 12th Street, Sapperton, Queensborough) supports reduced vehicle use and people's ability to shop local. Participants also said a healthy local economy also helps

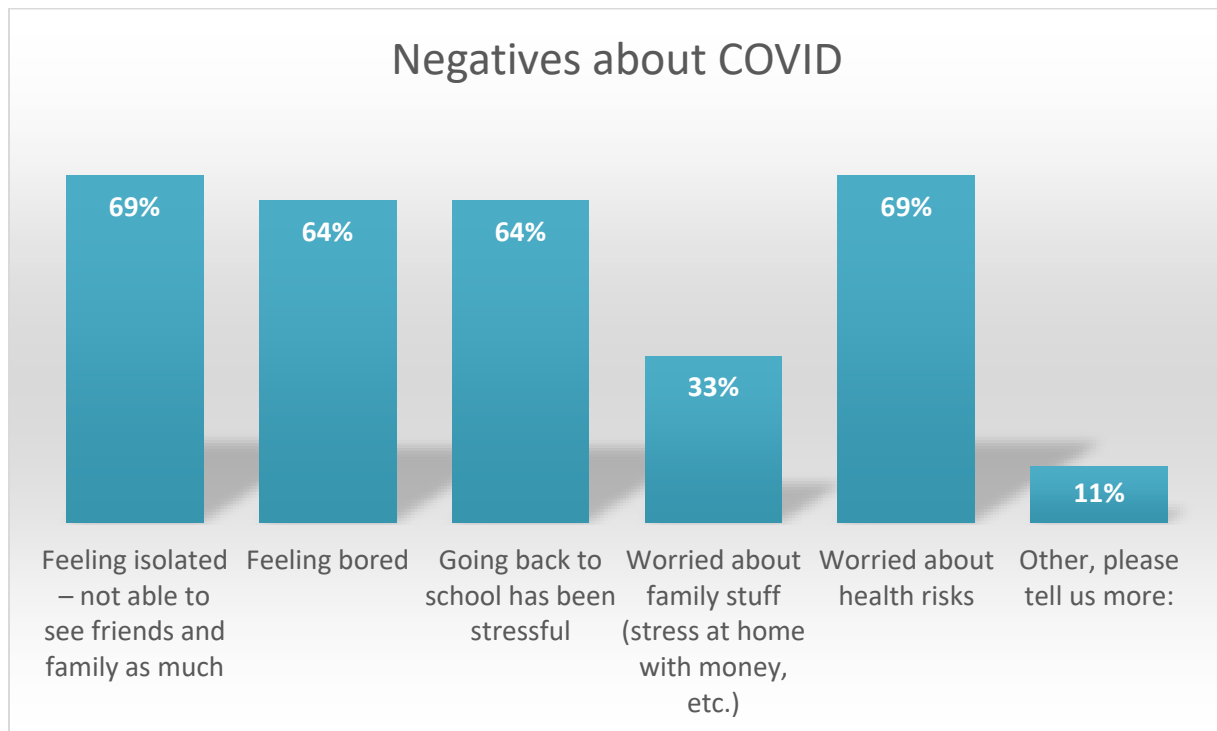
create more local jobs at all levels, and supports the tax base for initiatives such as affordable housing. Participants suggested efforts and incentives to attract people to live here and start small businesses, such as commercial rent subsidies, etc. Related to this theme, a few participants suggested implementing community-based delivery services to support access to local goods.

6. **Addressing food insecurity; creating more community gardens:** Many participants expressed the need for more community gardens in New West, and the growing need to address food insecurity. The pandemic has highlighted food security issues.
7. **Lack of universal access to technology:** Several participants shared concerns about keeping community members connected when not everyone has access to technology. Isolated seniors and low-income community members were mentioned in particular. Participants said universal access to technology would increase equity.
8. **Climate action:** Several participants urged the City to continue moving forward on its climate action plans – to reduce our carbon footprint, invest in green energy, etc.

Youth Survey

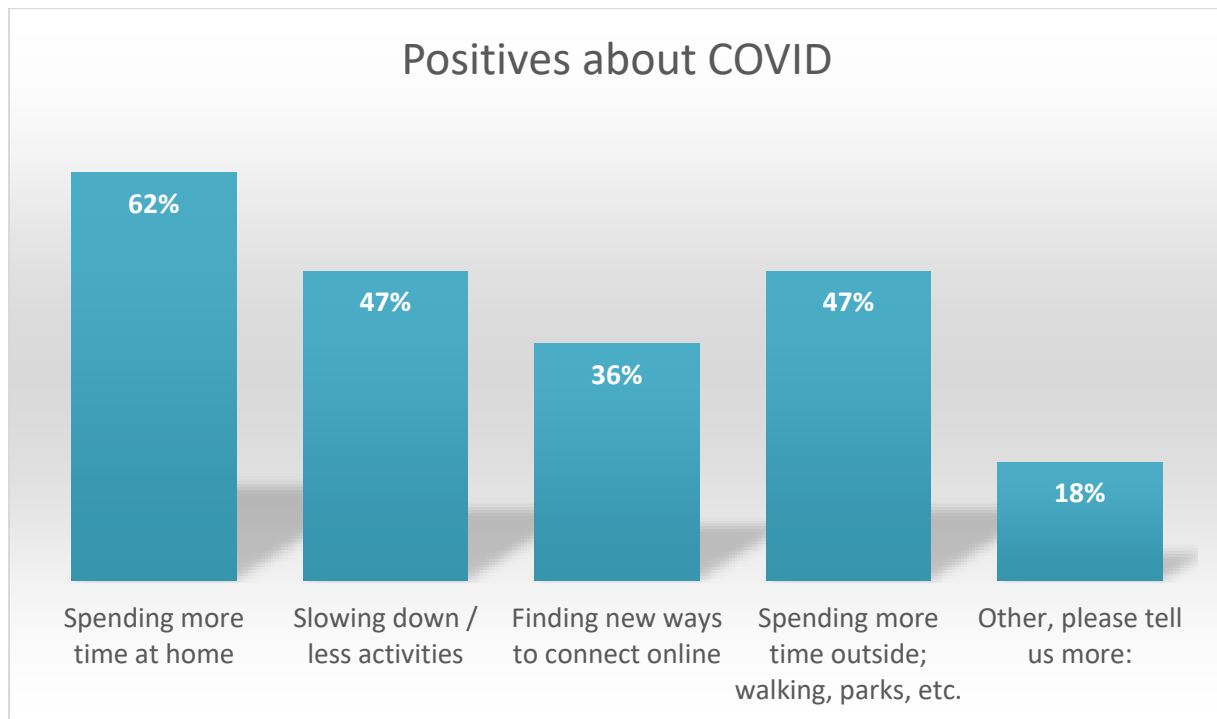
The youth survey was open from September 25 through October 5, 2020 and received 45 responses. Below is a summary of the results. For the full survey report, including all verbatim open-text input, please [visit the online project page](#) and look for the Documents menu on the right side.

Question 1: What has been hard for you about COVID?



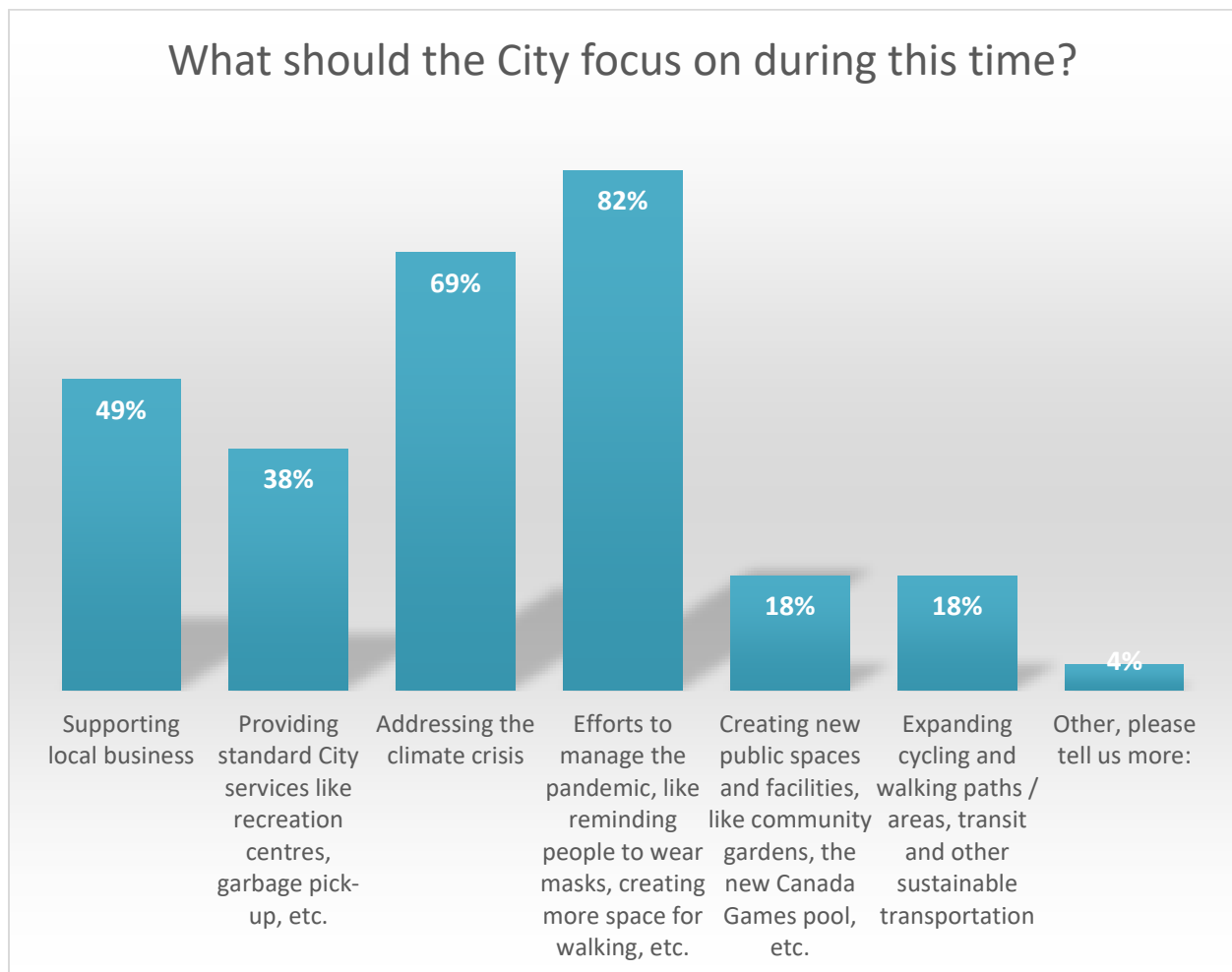
Of the five participants who selected “Other, please tell us more,” they shared comments about mental health challenges, struggling with online classes, family health issues, lack of events to get excited about, and struggles finding a job.

Question 2: What has been good for you about COVID?



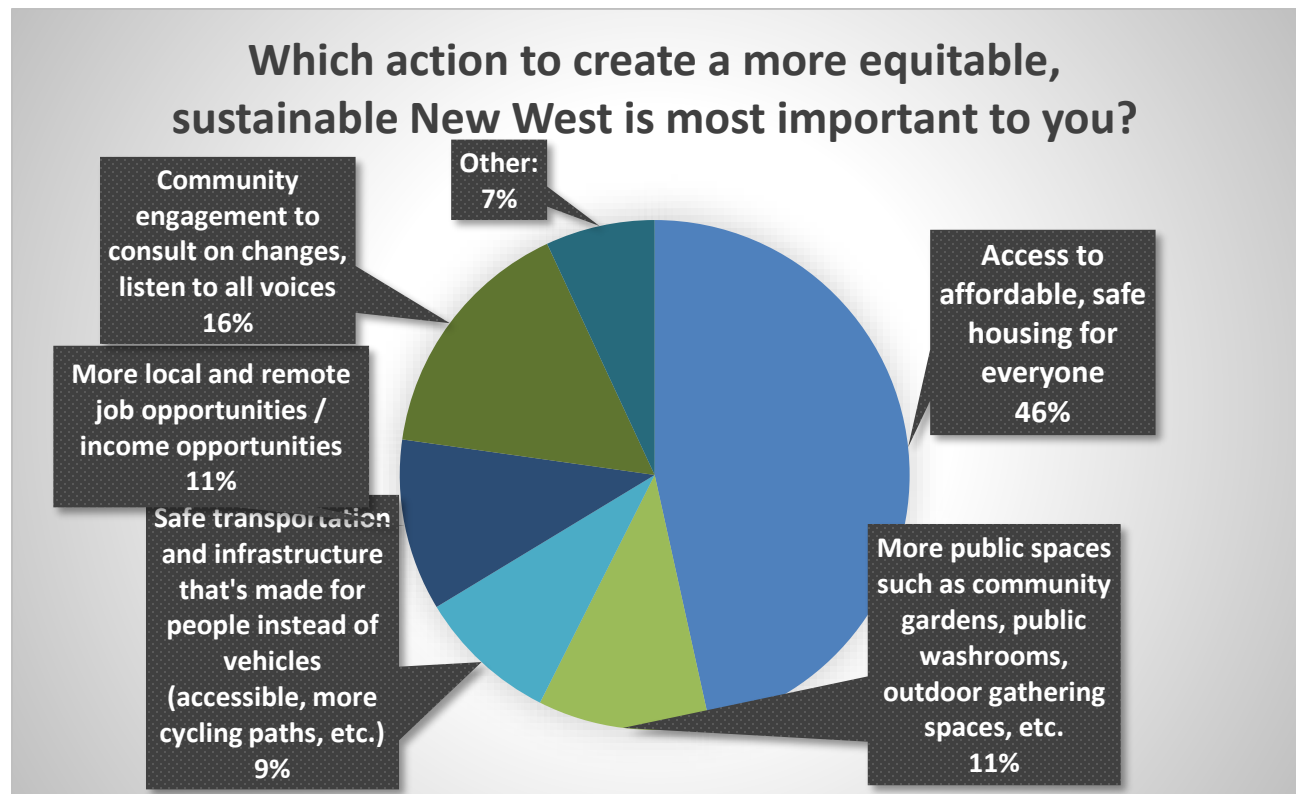
Of the eight participants who selected “Other, please tell us more,” they shared comments about having more times for hobbies / passions, learning new things, reflecting on healthy habits, and more time alone.

Question 3: What do you think it's important for the City government to focus on during the pandemic and recovery?



Only two participants selected “Other, please tell us more,” providing comments about the need for hand sanitizer on buses, and a more responsible return-to-school plan.

Question 4: In a previous survey, we asked people in New West what actions the City can take to help build a more equitable, sustainable, resilient city. It was an open response question and we got a wide variety of answers. Below are the top five themes we heard. Which one is most important to you?



Three participants selected “Other, please tell us more,” and shared comments about all of the actions being important, and the need for more reliable public transit from Queensborough to New Westminster Secondary School.

Question 5: OPTIONAL – What would you suggest to the City for ideas to build a stronger community that’s fairer for everyone? How could New West be a better community for you?

This was an open-text question, and a total of 16 comments were provided in response. Themes in the responses include:

- More spaces / places for gathering, activities, recreation, fun. Examples of comments here include:
 - “Build another community center with a pool”

- “Creating more youth-centered spaces where underprivileged youth can find support without judgement.
- “Having more place to socialize like parks and community centers.”
- COVID-19-related safety measures / following protocols – particularly at school. Examples of comments here include:
 - “Make mask mandatory in schools”
 - “Safer conditions for students returning to school (in class instruction, specifically for secondary school)”
 - “I suggest that our New Westminster community works together to find ways for everyone to participate in following protocols and live in a safety environment.”

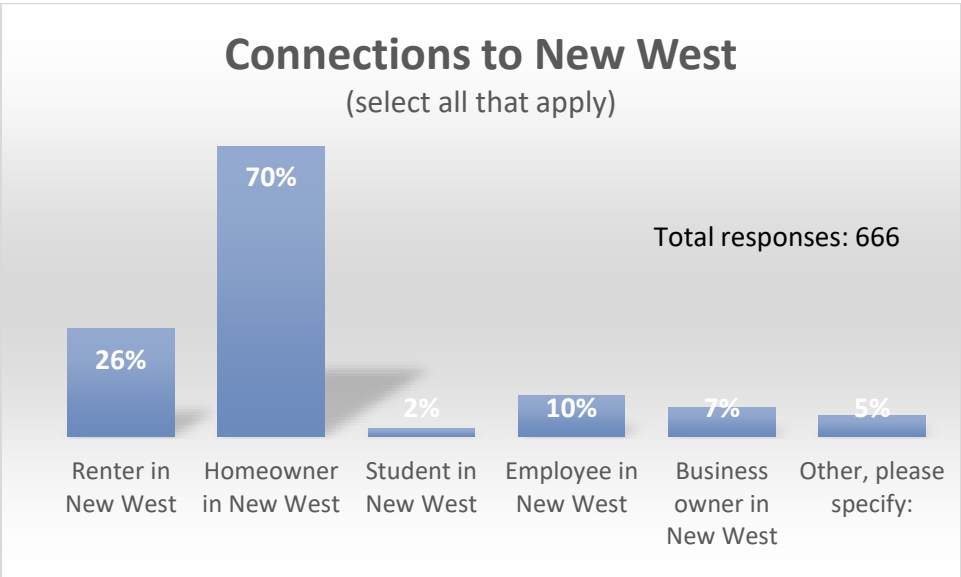
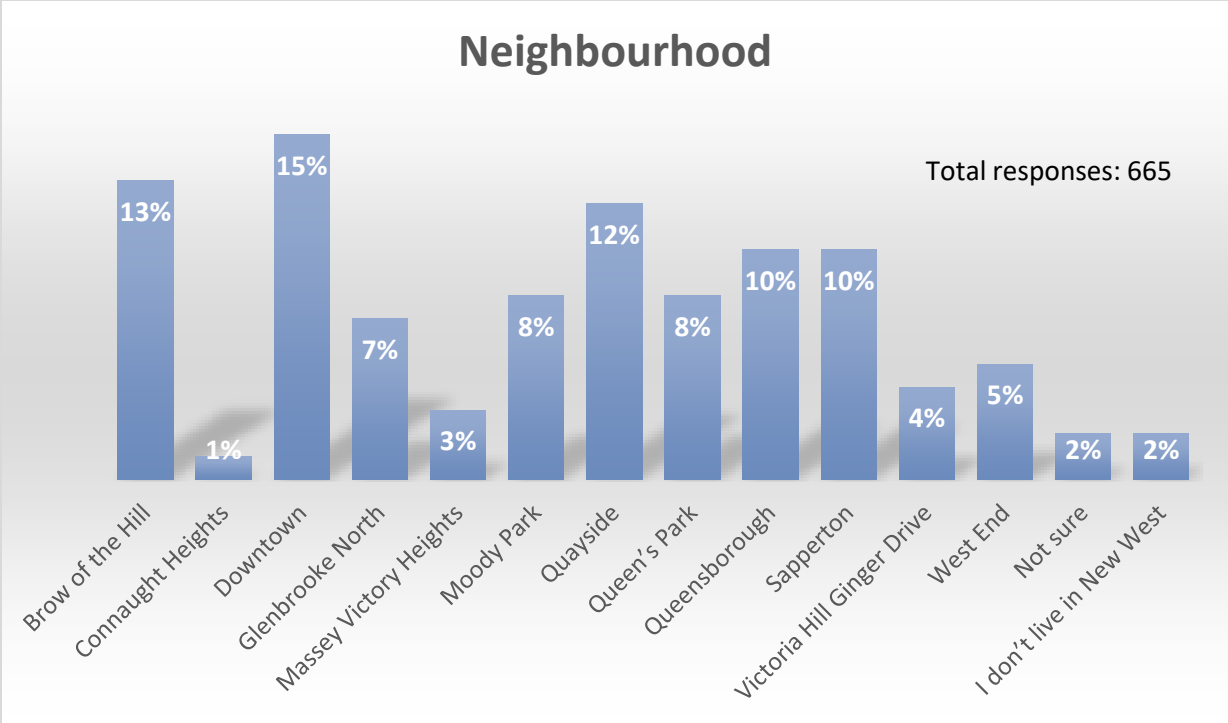
Other responses were related to listening to youth, prioritizing the new high school building, defunding police and using that money to support mental health services, making sure changes are followed through and not ignored, activities and food, being “more fun,” and things are going well so there is not much to change.

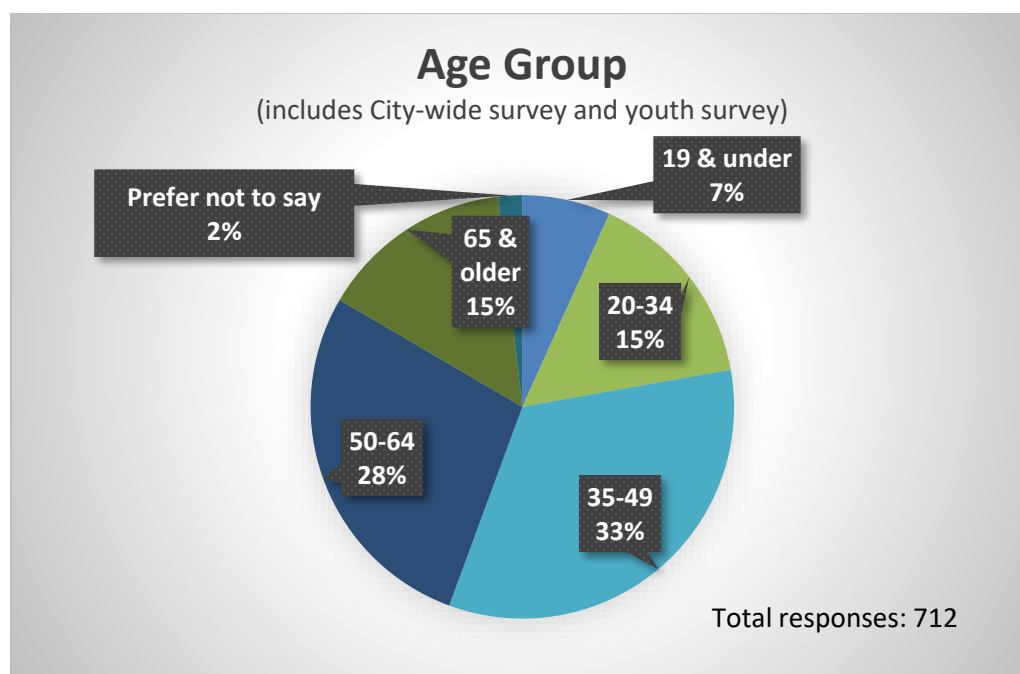
5. About Participants

Across all engagement activities approximately 1,300 New Westminster community members provided input on COVID-19 recovery and building a stronger New West. Demographic information was primarily collected through the City-wide online survey, with several optional questions included at the end of the survey.

Small-group dialogue participants were asked to share their neighbourhood; however, this information was not recorded in the session notes. Anecdotally, the discussion facilitators have noted that participants came from a variety of New West neighbourhoods. Participants in the direct outreach engagement activities provided some optional demographic information; however, they were not asked any specific demographic questions like in the survey. We can infer that respondents to the youth survey were all under age 19; however, the survey did not include any demographic questions.

The following demographic information is from the survey – with the exception of age category, which also includes the youth survey participants.





Demographic Analysis

Compared to the demographic profile of New Westminster from the 2016 Census, most neighbourhood participation rates were proportional (less than 5% +/-) – with the exception of Brow of the Hill, which was under-represented in the survey (13% of survey participants; 21% of New West residents according to the Census), and Quayside, which was over-represented (12% of survey participants; 6% of New West according to Census).

As we see in most City of New Westminster surveys, residential property owners were overrepresented (70% of survey participants; 56% of residents according to Census), and tenants were underrepresented (26% of survey participants; 44% of residents according to Census). However, Public Engagement staff worked to balance this through the direct outreach engagement activities, where the majority of those who provided demographic information said they were renters. The direct outreach also included under-housed and those with lived / living experience in homelessness.

When it comes to the age groups of participants, even with the targeted youth survey ages 19 & under, along with ages 35-49, were underrepresented, while ages 20-34 and 50-64 were overrepresented. Ages 65+ were proportionally represented.

Diversity of Voices

The final optional survey question asked participants to provide any additional demographic information they felt comfortable sharing – in particular, related to groups that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. We specified the information was being requested to understand what perspectives might be missing from the conversation, and to ensure diversity of participation.

Based on the responses to this question, the survey included multiple participants who:

- Identify as LGBTQIA2S+
- Identify as people of colour
- Are living with a disability
- Are parents
- Have lost work due to COVID-19
- Are immune compromised / are at high risk of contracting COVID-19
- Are seniors or have a senior in their household
- Are immigrants / new to Canada
- Identify as Metis and/or Indigenous
- Are single parents
- Are low income

Also, as outlined previously in the report, participants in the direct outreach interviews also included:

- isolated seniors
- people with disabilities
- newcomers to Canada
- people of colour
- tenants
- community members with direct lived or living experience of poverty, homelessness, mental health and/or substance use

6. Next Steps

Public Engagement staff is working to share the key themes and summary report widely with Council, City staff across departments, and the community. The summary infographic, this report, and all of the verbatim input across the

engagement activities are available on [Be Heard New West](#), the City's online engagement platform, for public access and review.

Pending Council endorsement, the City's inter-departmental New Normal Committee, which is working on pandemic response and recovery planning, and the COVID-19 working groups (task forces) will be asked to review the engagement findings and provide their feedback and recommendations for action planning. This feedback and the engagement findings will then be presented to the Mayor's Task Force on Reconciliation, Social Inclusion and Engagement for input, suggestions and recommendations for next steps.

The engagement input covers a broad range of topics, and can be applied to a wide variety of City projects and initiatives. City leadership and staff are asked to consider this input and the key themes as we continue to move through the pandemic response and recovery periods, both now and in the weeks and months to come.

Key Learnings for Future Public Engagement

- Based on survey responses regarding preferences for format of community dialogue, there is an appetite for moderated online discussion forums where participants can contribute on their own time without having to attend a scheduled session. Public Engagement staff will work to incorporate online discussion forums in future engagements. This format is available on the City's new online engagement platform, [Be Heard New West](#), which launched in early November.
- Targeted outreach and working in partnership with non-profits that are serving the population groups we want to reach is an effective method for reaching seldom-heard voices. However, it is resource and time intensive to conduct.